

# Wildlife Times



## ASEAN Countries Make Major Progress on Wildlife, Habitat Conservation

**Pattaya, Thailand, April 12, 2009** – In a major step forward, the ASEAN-Wildlife Enforcement Network (ASEAN-WEN) conference concluded yesterday with strong commitments by Asian governments and international partners to coordinate enforcement efforts in a concerted effort to halt wildlife crime and habitat depletion.

The agreement came at a meeting, “A Forgotten Crisis: Arresting Wildlife Depletion through Strengthened Partnerships and Regional Cooperation,” that was held April 10-12 in Pattaya, Thailand.

ASEAN-WEN is the region’s largest environmental law-enforcement network. It links scores of environmental agencies, police organizations, customs bureaus and members of the judiciary from all 10 ASEAN member countries to share intelligence, conduct investigations, and train officers to combat wildlife trafficking and implement international and national laws regulating wildlife trade.

The Pattaya conference was hosted by the Government of Thailand and sponsored by the World Bank, ASEAN-WEN, the Save the Tiger Fund, TRAFFIC, the U.S. Agency for International Development, and the FREELAND Foundation.

With illegal trade in wildlife estimated at over \$10 billion across Asia, second only to weapons and drug smuggling, participants at the conference made a call to action, with agreement on a new wildlife Manifesto, “Combating Wildlife Crime in Asia,” supported by ASEAN Secretary-General Surin Pitsuwan, Thailand Minister of Natural Resources and Environment H.E. Suwit Khunkitti, and World Bank President Robert Zoellick.

Mr. Zoellick, in his message said, “ASEAN members, other interested countries in Asia, and a powerful coalition of partners in civil society with strong support

from the World Bank have come together today to tackle wildlife crime head on and to take smart steps – immediate steps – to coordinate a regional law enforcement response to protect endangered species and protect habitats. The tiger is one sad example of a threatened species that we must protect. The World Bank has joined with other partners to help save the wild tigers of Asia, whose numbers have declined over the last century from 100,000 to less than 4,000. We congratulate the participants for these outcomes and thank the Government of Thailand for hosting this important event.”

A major effort by the World Bank is under way and gaining momentum, the Global Tiger Initiative. It was launched last year by the Bank, the Smithsonian Institution, the Global Environment Facility, and the International Tiger Coalition, as an international collaborative platform dedicated to saving wild tigers and mainstreaming biodiversity. The delegates began preparations for the Year of the Tiger Summit in 2010 that will bring high-level political commitment to save the wild tigers, Asia’s religious and cultural icon, and the symbol of environmental sustainability.

Despite the efforts of individual governments and conservation organizations, wild tigers and many other endangered wildlife species are silently disappearing from the Asian landscape. Saving them requires a concerted multinational effort with support from top political leaders and international organizations. Since its inception in 2005, ASEAN-WEN has become a successful model for regional cooperation in transnational law enforcement on illegal wildlife trade.

The Secretary-General of ASEAN, Dr. Surin Pitsuwan, reflected on the achievements of this week’s conference, saying, “We have a unique, diverse, and rich biodiversity that needs to be protected carefully. We must all work together to conserve our natural heritage. I commend



## Manifesto on Combating Wildlife Crime in Asia

Resulting from the International Workshop “A Forgotten Crisis: Arresting Wildlife Depletion in Asia through Strengthened Regional Cooperation and Effective Partnerships”

Hosted by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, Thailand, The Royal Thai Police and the ASEAN Wildlife Enforcement Network Program Coordination Unit

Workshop Co-sponsored by FREELAND Foundation, Save the Tiger Fund, TRAFFIC, the United States Agency for International Development and the World Bank

Experts and representatives from 21 countries, 12 intergovernmental organizations and agreements, and 29 non-governmental organizations (including Wildlife Watch Group, Nepal), having met in Pattaya, Thailand, from 10 to 12 April 2009, agreed:

### Wildlife crime poses a serious threat to Asia

Illegal harvest and trade in wild plants and animals involves organized crime, criminal networks and pervasive corruption driven by sheer greed. It presents risks to human health, biosecurity and livelihoods. It exploits local communities. It offends religious beliefs and moral values. It results in significant loss of revenue to governments. It generates massive proceeds for criminals and the trade has been exploited by insurgent groups.

Wildlife crime stands alongside other major threats to the natural systems that sustain human life. It is a significant transnational problem, which must be addressed with the same tools of law enforcement as drug, human and arms trafficking.

These are not problems that countries can tackle individually. Neither will enforcement alone resolve them. Indiscriminate demand for wildlife products is a driving force of wildlife crime. Effective demand reduction strategies must be developed and implemented.

The ASEAN Wildlife Enforcement Network has made important inroads toward tackling wildlife crime in Southeast Asia. Establishment of a similar wildlife enforcement network in South Asia is urgently needed.

Workshop delegates call upon relevant governments, organizations and civil society to make the following pledges, to be known as:

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## ASEAN countries ...

the World Bank for its strong support to ASEAN-WEN to prevent and combat against the threat to the wildlife of ASEAN and Asia.”

Participants included ASEAN government delegations and representatives from about 20 countries, including 10 non-ASEAN countries, international organizations, and numerous NGOs active in wildlife and biodiversity preservation. They discussed and identified a series of factors which drive and encourage illegal trading. The Manifesto will help develop the Southeast Asia and South Asia wildlife enforcement networks into fully effective and sustainable platforms. These will have specially trained wildlife crime task forces within the national police forces and other enforcement agencies to track, monitor, investigate and share cross-border information and to stop illegal wildlife trade and arrest traffickers in the region.

“Just as the financial crisis has shown that our economies are all intricately related, wildlife crime and its impacts are cross-border and global. All Asian countries, as well as non-Asian countries, must come together to

solve this forgotten crisis,” said Thai Minister of Natural Resources and Environment Suwit in a statement. The ministry offered to set up a ministerial steering group of tiger range states this year. This is significant change and signals high-level political support for the recommendations of the Manifesto.

The results of a new report, *What’s Driving the Wildlife Trade?*, were also presented at the workshop. The study, jointly conducted by TRAFFIC and the World Bank, reported on the economic and social drivers of wildlife trade in Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos and Vietnam.

Civil society groups applauded the Thai Government and World Bank for their pledges.

“The Thai Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment and World Bank have done the right thing by listening to conservation stakeholders and taking their message to the highest levels in Asia,” said Kraisak Choonhavan, Chairman of FREELAND Foundation, “We now hope Asia’s leaders will listen.”



## Manifesto on ...

### The Pattaya Pledges

#### Governments in Asia

Protect natural resources from theft and destruction through:

- Crime prevention and deterrence;
- Intelligence-led enforcement, effective patrolling and anti-poaching activities;
- Effective and accountable governance and management of fragile ecosystems;
- Fostering stewardship by communities;
- Effective control of illegal domestic wildlife use;
- Reducing demand for illegal wildlife products;

Disrupt and dismantle organised wildlife crime networks in source and demand countries by:

- Identifying, investigating and prosecuting significant cases, obtaining significant terms of imprisonment and fines, and seizing and forfeiting the proceeds and tools of the criminal activities;
- Using laws against corruption, money laundering, fraud, organized crime, smuggling, as well as criminal and non-conviction based forfeiture, to combat wildlife crime;
- Ensuring effective collaboration and cooperation among enforcement agencies;
- Ensuring timely and effective mutual legal assistance
- Enacting and implementing stronger legislation, which ensures penalties on a par with drug and arms trafficking;

Ratify and vigorously implement the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) and the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC) and related protocols. Monitoring to ensure compliance with the conventions is essential;

Provide all human, financial, technical and training resources to law-enforcement personnel, prosecutors and the judiciary to combat wildlife crime;

To fully support the ASEAN Wildlife Enforcement Network and a similar enforcement network in South Asia, and;

To engage with the international community in implementing the above pledges.

#### International organizations

The CITES Secretariat, ICPO-Interpol, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the World Bank and the World Customs Organization, among others, to provide support to the ASEAN Wildlife Enforcement Network and a Similar South Asia enforcement Network;

The World Bank will use its convening power and leadership to:

- Generate political will and influence public policy for the emergence of a development paradigm that integrates biodiversity values;
- Enhance financial and technical resources to reverse the serious decline of wildlife and improve management of high conservation value landscapes;
- Support national capacity building
- Continue support to the Global Tiger Initiative

The South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP) to continue to pledge its support to the establishment of a wildlife enforcement network in South Asia and ensure its collaboration with other enforcement networks, particularly ASEAN-WEN;

IUCN to call upon its members to seek high-level political commitment, and with WWF, through their wildlife trade monitoring network TRAFFIC actively support efforts to combat illegal wildlife trade in Asia;

The United Nations system to recognise that wildlife crime poses a significant threat to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

#### Civil society

Civil society organisations increase support for communities seeking alternative livelihoods that results in reduced local involvement in wildlife crime and increased support for law-enforcement efforts to protect natural resources; Reduce consumer demand for illegally-sourced wildlife and its products;

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) assist with finding resources to sustain wildlife law enforcement efforts and to effectively deliver the latest information on poaching and illegal trade arising from their research and analysis to the appropriate agencies responsible for countering illegal trade and managing wildlife and protecting ecosystems; Commercial sector to conduct and facilitate wildlife trade in a legal and sustainable manner and support and promote efforts to combat illegal trade, including consumer education.

#### Concluding Remarks

The participants recognize that the wildlife of Asia will continue its perilous course to extinction unless the pledges made here are kept. We do not want our grandchildren to remember us as the generation that stood by while their natural heritage was stolen and destroyed. Let us bequeath to them a healed and intact world where rivers run clear, air is clean and rich, forests are pristine and there are still wild places where wild creatures run free. Our children deserve this heritage and we must not fail them.

Participants noted with sincere appreciation the Royal Government of Thailand's intention to convene a Ministerial meeting in 2009 to tackle this 'forgotten crisis' in Asia.



**'THE JAIPUR DECLARATION'**  
11<sup>TH</sup> Meeting of the Governing Council of SACEP  
Jaipur, India  
22 May 2008  
Declaration on  
South Asia Initiative for Combating Illegal in wildlife

Aware that the countries in the South Asia region are very rich in terrestrial and marine natural resources which are storehouse of unique biodiversity as well as many endangered species and that there is rapid growing demand both locally and globally for wildlife products.

Acknowledge that while legal trade can be monitored and managed, illegal trade in wild animals and plants poses a major challenge to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in south Asia.

Recalling that all the countries in the region are presently having various laws and regulations prevent trade but still are subject to large scale illegal trade in wildlife and its derives by a well organizes local and international illegal trade network.

Realizing that despite concerns of region have committed for wildlife conservation and to regular illegal trade under the Conservation on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) through its various resolutions, or implement related National Laws and policies.

Recalling the south Asia Wildlife Trade Diagnostic Workshop held in Kathmandu in April 2004 and the priorities identified for improved regional co-operative to address illegal wildlife trade challenges in south Asia.

Recalling the decision taken in the Tenth in Tenth Governing Council Meeting of SACEP on 25<sup>th</sup> January 2007 to incorporate a work Programme (2007-2008) for combating illegal Trade in wildlife products and to help strengthening of enforcement of CITES in the region.

Aware of CITES Resolution 11.3 compliance and Enforcement revised at that 14<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Conference of the parties CITES in July 2007 urging parties to consider formulation regional action plans, incorporation timetable, targets and provision for funding, designed to enhance enforcement agencies.

Acknowledging the Memorandum of Understanding signed by SACEP and TRAFFIC International on 20/07/07 to jointly take forward the initiative of regional co-operation for Combating Illegal Trade and their joint efforts initiated by them.

Recalling the endorsement of the South Asia Regional Strategic Plan on Illegal Wildlife Trade (2008-2013) by the Senior Officers of the Member Countries at the First Regional Workshop on the South Asia Wildlife Trade Initiative in Kathmandu from 31<sup>st</sup> January and 1<sup>st</sup> February 2008.

Stressing the importance of support of mutual network and technical support as well as financial and technical support from their international support community for building expertise, resource, and capacity to address the needs of the region for combating the illegal wildlife trade; and Believe that regional co-operation can provide the best solution for regional problems; We the Environment Ministers constitution the 11<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Governing Council of SACEP,

Support the South Asia Initiative for Combating Illegal Trade Wildlife and Regional Action Plan and the Formation of South Asia Wildlife Enforcement Network (SAWEN). Urge to establish the South Asia Experts Group on Illegal Trade consisting of relevant technical representatives from the eight member countries, which would meet periodically to provide a forum for the development of regional programmes through network, sharing and effective dissemination of knowledge and information.

Mandate the expert group to develop work programme for implementing the South Asia Regional Strategic Plan on Illegal Wildlife Trade with assistance of SACEP and other relevant partners and Request Countries donors and other organizations to provide financial and technical support to assist in the implementation of the approved work programme.



# Laos emerges as key source in Asia's illicit wildlife trade

Laos is rapidly developing as China and other Asian nations exploit its resources. One of the first casualties has been the wildlife, now being rapidly depleted by a thriving black-market trade, writes Rhett Butler from Yale Environment 360, part of the Guardian Environment Network.

Deep in the rugged mountains of Nam Et-Phou Louey National Protected Area on the Laos-Vietnam border, Laotian game wardens came upon the following scene: pieces of the pelt of a recently killed tiger, its bones removed, with rifle shells scattered in the trampled vegetation.

The wardens knew precisely what had happened. Poachers had trapped a tiger in a baited snare that had encircled one of its front feet with a cable and lifted the animal into the air. Coming upon the snarling tiger, the poachers had shot it, then proceeded to carve out its 22 to 26 pounds of bones, which — when ground up — would be sold to middlemen for the Chinese medicinal market. The poachers then cut off the tiger's penis, which would eventually be soaked in wine and the wine drunk as an aphrodisiac.

Middlemen paid the poachers up to \$15,000 for the bones and other parts of the tiger, an astronomical sum in a country where per capita income is around \$400 a year. In China today, the remains of a tiger may fetch \$70,000, with the ground bones highly valued as a cure for rheumatism, according to Arlyne Johnson, co-director of the Wildlife Conservation Society's Laos Program, which is trying to stem the flow of the illegal wildlife trade.

Twenty-five years ago, hundreds of tigers roamed large swaths of relatively untouched jungle in Laos. But in recent years — particularly in the last decade — development, deforestation, and a booming traffic in wildlife have reduced Laos's tiger population to 50 or fewer individuals, according to Johnson and other scientists. The main driver of the rapid depletion of tigers and scores of other species of birds, animals, and reptiles is the growing affluence of neighboring Thailand, Vietnam, and especially China, where a vast new market for wildlife products has arisen.

Nothing symbolizes this market more vividly than the so-called "north-south economic corridor," a recently completed road that now connects once-sleepy Laos — and its timber and other raw materials — to China. With its booming economy, China is also the world's largest — and fastest-growing — market for wildlife.

Laos is the latest front in the struggle to rein in an underground global trade that every year kills tens of millions of wild birds, mammals, and reptiles to supply multi-billion dollar markets around the world. The U.S. and Europe rank among the largest buyers of elephant ivory and tiger parts and also feed this illicit business with their demand for exotic pets.

But as I learned on a trip to Laos earlier this year, it is the Asian market — particularly in China — that powers this trade. A major source of demand is traditional Chinese medicine, which is based on the belief that the parts of certain animals have curative properties — river otter tails for labor pains, bear bile for fever, shark fins for cancer. This trade is taking a heavy toll on wildlife not just in Laos, but around the world — in Southeast Asia, the Russian Far East, Africa, and even North America.

The reasons for the rise of commercial hunting and trapping are not complex — rapid development and growing affluence that create demand; an increase in international trade; the emergence of increasingly sophisticated smuggling networks; an influx of weapons and technology; and easier access to wilderness areas because of road building by extractive industries. All drive overexploitation of wildlife, but addressing the trade in a manner that is effective but also fair to local people is a huge challenge.

Until 1986, Laos was ruled by a communist government and was largely isolated from the outside world. But a change of government and an economic liberalization program began a trickle of investment in the country that has recently become a flood. Like other forest-dependent people, rural Lao long relied on hunting to supplement their rice-dominated diet with protein. But the opening of the economy put a price on the heads of virtually all animals, ranging from river insects to tigers. This, combined with an abundance of weapons from years of war and insurgency, gave hunters the incentive and the tools to convert Laos' rich biodiversity into cash. Now the very resources upon which rural people have long depended are at risk.

The situation is particularly grim along the recently completed north-south economic corridor — an 1,150-mile road that runs from Bangkok, Thailand to Kunming, China, passing through the heart of Laos. The corridor has spurred widespread deforestation and wildlife poaching. Vast tracts of forest along the corridor have been logged for timber and converted for teak or rubber

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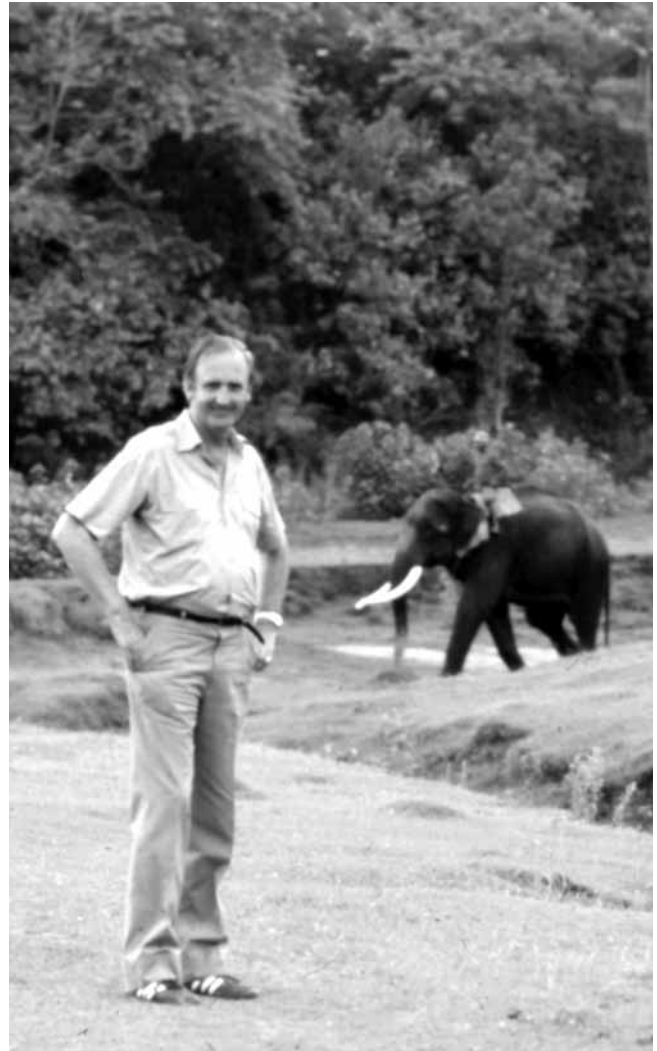
# A.V. Jim Edwards

## 24<sup>th</sup> November 1935 to 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2009

Jim Edwards, who died recently in Kathmandu, was one of the pioneers of tourism in Nepal, along with his friends Boris Lissanevitch and Colonel Jimmy Roberts. A far-sighted man, gifted with luck and charisma, Jim had the vision to see the future for conservation-based wildlife tourism, in the Himlayan mountains and jungles that he loved, long before the concept of “ecotourism” came into being.

A.V. Jim Edwards was born 24<sup>th</sup> November 1935 in Hampshire, England, before moving to Jersey, Channel Islands when he was thirteen after the early death of his mother. He was educated in England then on the island. His father, Slim, served in the RAF during the Second World War and spent much of his life at sea. In his teenage years, Jim was an adventurous youth and enjoyed sailing and swimming as well as representing Jersey with friend Charles Maine in badminton. His first job was as a delivery boy for a St. Helier butcher and an illicit pound of sausages often found its way onto the Edwards’ table! After a brief spell with the States of Jersey, he did national service with the Queen’s Own Royal West Kent Regiment and then joined Lloyds bank, Tonbridge Wells before being transferred to Sweden, a posting he found more convivial. Dreaming of seeing more of the world, and always the adventurer, Jim drove overland on a Saab car promotion, through Europe, the Middle East, and the Indian sub-continent before arriving in Nepal in May 1962. Enraptured by the splendours of the country, he decided this was where he wanted to live. Travel further afield was put on hold and he spent a year exploring the Terai jungles, hunting, and fishing, largely in the remote Karnali region in far west Nepal. Jim also worked around this time with the new USAID Mission in Kathmandu, managing logistics.

In 1964, Jim teamed up with American anthropologist turned wildlife ecologist, Dr Charles (Chuck) McDougal and started the first wildlife tourism company, Nepal Wildlife Adventure, to operate jungle treks, fishing and hunting expeditions. It was the beginning of a long and distinguished career in the travel industry. In 1969, with his mind set on learning more about the travel trade, Jim enrolled in the Pan American World Airways Management Training Course, in New York. In his absence, Chuck McDougal continued to run Nepal Wildlife Adventure, while Jim in return, was able to send many clients to



their company from the US and Europe. Finishing his course, he worked for Pan Am in Sales, Marketing, and Public Relations in New York City for three years.

In Kathmandu, there was a small community of foreigners who all knew each other. On a tip-off from Boris Lissanevitch, Nepal’s pioneer hotelier, Jim heard of Tiger Tops a small camp in the Chitwan rhino reserve that was in need of improved management. Elected a fellow of the prestigious Explorer’s Club in New York in 1967, Jim met the owners of Tiger Tops, Texan millionaires and big game hunters, Herb Klein and Toddy Lee Wynne. At their request, in 1971, Jim and Chuck McDougal took



over the Tiger Tops Jungle Lodge that the Texans had built in the 1960s as a wildlife tourism enterprise in Chitwan where they had enjoyed hunting safaris. With Chuck's hard work on the wildlife, his brother, John Edwards, on the operational side, and Jim's marketing and business flair, they turned Tiger Tops into a famous conservation tourism model. Jim used his contacts in Pan Am and the World Wildlife Fund, to help lobby the Nepal government to turn Chitwan into a National Park and it was gazetted in 1973. In 1974, Jim teamed up with Colonel Jimmy Roberts, the pioneer of Himalayan trekking who had started Mountain Travel, the first trekking company in the world. Thus was formed Tiger Mountain, very much Jim's group of adventure travel companies throughout Nepal and India. Over the 1970s and 1980s, the group of companies included partnerships with lodges in Madhya Pradesh, Kashmir, and Karnataka in India, expanded camps in Nepal and activities in Sri Lanka. Tiger Mountain pioneered tourism in Ladakh and organised early tours in Bhutan and Tibet. A chance meeting with explorer, Col. John Blashford-Snell, led to pioneering descents of Nepal's Trishuli River in Nepal, resulting in the establishment of Himalayan River Exploration, the first river running company in South Asia. Jim's last major project was the establishment of a permanent lodge on Prince Charles's "Royal Trek" route operated by Mountain Travel in 1980. Jim's eldest son, Kristjan, supervised the project. Sir Edmund Hillary opened Tiger Mountain Pokhara Lodge in 1998.

Seeing the effective manner in which tourism, carefully and sensitively managed, could be a positive force for conservation, Jim, and his colleagues formed the International Trust for Nature Conservation, a UK registered charity with a mandate to support conservation initiatives around the world. ITNC has supported various conservation projects in Nepal and India. Jim is widely recognised for his immense contribution to Nepal's tourism industry, setting standards of adventure tourism that are admired all over Asia. At a time when Nepalese corporate management was in its infancy, Jim's constant concern was to provide opportunity to many Nepalese, often with limited education, and to set the standards for caring and inclusive management that remains the hallmark of Tiger Mountain today. It was a matter of great pride to Jim that Mrs Gandhi commented, "Why do we have to look to Nepal to learn how to manage wildlife tourism lodges."

For his contribution to Nepal's tourism industry, Jim Edwards was the recipient of many awards and accolades. Jim founded the World Elephant Polo Association in

1981 with James Manclark and ran the annual World Championships at Meghauli, Chitwan, a tribute to his sense of humour, marketing acumen, and enjoyment of a fine party. Elephant polo attracted many celebrities and further promoted Tiger Tops as well as raising funds for many charities.

A man of immense charm and love of life, Jim could bowl people over with his inspirational energy, hospitality, self-deprecating sense of humour and monumental generosity. Jim defied stereotypes, yet sought an element of conformity, and was immensely pleased to be made an honorary member of the Sirmoor Club, the regimental association of 2<sup>nd</sup> Gurkhas and member of the St Moritz Tobogganing Club. He was iconoclastic and did not suffer fools easily. Jim had a sharp eye for a finely turned ankle, and much enjoyed the company of women. In 1970, he married Icelandic beauty, Fjola Bender. Then in 1978, he met Belinda Fuchs at Tiger Tops, a zoologist from Switzerland, and they were married in 1983. In later years, he lived happily with his devoted companion Tia Rongsen from Nagaland. Jim had four children who were a source of great pride and comfort to him: two by his marriage with Fjola, Kristjan, and Anna Tara; and two sons by his marriage to Belinda, Timothy, and Jack.

Jim was passionate about the jungle and enjoying wild places with friends. He fished regularly on several rivers in Iceland, where he suffered the first of two strokes in 2004 while fishing with his sons, Timothy and Jack. His courage and tenacity in regaining mobility won him wide respect. Sadly, in January 2009 he suffered a second major stroke whilst mahseer fishing in Karnataka. A paradoxical man, Jim challenged and inspired all those with whom he came in contact. Life was never dull when Jim was around. He enriched the lives of many from all over the world and provided support for many Nepalis at home and abroad as part of his lifelong love and commitment to Nepal and her people. We mourn his passing but in Virgil's words – *meminisse juvabimus* – we shall delight in remembering.

## APPEAL

*Dear valued readers,*

The 12<sup>th</sup> issue of the Wildlife Times is in your hands. It is our small effort to raise various issues related with wildlife conservation. Please help us include the activities from your group or organizations of wildlife conservation by sending us the concerned information. We would love to find any suggestion and criticism. Please feel free to leave your feedback at [info@citesnepal.org](mailto:info@citesnepal.org). We also seek support from your organization to continue this Wildlife Times. We look forward to your queries, comments and support.





## £20m of ivory seized as poachers return to their prey

*The Independent, April 15, 2009*

The decision to allow a sale of ivory to China and Japan could be fuelling a rise in smuggling, reports Cahal Milmo

Investigators have seized £20m worth of illegal ivory in south-east Asia in the past six weeks, including the third largest haul of elephant tusks on record, The Independent has learnt.

Customs officials in Vietnam last month discovered 1,200 sections of tusks from up to 900 elephants, weighing 6.23 tonnes, hidden inside a consignment of waste plastic which had been sent from the Tanzanian port of Dar es Salaam.

Conservation bodies said that poaching in countries from Kenya and Tanzania to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Sudan is reaching levels not seen since a global ban on ivory sales was imposed in 1989 and was placing the remaining wild elephant population in danger of extinction.

The seizure, which was accompanied by the interception in Thailand of a tonne of raw ivory from DRC, follows a controversial decision last October by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (Cites), to approve the sale to China and Japan of 108 tonnes of tusks from four southern African countries with sustainable elephant populations. The British Government, which is a key signatory to the convention, voted to support the sale.

Conservationists yesterday claimed that the ivory confiscations and increase in poaching were proof that fears expressed at the time of the sale that it would fuel renewed demand for illegal tusks have come true.

An authoritative American study warned that poaching deaths are on a par with the late 1980s and the remaining large groups of elephants outside protected reserves could be extinct by 2020 without improved enforcement.

Campaigners believe the legal trade is being used as a disguise to smuggle ivory to China, where there is burgeoning demand for name seals, carvings and polished tusks and concern that newly introduced counter-trafficking measures are inadequate. Vietnamese officials said last week they believed the consignment seized in Hai Phong port from a Malaysian vessel was destined for China.

It is estimated that about 37,000 African elephants are killed by poachers each year. Figures obtained by The Independent show that in Kenya alone, the number of poached elephants has doubled in the past 12 months while officials in Tanzania are also investigating a reported large increase in poaching in the country's protected game parks. The elephant population in DRC is estimated to have fallen by a third in the past five years.

Michael Wamithi, director of the International Fund for Animal Welfare (Ifaw) elephant programme, said: "These alarmingly successive incidents are an indication that there is an escalation in elephant poaching in African range states, and an upsurge in illegal trade of ivory in the Far East markets. Although investigations are still ongoing, we suspect that the 6.2-tonne ivory haul in Vietnam was headed for larger markets in China, where legal ivory markets could provide cover for illegal trade. Vietnam has a small market unlikely to be able to absorb or demand such quantities."

The ban on the sale of ivory has been credited with halting a catastrophic decline in Africa's elephant population throughout the 1980s, when 70,000 elephants a year were being slaughtered by poachers. Elephant numbers across the continent are estimated to have fallen from 1.3 million to 625,000 before the prohibition was introduced in 1989.

Cites denied a link between the sale of ivory from South Africa, Namibia, Botswana and Zimbabwe last October, which was accompanied by a 10-year moratorium on further sales, and any increase in poaching or smuggling. The organisation's exhaustive Elephant Trade Information System (Etis) suggests that smuggling went down in the wake of the last sanctioned ivory sale in 1999, although the amount seized each year has now been increasing since 2005.

But Traffic, the wildlife trade monitoring organisation, reported in February that illegal ivory prices had risen to \$1,500 (£1,000) per kilogram. The figure is disputed by Cites, which points out that the average price during the sale of legal ivory was \$162 per kilogram and suggests that such a black market price is unsustainable. But campaigners say there is ample evidence that poaching is becoming increasingly rampant, with hunters and dealers targeting and decimating specific herds in the face of inadequate enforcement by host countries.

Poached ivory is currently sold for about \$38 per kilogram in Kenya, where hunters have recently targeted the famous Amboseli elephants, killing 15 in the past year. With adult male elephant tusks weighing up to



50kg, the death of a single elephant can represent a year's income for a farmer or hunter. The result is a growing trade which is funnelling poached ivory from across Africa to criminal gangs with export links to the Far East. Traffic, which provides smuggling data to Cites, said the latest seizure in Vietnam proved there were sophisticated middle-men based across eastern Africa capable of amassing large quantities of ivory and smuggling it across the Indian Ocean.

Mary Rice, executive director at the Environmental Investigation Agency which provided much of the evidence that led to the original ivory ban, said: "There is an increase in poaching in many areas and we have an increase in seizures in Asia. These are not one-off opportunistic shipments, they are obviously consistent and organised."

## **Indonesiasaidtoallowillegalmonkeytrade JAKARTA (AFP)**

An illegal trade in primates for laboratory tests is thriving in Indonesia despite local and international regulations designed to control such exports, a British animal welfare group said.

The British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection (BUAV) said Indonesia should be suspended from the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) for allowing the "disturbing trade."

It said Jakarta was "breaching its own wildlife legislation as well as failing to comply with CITES regulations and violating international animal welfare guidelines."

"The official Indonesian 'ban' on the export of wild-caught primates for research is a sham," the group said in a statement at the conclusion of an investigation into the primates trade.

"Through a lack of enforcement by the Indonesian authorities and the use of misleading source codes for CITES export permits, the BUAV believes that wild-caught monkeys continue to be exported and end up in the international research industry."

It said illegally caught wild primates are subjected to a "chain of cruelty and suffering" before they end up in research laboratories around the world, including China, Japan and the United States.

Many were kept in "appalling conditions at dealers' premises" before being packed into small wooden crates and shipped by Philippine Airlines, Korean Air and China Southern Airlines, it said.

The number of wild monkeys allowed to be trapped in 2009 for the research industry had increased a "staggering" three-fold to 15,100, it said.

"The BUAV calls on CITES to suspend Indonesia's membership while it carries out its own investigation," BUAV chief executive Michelle Thew said.

"To what extent CITES itself is aware of the practices taking place within Indonesia must also be urgently addressed."

## **China's wild alligators to double in 10 years: Report**

**19 Apr 2009,**

SHANGHAI: China's endangered Yangtze alligator population is expected to more than double to 300 in the wild within five to 10 years, state media reported on Sunday.

Currently there are more than 120 alligators breeding in a wider area than five years ago, Wang Chaolin of the Chinese Alligators Protection Nature Reserve, in eastern Anhui Province, told Xinhua news agency. "We have for the first time found wild baby alligators. Normally their survival rate is only two percent," Wang was quoted as saying. "The finding of the infants indicates the number of the species is increasing." Wang said measures such as the protection of baby alligators and the releasing of captive-bred alligators into to the wild were helping bring the species back from the brink of extinction, the report said. The Yangtze alligator, also known as the Chinese alligator, was once plentiful, particularly along China's eastern seaboard, Xinhua said.

But pollution, a warming climate and human activity have made it one of the world's most endangered creatures in the wild, it added. "I'm confident the number will reach 300 in the future," Wang said. "But humans are still the biggest threat to the animal." China has put the Chinese alligator at the top level of its list of protected species. The Chinese Alligator Breeding Research Centre was set up in Anhui 30 years ago. Since then, the number of captive alligators at the centre has risen from about 200 to more than 10,000.

## **The \$1.5 million Wedding Dress Made Up Of 2009 Peacock Feathers**

NANJING, China, April 13 (UPI) — A Chinese wedding dress factory said eight workers spent 40 days creating a \$1.5 million dress from 2,009 peacock feathers.

The factory in Nanjing, Jiangsu province, said the dress also includes a bodice featuring brocade and Suzhou embroidery, the Daily Mail reported Monday.

Male peacocks each shed an average 200 feathers during an average year, meaning the makers of the dress would have needed to collect dropped feathers from more than 10 birds for a year to gather enough for the gown, the British newspaper said.



## Save rhino drive down the drain

**Pragati Shahi**

KATHMANDU, April 1 - Just two days ago, poachers critically injured a rhino inside Chitwan National Park. Officials say the rhino has received two bullets on its head and can die anytime. The vets are helpless as they don't have the technology to extract the bullets from the rhino.

Nepal's one horned rhino is under threat if the latest figures on poaching are anything to go by. Seven rhinos, excluding the latest injured one were found killed by poachers since the latest census in March 2008 in CNP, according to Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC). There were 408 rhinos in March, 2008. Similarly, two rhinos were found killed and their horns and hooves extracted in Bardiya National Park (BNP) after March 2008.

Despite "concerted efforts" rhino poaching continues in Nepal. "The park area is large and security personnel are few," says Narendra Babu Pradhan, chief conservation officer at CNP, while commenting on continued poaching of rhinos in Nepal. He argues that conservation efforts have gone down the drain due to lack of resources at the parks. According to him, there are only four well equipped vehicles in CNP for patrolling 932 square kilometres and the buffer-zone covering 750 square kilometres. The government's decision to restrict armed security force from patrolling the buffer-zone has also contributed to increased poaching, according to him. Out of a total of seven rhinos killed in CNP, four were found dead inside the buffer zone. Likewise both rhinos in Bardiya were killed inside the buffer zone. The traditional poaching strategy has changed. Now, they prefer more sophisticated weapons like SLR guns. Diwakar Chapagain, wildlife trade manager of World Wildlife Fund (WWF) says the unchanged conservation strategy is now the major hurdle in rhino conservation.

## Poachers, smugglers get political protection

**Nepalgunj, April 4**

A special mobile team, formed some three months ago to minimise the increasing threat of poaching of wild animals and wood smuggling from the forests of Banke, Bardiya and Dang, has failed to work effectively as poachers and smugglers have received political protection. The poachers and smugglers have also taken

advantage of transitional period during when the nation has experienced failure in the effective enforcement of the rules and regulation. The special mobile team has stated that they are unable to achieve progress as they have expected in mitigating poaching and wood smuggling due to political intervention and protection to the smugglers, regular strikes and protests called by different political and other groups.

District Forest Office of Banke, Bardiya and Dang have jointly been carrying out the special mobile campaign from January 29. "We are unable to work properly due to high political pressure along with the early release of wood smugglers from the jail," said one of the district forest employees requesting anonymity. "No sooner we arrest the smugglers, politically affiliated leaders give us order to release them," the employee said. A total of about 30 forest officers and staffs have been deployed to control the increasing threats of wood smuggling and poaching.

The campaign, which has been carried out on the decision of Regional Forest Directorate, will continue till mid-August. The staffs remained busy keeping themselves mobile round the clock at the East-West Highway that runs through Banke, Bardiya and Dang districts and round the forest area situated at the districts. The mobile team is currently at Bardiya district. Ram Hari Sedai, assistant forest officer, however, said that they were not facing any such problems and difficulties from the political leaders. Sedai said that the frequent protests and bandh have affected them. "The Tharuhat movement organised some two weeks ago affected us badly," Sedai said.

## Rhino deaths unabated

**Binod Tripathi**

CHITWAN, April 20 - At least 13 one-horned rhinos have died in the last one year inside Chitwan National Park (CNP), all thanks to the government's failure to avail needful resources to forest officials combat the problem. According to information provided by CNP, seven rhinos were killed by poachers and six others died of natural causes. It is believed that the government's failure to deploy essential staff for patrolling, increase check posts and reluctance to upgrade security measures have resulted in the rise in deaths of rhinos in the recent past.

The Park officials said that special package programmes have been added to curb poaching.



However, an official conceded that they have been facing increasing challenges in recent times to save the rhinos from poachers, particularly since the time of last census taken in March-April. CNP has also organised a week-long 'Save Rhinos Campaign' from April 14 on the sidelines of 14th Wildlife Week being celebrated here. CNP officials flayed the concerned department for failing to recruit adequate staff and continuing to ignore the importance of setting up more check posts.

Though the Park has been divided into four sectors to provide security, there has been a huge crunch in manpower to carry out patrolling. "The govt. bureaucracy should be strong to make the security system effective," said Ana Nath Baral, Assistant Conservation Officer of CNP, adding, "The Park should not be used to meet certain people's personal interests. Everyone should realize the importance of wildlife conservation and should make all efforts to conserve wildlife viewing this as their own responsibility." 1,100 security personnel, including security personnel from the Gorakhnath Battalion of Nepal Army have been deployed in the CNP area. There were 408 rhinos in the CNP area during the last census. However, the Park officials are highly skeptical about their ability to do anything to enhance the rhino numbers in the coming days.

## Water scarcity in Parsa wildlife reserve

*Diwakar Bhandari*

**PATHLAIYA** : The effects of global warming is being felt everywhere and the wildlife at the Parsa Wildlife Reserve are the latest to be hit. With natural sources of water drying in the reserve, the wild beasts have started moving towards nearby human settlements to quench their thirst. In a bid to stop wild animals from going to human settlement, the Parsa Wildlife Reserve has started supplying water in the jungle from tankers. "We started supplying water from the tankers after the animals started going to nearby villages to quench their thirst," Tulsiram Sharma, chief conservation officer at the reserve said. He also said they had been refilling ponds inside the reserve three times a week through tankers. According to officials at the reserve, the chances of attack against the animals are high when they come out of the reserve. "They might be targeted by villagers and might also fall into accidents while crossing roads," they added. The reserve has constructed an artificial pond near a grassland, which stretches across 40 bighas of land, so that the animals do not have to go to human settlements in search of water. Different species of deer, boar and blue bull graze in the grassland, the reserve officials said. The reserve is home to over 300 species of wildlife and birds. The reserve occupies parts of Chitwan, Makwanpur, Parsa and Bara districts in central Nepal.

## 40,000-yr elephant footprint in Valley

*Dev Kumar Sunuwar*

**KATHMANDU, April 1** - A team of geologists and sedimentologists from Japan and Tribhuvan University (TU) have discovered 40,000 and 24,000 years old footprints of elephants respectively on two separate soil sediments in Kathmandu Valley.

These two finds suggest that elephants lived in the Valley in those ages, according to geologists. "To our knowledge, nobody has found such imprints on soil sediments that old anywhere else in the world," said Dr. Tetsuya Sakai, Sedimentologist from Shimane University in Japan. He also said that in the research period along sand-mining areas in Thimi and Gokarna, many strange deformations of elephant footprints and toed-ungulates (having hooves) were found and we could scientifically infer that elephant treadings had caused the deformations. The age of the footprints and sediments were measured with carbon dating, an international instrument for measuring the age of soil. Japanese geologists, ecologists and sedimentologist, in collaboration with geologists of TU, have been regularly conducting research on geological, cultural and natural landscapes and topography of Kathmandu Valley since 1998. However, the footprints in the Valley were this time discovered by a team comprising Prof. B.N. Upreti and Ananta Prasad Gajurel from Geology Department at Tri Chandra Campus, TU; and Dr. Tetsuya Sakai, from Shimane University in Japan and Dr. Hideo Tabata from Gifu Academy of Forest Science and Culture in Japan.

"We had never seen anything like this anywhere during our research in any part of the country including Kathmandu Valley," said Dr. Hideo Tabata. Adding that they needed animal fossils for more evidence for further confirmation of their interpretation, he said, "We are very sure that these evidences can be found on the soil sediments around sand-mining areas." "Therefore we urge sand mine workers to contact us if they find fossils, namely bones and teeth without breaking the site of the finding," he added. "These are treasures of Nepal and they need to be further conserved in museums, instead of destroying or letting them go unnoticed."

He also said he is socked by the fast pace of development activities in the Valley, which are destroying the historical, cultural and natural landscapes in such a way that Nepal can never recover its lost greenery and healthy treasures.



## After north, poachers target tigers in the south

**Gyan Varma**

**Monday, April 6, 2009 23:21 IST**

New Delhi: After wiping out the tiger population in northern India, poachers have headed south. The happy hunting grounds: tiger reserves in Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala.

On Monday, forest officials recovered the skin of a tiger and a leopard in the jungles of Tamil Nadu. Subsequently, four poachers and their local contacts were arrested from Dindigul district. Forest officials said they were tracking the poachers for the past six months.

“Poachers are becoming active in south India because forest officials in north Indian reserves are breathing down their necks. So, we were keeping constant tabs on their movements to ensure that they do not succeed in their games,” a senior wildlife official said.

Sources said reserves at Bandipore (Karnataka), Madhumalai (Tamil Nadu) and Peryar (Kerala) are being targeted by poachers. “The three tiger reserves have a considerable population of tigers and leopard which has attracted the poachers,” said the source.

Senior officials said the skin of 16 tigers and 31 leopards were seized across India last year. They were meant to be smuggled outside the country by poachers. The poachers were allegedly offered Rs6 lakh for each tiger and Rs2 lakh for each leopard.

## Tiger, leopard skins seized in Tamil Nadu

**April 6th, 2009**

Dindigul (Tamil Nadu), April 6 (IANS) Skins of a tiger and a leopard have been seized from three people by forest officials here.

“The skins were seized from three wildlife traders in a joint operation carried out by the Tamil Nadu forest department and Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB) Sunday,” Wildlife Trust of India, an NGO, said in a statement Monday.

All three accused have been arrested, said the NGO, which tipped-off the authorities about their activities.

The accused were nabbed when they arrived at a designated spot to deliver the contraband to a decoy customer.

The accused reportedly attacked the forest officials on realising that the deal was a trap. One of the officers received minor injury in the incident.

The entire operation involved months of surveillance. The traders were contacted through a decoy customer, the NGO said.

“As per our records, at least 16 tiger and 31 leopard skins were seized across India last year. The seizures have continued this year as well, which is an indicator that tigers and leopards are being poached from the wild,” Ashok Kumar, vice-chairman, WTI, said in the statement.

## Tussle over tusks

*Wildlife conservationists raise concern over an Environment Ministry decision to give away tusks collected at the Wildlife Conservation Department*

**Malaka Rodrigo**

During a voyage to Serendib, Sinbad the Sailor is said to have discovered an ancient elephant graveyard, full of elephant tusks. That maybe fictitious, but the Department of Wildlife Conservation (DWC)'s store today resembles a modern elephant graveyard as all the tusks belonging to elephants who die in the wild are kept here.

These tusks are now to be given away on a decision taken by the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources and the first pair of tusks was donated to the President recently.

The decision to give away the tusks has caused some controversy among conservationists with many of the view that this will strengthen the idea of considering elephant tusks as a status symbol.

“This is not a good example set by the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources. It may be true these tusks were from a dead elephant that was not killed for its tusks. But this promotes elephant tusks as a symbol of status,” said one environmentalist who wanted to remain anonymous.



All those who can afford them may want to have a pair of tusks to show their status, and the market for ivory will again be renewed, thus indirectly leading to illegal methods being used to acquire the tusks, it is feared.

Elephants have always been part of our culture and tusks too play a vital role points out Environment Minister Patali Champika Ranawaka who told The Sunday Times there was nothing wrong in donating these tusks that were left in the DWC stores. These tusks that are gathering dust in DWC will now be getting due recognition. "It is a national wealth that shouldn't be left hidden in the stores. We haven't done anything wrong by donating tusks to the state," said the Minister. It is only some activists who could not find fault with the Environment Ministry who are trying to make the donation of tusks a means to criticize the ministry, he says.

If the tusks that were with the DWC shouldn't be given out, should they be destroyed? This was an issue debated by elephant activists in other parts of the world too. Africa is home to the other species of elephant, that are directly hunted for their tusks. Both male and female African elephants have tusks bigger than that of the Asian Elephants. In 1989, the Kenyan Wildlife Conservation Department had taken a landmark decision to destroy all the ivory piled up in their stores weighing 12 tons. These could have earned a fortune to Kenya, but they burned all their stock under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Flora and Fauna (CITES). Zambia too followed suit in 1992. It was a brave stand, to show that ivory has no price.

But another group in Africa counter-argued that in a region where people are struggling economically, the precious ivory shouldn't be collecting dust in warehouses. Why not sell the tusks and channel the funds back into conservation? With increased demand for ivory from East-Asian countries, subsequently Botswana, Namibia, and Zimbabwe, were permitted to trade limited amount by CITES. The debate continues, as this week the international media reported the seizure of £20m worth of illegal ivory in south-east Asia, including the third largest haul of elephant tusks on record. Conservationists claim that the decision to allow the sale of ivory to China and Japan could be the reason fuelling a rise in smuggling. They argue that the marketing systems provide loopholes through which poached ivory can enter the legal trade. The report pointed out that about 37,000 African elephants are killed by poachers each year.

Sri Lanka's problem with ivory is always different. The ivory trade was banned in Sri Lanka in the 1970s, so nobody can keep anything made out of ivory without having a permit. But here in Sri Lanka,

poaching for ivory alone is not done like in the African countries. Only 11% of male Asian elephants (*Elephas maximus*) have tusks. If we assume there are about 4000 elephants in Sri Lanka and the numbers of male elephants are half the number, then the tuskers living in the wildernesses are estimated at around 40-70. This is indeed an alarming situation, if poaching specifically for tusks is done. But they are more likely to fall victim to the human elephant conflict. During the past two years, a few majestic tuskers have been killed and the DWC's stockpile amounts to about 30 pairs of tusks.

Prof. Charles Santhiapillai's research into the ivory trade in Sri Lanka in 1999 revealed that the ivory trade was centred in Galle at that time. Ivory carving was popular and done by a group of craftsmen based there. The craftsmen claimed they were using the stocks they had before ivory became an illegal commodity. But Prof. Santhiapillai believes this craft is not practised anymore due to the lack of ivory or it having gone underground. He also points out that the more serious threat, facing the Sri Lankan elephant is the human elephant conflict.

There is no doubt that the remaining few tuskers are a national treasure. What is important is to protect them when they are alive, rather than later debate what should be done with their tusks.

## Tiger pugmarks seen at 10,000 feet

**2 Apr 2009,**

GANGTOK: Pugmarks of a Royal Bengal Tiger have been found in the snow at an altitude of 10,000 feet in the Himalayas near Jeleppla in eastern Sikkim after a gap of nearly 18 years, officials said.

Officials called it a rare discovery, since tigers are usually found in the plains and almost never above 6,000 feet. The latest pugmarks were photographed March 27 in the Ganek-Lungto area in eastern Sikkim, Divisional Forest Officer (Wildlife) Karma Legshey said.

Tiger pugmarks were last officially recorded at this altitude in Sikkim some 18 years ago, by then divisional forest officer Tshesum Lachungpa. Legshey said forest officials were on a routine patrol when they found the pugmarks on the snow in the northeastern part of the Pangolakha Wildlife Sanctuary in Sikkim. The team then recorded the altitude of the pugmark site using the Global Positioning System. They also measured the pugmarks and photographed it, he added. "The pugmarks measure 19 cm long and 17 cm wide with a stride of around 110 cm," Legshey said, adding that a subsequent study confirmed the pugmarks as being those of a Royal Bengal Tiger. He added that the trail of around 70 metres (of the animal's track) resembled that of a tiger on a "normal walk". The team then followed the track from Ganek to Devithan from where the terrain became too steep to follow.



"After making necessary arrangements at the site, we came down to Zuluk from where it was possible to catch the mobile telecom network and informed our superiors of our find. Immediately, a team from WWF-India, Sikkim Programme Office, led by Partho Ghosh, a tiger expert, left for the site and conducted necessary studies on the spot," Legshey said. "After interviews with local residents and senior officials, it was presumed that the animal is a female," he added. The residents in the area heard tiger roars in the past and also came across carcasses of yaks and goats killed by the animal, Legshey said. He said the tiger might have crossed into Sikkim from Bhutan through the Pangolakha Wildlife Sanctuary, which is a forest extending into the neighbouring country. Currently, a team of forest officials is camping at Zuluk to monitor and alert the villagers, police and defence personnel about the probable presence of a tiger in their midst. Meanwhile, forest officials have urged the local residents not to harm the animal even if it attacks livestock, and assured appropriate compensation in case of an attack. Tigers have been reported to prowl in the forests of Lachen and Lachung in northern Sikkim at an altitude above 8,000 feet, but sightings have been rare.

## Bangladesh hosts 6,000 rare dolphins: Study

**1 Apr 2009,**

DHAKA, Bangladesh: Thousands of rare dolphins have been found in Bangladeshi waters, a wildlife advocacy group said Wednesday, with a warning that the mammals are threatened by climate change and fishing nets. Nearly 6,000 Irrawaddy dolphins, which are related to orcas or killer whales, were found living in freshwater regions of Bangladesh's Sundarbans mangrove forest and the adjacent waters of the Bay of Bengal, the New York-based Wildlife Conservation Society said. Prior to this study, which the Wildlife Conservation Society news release said used rigorous scientific techniques, the largest known populations of Irrawaddy dolphins numbered in the low hundreds or less. The news release did not say when the study was conducted but Bangladeshi researchers in the team said it was launched in 2004. "This discovery gives us great hope that there is a future for Irrawaddy dolphins," said Brian D. Smith, the study's lead author. "Bangladesh clearly serves as an important sanctuary for Irrawaddy dolphins, and conservation in this region should be a top priority." Ainun Nishat, the Bangladesh head of International Union for Conservation of Nature, said the finding was an indication that "ecology in the area is not dead yet."

"There is plenty of food, mainly fish, in the area for the dolphins to eat," said Nishat, who was not involved in the study. "What is now needed is to restrict fishing in the area to protect the dolphins." The study also warned that the dolphins are becoming increasingly

threatened by accidental entanglement in fishing nets. During the study, researchers encountered two dolphins that had become entangled and subsequently drowned in fishing nets, a common occurrence, according to local fishermen. Rising sea levels caused by climate change also threaten the freshwater dolphins, the researchers said. Scientists do not know how many Irrawaddy dolphins remain. In 2008, they were listed as vulnerable in the International Union of Conservation of Nature's Red List based on population declines in known populations, according to the news release. The Irrawaddy dolphin grows to up to 8 feet (2.5 meters) in length and frequents large rivers, estuaries, and freshwater lagoons in south and southeast Asia.

The results of the study were made public Wednesday at the First International Conference on Marine Mammal Protected Areas in Maui, Hawaii. Wildlife Conservation Society has asked Bangladesh authorities to establish a sanctuary for the dolphins in the Sundarbans mangrove forest. "The sanctuary may take time," said Mohammad Jalilur Rahman, an official at the state-run Bangladesh Fisheries Research Institute. "But we are already motivating the fishermen not to harm the dolphins which get entangled in their nets."

## Reduce human populations to protect wildlife: Attenborough

**13 Apr 2009,**

LONDON: Sir David Attenborough, a prominent British broadcaster, has stressed on the need to reduce the number of people on Earth to protect wildlife in the future. According to a report by BBC News, Attenborough has become in a line of patrons of a group seeking to cut the growth in human population. On joining the Optimum Population Trust, he said that growth in human numbers was "frightening". In a statement issued by the Optimum Population Trust, he is quoted as saying, "I've never seen a problem that wouldn't be easier to solve with fewer people, or harder, and ultimately impossible, with more." Attenborough, one of the BBC's longest-standing presenters, has been making documentaries on the natural world and conservation for more than half a century. The Trust, which accuses governments and green groups of observing a taboo on the topic, say they are delighted to have Sir David as a patron. Founded in 1991, the trust campaigns for the UK population to decrease voluntarily by not less than 0.25% a year. It has launched a "Stop at Two" online pledge to encourage couples to limit their family's size. Other patrons include Jonathan Porritt, chairman of the UK Sustainable Development Commission, and Dame Jane Goodall, founder of the Jane Goodall institute.



## In defence of the Red List

# Don't knock the list

*The Red List is not perfect but it is still hugely valuable, say*  
Jeff McNeely, Simon Stuart, Jane Smart and Jean-Christophe Vié

The IUCN's Red List of Threatened Species is widely recognised as one of the best tools we have for guiding nature conservation. It is widely used to identify species in need of conservation measures and sites of crucial importance for biodiversity, and also to track progress on reducing biodiversity loss and to guide resource allocation. It is not perfect and no stranger to criticism, most recently in the pages of this magazine, where it was described as "unscientific and frequently wrong" (New Scientist, 14 March, p8). This is wide of the mark.

The first IUCN Red Data Book was published in 1963 as an essentially subjective list of extinction risks. Over the past 45 years it has evolved considerably. It is no longer simply a register of species and their level of risk, but a rich compendium of information on where species live, their ecological requirements, the threats they face and the conservation actions that can be used to prevent them becoming extinct. It also covers common species, not just endangered ones.

As such, the Red List helps to answer many important questions. What is the overall status of biodiversity and how is it changing over time? What is the rate at which biodiversity is being lost? Where is biodiversity being lost most rapidly? What are the main drivers of the loss of biodiversity? What is the effectiveness and impact of conservation activities?

While we at IUCN welcome constructive criticism, we are exasperated by critics who fail to recognise the steady improvements IUCN has been making in trying to present an objective picture of the conservation status of species worldwide, as well as helping to ensure that biodiversity loss is recognised as a crucial issue at the highest political levels. In recent years, a large number of articles have been published in the scientific literature championing the Red List's merits (for example *Trends in Ecology & Evolution*, vol 21, p 71). No other conservation tool can claim the same level of rigour, the same degree of transparency and the same amount of debate and consultation. It is important to note that the Red List is one of the very few biodiversity indices, if not the only one, for which the methodology has been published in a peer-reviewed scientific journal (PLoS ONE, vol 2, p140).

One oft-repeated criticism is that the list is excessively cautious because it assigns too many species to a category labelled "data deficient", meaning there is not enough information to assess conservation status. This is a weak

argument. Rather than rushing to a judgement based on poor data, we highlight those species that need more research before an objective decision can be made.

Handling uncertainty in a structured way is not common practice in the conservation world, but this is what the Red List does. Given the magnitude of the extinction crisis there is a need to provide sound advice to decisionmakers who are pressing scientists to inform them about the state of biodiversity.

Similarly, we have heard arguments faulting the Red List for assigning extinction risk based on how fast a species is declining, rather than on absolute numbers. While this can lead to species such as the green turtle being listed as endangered when there are still more than 2 million individuals, criticising it on these grounds is misleading. Decline is a key indicator of extinction risk. As many conservation experts can attest, there are numerous instances of formerly abundant species declining to extremely low levels very rapidly – think of American bison and passenger pigeons in the past and, more recently, Asian vultures and Saiga antelope.

Both these criticisms were addressed in a major paper that appeared in *Conservation Biology* last year (vol 22, p 1424). It was disappointing to see *New Scientist* repeating them without reference to that paper.

One criticism in the article was new even to us: that the Red List diverts resources away from species that really need them. This argument is baseless. It is like accusing humanitarian organisations of putting children in Eritrea at risk because they are publishing a report on Darfur.

Of course the Red List is open to improvement. IUCN regularly convenes a group of respected scientists to review and refine the system, and its guidelines are constantly updated to reflect the latest scientific thinking and insights. One important issue this group is working on at the moment is how to integrate climate change into the listing process. Our preliminary results show that a large number of species that do not currently appear as threatened on the Red List are susceptible to climate change.

The Red List remains the most accurate tool for measuring the state of species. The fact that it is based on the work of more than 7000 scientists does not mean it is "cobbled together". It makes it richer, with an unparalleled reach. Yes, it is open to debate and



challenge, but the diversity of the sources it draws on makes it unique and irreplaceable. There are countless examples showing that, where used properly, it can be deployed to develop conservation programmes that have enormous benefits.

It is extremely difficult to raise awareness among decisionmakers about the crucial importance of giving attention to all life forms on our planet. Everybody in the conservation movement wants biodiversity to receive the same level of attention as climate change, but this

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## Laos emerges ...

plantations, while hillsides have been burned for sticky rice cultivation. The money comes from Chinese business owners who not only provide finance, but sell snares and traps and place orders for fresh wildlife, guaranteeing a market for hunters and smugglers.

The situation deteriorated to such an extent that in 2005 the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) scaled back its project in Nam Ha National Protected Area, the largest nature reserve in the country at the time. Wildlife is commonly sold along the corridor, especially near the Chinese border. But other than dead animals in markets, I saw little evidence of animals and birds along the corridor — or, for that matter, in most of Laos.

In eastern Laos, the Vietnamese are the main financiers of new roads intended to facilitate access to Laos' resources; wildlife comes as a bonus. In Laos, like other countries, there is a strong synergism between road building and the wildlife trade. Loggers supplement their income with hunting and use logging trucks to transport bushmeat to traders and urban markets.

Extractive industries like logging and mining also actively encourage human settlement, boosting demand for game as a source of protein. Cash-rich workers can afford to buy weapons, snares, headlamps, and outboard motors to speed wildlife depletion, especially in regions where arms are widely available. A study, soon to be published in the journal *Conservation Letters*, found pervasiveness of firearms to be a key contributing factor to Laos' precipitous drop in wildlife.

For poachers, the tiger is the crown jewel. But tigers in Laos and other countries also face a secondary threat — depletion of prey populations from unsustainable hunting, making it difficult for tigers to survive in what would otherwise be suitable habitat and pushing them into conflict with humans. Hunters are using livestock to bait tigers; the loss of a cow is a small price to pay for catching a big cat. Sometimes a cow or a pig is slaughtered, dragged into the forest, and wired with snares or explosives so that a tiger lured by an easy meal is quickly converted into a pharmacological product.

is no easy task. The Red List, thanks to its objectivity and high standards, is one of the very few tools that could allow this to happen.

*Jeff McNeely is chief scientist of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). Simon Stuart is chair of IUCN's species survival commission. Jane Smart is head of IUCN's biodiversity conservation group. Jean-Christophe Vié is deputy head of IUCN's species programme. We will be publishing a selection of letters on the IUCN Red List in next week's issue.*

Pangolins — scaly anteaters believed to cure blood circulation problems and skin conditions — are also highly prized. While commercial international trade in pangolins is banned under CITES (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora), pangolins have been extinguished from much of Laos by poachers. The extent of the pangolin trade in Southeast Asia remains enormous. TRAFFIC, a wildlife trade-monitoring network, recently estimated that at least 100,000 pangolins — mostly from Malaysia and Indonesia — are killed each year to meet Chinese demand.

More than 25 tons of pangolin parts have been seized in Vietnam in the last year alone, but the enforcement action demonstrated one of the major challenges facing those working to control the trade. Instead of destroying the pangolins, the Vietnamese government auctioned off the contraband, thus allowing the wildlife products to ultimately reach their intended destination. "Selling off the seized pangolins sent out entirely the wrong message," said Sulma Warne, TRAFFIC's Greater Mekong program coordinator.

Mixed signals from the government are not unusual. Reports from the Environmental Investigation Agency, TRAFFIC, and WildAid have cited complicity of authorities across Southeast Asia in the wildlife trade. Cross-border trade of large volumes of wildlife necessitates collaboration between traffickers and officials. Border agents in Laos and Thailand are known to impose a "tax" on wildlife products, regardless of their origin or legality. Those who run the trade tend to be influential, often with ties to corrupt government officials or the military, and don't limit themselves to wildlife; investigations have turned up links to other illicit trade, including weapons, drugs, and people.

Some charged with carrying out the law act with impunity; forest rangers sometimes cite access to fresh meat as a chief benefit of a field assignment, according to Sarinda Singh, a University of Queensland researcher

*Cont. page 19 ►►*



# Conservation LEADER

Ramprit Yadav

It was hard to believe then, when Ramprit Yadav, who used to be scared even by listening to the names of tiger and bear, would devote his life to their conservation in the future. At that time Ramprit didn't love wildlife very much. However, the time changed later. Later in his life, Ramprit became a senior conservationist and protector of wildlife.

Ramprit Yadav, who initially was deployed for forest conservation in 2029 BS, eventually entered the campaign of Karn Shakyu, whose campaign was meant for wildlife conservation. His entry to this campaign never reversed back. During that period, Royal Chitwan National Park was in the process of being established. He began working as an Assistant Warden in the park. On his career life, he has served as Assistant Warden and Warden of the park several times.

Ramprit Yadav has traveled to different countries. However, he becomes happy only inside the jungle. He has been working inside the jungle for the last 30 years. He used to celebrate Dashain and Tihar inside the jungle in the company of these animals. He has a distinct vision on the aspect of wildlife which is clearly observed while interacting with him. He shares his experience of a sudden encounter with a tiger: "suddenly a tiger encountered me in a jungle. I was alone there and so the tiger was; and I was scared and my whole body trembled. As there was no alternative for me, I constantly gazed at the tiger. After some time, the tiger took its own course. I was quite surprised to observe the generosity of the tiger. Since then, I am respecting the tiger and came to know there is no one else as generous as the tiger."

Such types of respected tigers are growing in Chitwan jungle rapidly. Similarly, the numbers of rhinoceros are increasing there. Herds of elephants are also increasing. Ramprit becomes happy about it. He further tells that the progress in the number of animals is a matter of satisfaction for him.

It was not easy to conserve wildlife in Chitwan initially. For this, wildlife lovers like Ramprit had to suffer so much. Local people were not in favor of declaring a national park in Chitwan during 2027 BS. People became surprised and did not believe when he used to tell that the jungle is to be made a wildlife conservation area. Similarly, they used to protest about this concept. Villagers pelted stones on forest guards on their heads, who were supposed to be for grazing control inside the forest. Later, an act was promulgated. Only an act did not work and provision was made to punish if someone killed wild animals. Slowly, improvement began.

In the field of conservation, he is a respected fellow for many people. He is very hardworking and even some people who consider him as a hardworker become ashamed when they observe Ramprit's work. Recognizing his commitment, Ramprit Yadav was awarded the Global 500 award. He is a smart player of elephant polo and has been a winner of its championship three times.

He is still generous, similar to a tiger, even in his sixties, probably due to his long-time friendship with tigers and rhinoceros. Contemporary and co-workers observe him as generous and easy-going. His friends and co-workers also share his saying while in an excited mood: "without wildlife there is no life".



## King as Warden ...

level officers. At this time, local politicians and Members of Parliament (MPs), would wait outside the park boundaries in hopes of an audience with the king. What emerges from narratives of these royal hunts was that these were highly festive, yet disciplined and controlled events. At the present time it is difficult to imagine these royal visits since park headquarters are typically devoid of people (there are only some park officials and a few tourists). But prior to 1990 during these royal visits there would be: generals, secretaries, and tent workers. Over a 1,000 people used to be inside! There were 60–70 tents in the phantas [grasslands]. The army would be around the main tent, around the raja ko durbar [king's tent] and the rani [queen] came every time as well, as did his younger brothers—Gyanendra and Dhirendra.

Feasting on these occasions represented crucial moments in the lives of park staff, especially those at the lower levels. Memories of free food, extra bhthta (allowance) and general excitement is what one game scout from Thumani Post is left with. He remembered a savari he witnessed in the Royal Chitwan National Park:

In savari, there was shikar from the king. Tyas pachi hamilai ramailo anubhav pani hunthiyo [after that, we had happy understanding]. We used to get savari bhthta [royal visit allowance]. That was Rs 10 per day. This was in Bikram samvat 2043 [A.D. 1986]. Wild meat was highly prized, especially the wild fowl for which King Birendra was known to have a special fondness:

Raja loved to eat wild fowl though. He always wanted to have that while here.

We would chase the wild fowl outside the park, since according to law, you cannot kill inside the park boundaries. Palace shikaris would then kill them.

Birendra was depicted as contemplative, needing peace and quiet. When he entertained, it was in a very disciplined manner. The visits to the park were part of his royal touring duties, but it was also a time for ramailo or enjoyment: It was all shanti [peace]. There was no noise. Drinking was only one time in the evenings. The camp was very disciplined. No loud voices. It was very peaceful. And this was despite there being over 1,000 people. The only noise we heard was that of vehicles. Cameras were not allowed. Outsiders were not allowed. The only hustle and bustle we heard was from the army and that was before the king arrived. Morning to night, the programme was very, very tight. During the king's visit, we'd be up by 4 A.M. None knew which chetra [area] the king would visit that day.

## Hunting Quotas

Besides wanting peace and quiet, the royals came to the parks to hunt. The park staff understand that hunting for mere pleasure is unacceptable in today's environmental context. Their recollections of the hunt (actual numbers of kill) vary. According to a senior park official, during Birendra's time: before the king hunted, a committee with representatives from the palace, the department of national parks and others sat down and developed guidelines and quotas for the king, queen and others in the entourage. Certain animals [such as the tiger] were off limits. Once an animal was killed, it was weighed, assessed and all its characteristics were recorded. Then only was the animal taken from the shooting site and brought back to the camping grounds. People used to think: raja aayo, raja le sabai marne paucha [the king has come, the king can kill everything] but that was simply untrue. Actually, what the king came for was to observe, to do research. The niyam [rule] in the days was that you couldn't kill tiger. Only deer, neelgai [black buck], and wild boar were allowed. Tigers, leopards, and females could not be killed. The king was seen as a natural conservationist with much affection for wildlife.

When park staff was asked why the king hunted, they vaguely said it was because of some hard-to-specify sense of duty. The answers were generally that 'it was a ritual', 'an old habit', or 'it was manoranjan' (for fun). Several officers from the group claimed the king would kill only old deer. When asked why the king did not hunt to his heart's content, a retired official said, 'Maybe the king did not want to bring bajjati [shame] upon himself. This is why the samiti [referring to the palace wildlife committee] decided how much [the] raja would hunt.'

John MacKenzie (1988) writes of how British officials in colonial India followed an unwritten code of honour that included not killing pregnant females. In a similar manner, Nepali park officials construct Nepali royalty as fair-minded individuals who loved wildlife and who hunted out of duty. But since royalty were part of the meeting to decide on hunting quotas, it is difficult to imagine how park officials could contest the suggestions made by the royals. Instead, these were valuable opportunities for park staff to ingratiate favours with the palace by insisting on a generous quota. But some park officials choose to not narrate history in this way. A retired Bardia park official recalls:

The committee always worked with sano awaj [small noise, meaning without quibbling]; and that in fact, Prince Gyanendra<sup>21</sup> [who would also sit in on these meetings] would always cut down on quotas even if others raised it. There was no chakri [pleasing, currying favours] involved. Everyone was samajdari manche [mature men]. Raja's



family themselves would say you can't kill too much. But others remember a less favourable outcome for wildlife. A retired warden recalled that in the year after the Bardia National Park was established in 1976, there was a palace hunt and during this expedition the king's uncles (Princes Basundhara and Himalaya) had arrived with the king to do shikar: There were bail nimmis [quotas] of who would kill, and how much. The royal entourage asked me about it but I didn't know how these things worked so I asked Hemanta Mishra [a prominent wildlife specialist]. There wasn't much shikar that year but in the following year, Lava Raja [an uncle] showed a photo to the king to prove to him how much the herd had increased. This was the only such photograph from those times and it was to persuade the king to come back [for hunting]. It turns out that if the king did not deplete his hunting quota then the raja ko mamas' (uncles on the maternal side) were entitled to the remaining quota. According to the park staff, they could only draw on the king's quota after he

had departed. Perhaps it was to dissociate himself from the killings that would be in keeping with King Birendra's ambivalent feelings towards the hunt. But since these quotas expired after a few days, the king would give hukum (permission, order) to his uncles to hunt.

Opinions vary on how the stewards of wildlife and national parks understood these hunts. Some felt the king understandably needed to release tension, but others would say the hunt occurred precisely because he loved wildlife. It was the king's way of 'conducting research'. When rangers were asked to elaborate on this point, they gave examples such as: Why, the king would climb onto a machan [tower house] and then have park staff gherao [surround] a tiger on all sides with a white sheet just so he could observe the animal to his heart's content. Why else would he do that unless he needed to study the tiger?

*to be continued...*

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## Laos emerges ...

who conducted an assessment of wildlife trade in Laos.

In many parts of Southeast Asia, depletion of rare species has only increased their value, encouraging hunting down to every last individual in some cases. The result: Many areas now suffer from "empty forest syndrome," where wildlife densities are too low to support people or predators like tigers.

Addressing the wildlife trade means attacking on two fronts: supply and demand. Reducing demand for wildlife products in consuming countries is a critical component to this effort. "Wildlife trade won't end until people stop buying," said Troy Hansel, who works in wildlife trade monitoring for the WCS in Laos.

The supply side is more complex. Trade restrictions eliminate a source of income for the rural poor. So in Laos WCS is taking a multi-pronged approach to dealing with the wildlife trade. In addition to working with the government to clarify laws and strengthen enforcement through training of wildlife authorities and customs agents, WCS has established a comprehensive program in local communities to explain which animals can be legally hunted and emphasize the consequences of wildlife depletion. The program includes registration of firearms, an informant network funded through collection of fines, and a system of forest stations from which rangers launch patrols into protected areas.

Still, beyond enforcement and education, WCS's Johnson and Hansel believe it is critical to prove to the Lao people that wildlife is valuable as a living entity. The conservationists are planning to launch a small ecotourism project to help create a strong link between wildlife protection and well being of locals around Nam Et-Phou Louey. To date, WCS's efforts seem to be paying off. In parts of Nam Et-Phou Louey where it has conducted its outreach project and has a strong presence, WCS sees changes in wildlife behavior that indicate less hunting pressure, including more birds in villages and wildlife along rivers.

A short foray into the park showed hopeful signs. During a single evening boat trip in Nam Et-Phou Louey, I spotted owls, civets, a pair of otters, and an East Asian porcupine. The day before, rangers even came across tiger tracks.

"Lots of good habitat remains," said Johnson. "The recovery of wildlife populations is possible with proper management."

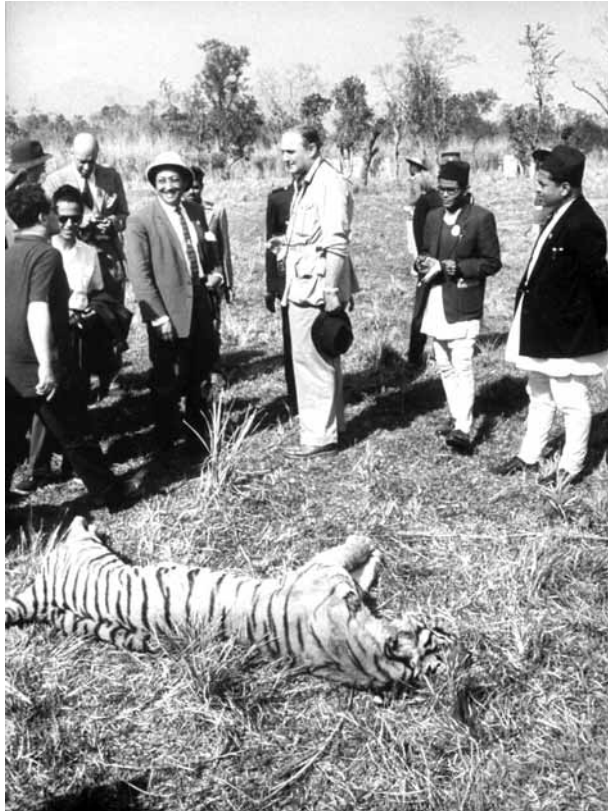
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# Kings as Wardens and Wardens as Kings II

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**The Hunt under King Birendra**

Birendra was less fond of shikar compared to his father. He shot his first tiger in the Royal Chitwan National Park more as a rite of passage (Beinart and Coates 1995, Gregson 2002) than as sport; he never was a big game hunter. But then again, the general period of Birendra's ascendance into kingship (January 1972) coincided with key efforts in the conservation world. In neighbouring India, Project Tiger got under way as Indian princes were putting aside their rifles and turning into big-time conservationists. Mahesh Rangarajan describes how it was only in the Indira Gandhi period (1966–77, 1980–84) that wildlife conservation took centre stage as 'salvaging the wild became critical to a more self-confident notion of nationalism' (2000: 8). In 1973 the tiger was recognised as an endangered species, and in Nepal the new king supported the creation of protected zones, especially under the establishment of the King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation.

Also, in 1973 the National Parks Act was passed (it was revised in 1994 to incorporate revenue sharing provisions generated by parks with local communities). But royal visits to the national park under Birendra continued and

are remembered as some of the most significant events in the careers of national park and wildlife officials in the days of panchayat rule.<sup>18</sup> The elaborate preparations involved in setting up camp provide vivid descriptions of security arrangements, the hierarchy of inclusion and exclusion, the excitement experienced by park staff and, most importantly, the rise of their status during this period. Pleasing monarchs yielded rich results. A royal hukum (command) could result in multiple promotions overnight as it did for several national park officials. This is something that certainly would not happen in post-1990 Nepal. The following description of the preparations for the hunt is by a retired accountant who has been in Bardia since the early days when the park boundaries was being demarcated:

Whenever there was His Majesty's savari, the whole police department came. There used to be chowkis [police posts] in all the borders. This was for security reasons. The army came from Kathmandu. Generals, Colonels, battalions came. Raja ko durbar [the king's tent] used to be set up. They used to bring daura[wood], kila [nails] from outside the jungle. Some took some home. This was all to set up the tents for the Raja. Savaris usually lasted several days. All the sachivs [secretaries] came as well. At that time we felt that Kathmandu was made here. I personally saw four savaris of Birendra sarkar. Sometimes, Himalaya and Basundhara sarkars [the king's uncles] came with him.

A senior ranger from Bardia who has witnessed nine royal hunts recalls how in Birendra's time between sixty to seventy elephants would arrive from as far as Kosi Tappu nature reserve: *Desh bhari ko hatti jamma hunthiyo* [all the country's elephants gathered].

The army was in charge of camp bevastha [arrangements]. Free mess was there for people. National park bhitra army ko duty thiyo, outside, police ko duty thiyo [inside the national parks the army was on duty and outside, the police was on duty].

At the time of these savaris, all attention shifted to the national park officials. Their importance rose in the eyes of all other government officials, as did their sense of self-esteem. A former district forest officer (DFO), now working for the United National Development Programme in Kathmandu, remembered how the estimation of wardens rose in the eyes of other district-

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