



REGIONAL OFFICE FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC (RAP), BANGKOK
FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS

April-June 2007

TIGER PAPER

Regional Quarterly Bulletin on Wildlife and National Parks Management

Vol. XXXIV : No. 2



Featuring

FOREST NEWS

Vol. XXI : No. 2

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TIGERPAPER



REGIONAL OFFICE FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

TIGERPAPER is a quarterly news bulletin dedicated to the exchange of information relating to wildlife and national parks management for the Asia-Pacific Region.

ISSN 1014 - 2789

Address

TIGERPAPER

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Cover: Elephants at sunset
Photo: A. Christy Williams

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Mother with calves (Photo: A. Christy Williams)

THE FEASIBILITY OF USING MARK AND RE-SIGHT METHODS TO ESTIMATE ASIAN ELEPHANT POPULATIONS

by A. Christy Williams

Introduction

An important objective of the three-year study on elephants and their habitats in Rajaji National Park (RNP) was to estimate the size of the elephant population in the study area. Various mark and re-sight methods were tested, using identified males and female groups in the study area. This paper briefly presents the results of the two methods used to test mark and re-sight methods of population estimation. The two methods described below were not carried out

with as equal effort across all of the forest blocks sampled as hoped for; therefore, the estimates have to be taken more as an index rather than as an accurate estimation. However, it is planned to randomize the sampling design in subsequent studies to come up with more reliable estimates. The main purpose of this paper is to illustrate the potential of using mark and re-sight methods of population estimation, where individual elephants can be identified, using natural characteristics, or marked with a radio transmitter.

Study area

The study was carried out in Rajaji National Park, the largest national park in the north Indian state of Uttaranchal. Covering 820 km², RNP is an amalgamation of three sanctuaries, i.e., Rajaji, Chilla and Motichur. Seventy percent of the park consists of hilly terrain and the vegetation is mainly dry, deciduous woodland. The intensive study site for this mark and re-sight survey covered about 100 km² of the Dolkhand and Chillavally forest ranges in the park.

Methods

Most male and female elephants can be identified by distinct morphological characteristics such as cuts, nicks, holes in the ears and the shape and size of the tusks of males. The first year of field work enabled the study team to identify certain individual bulls and female groups either by using naturally occurring marks or by radio collar frequency. A total of 9 individual males and 2 female groups were identified in the intensive study area. Whenever elephants were encountered randomly in the various forest blocks, details such as the sex of the animal and whether they had been marked/identified or were unidentified were noted down. This enabled the construction of a capture frequency distribution.

Results and discussion

Craig du'Feu Method

This is a continuous mark recapture method (Craig, 1953; du Feu, Hounscome and Spence, 1983). Data was analyzed for the period 11 November 1996 to 25 February 1997, because this method assumes a closed population and most animals move into the intensive study area during the winter months (November to March) and move out as the dry season (April to July) approaches.

Each sighting, whether of individual animals or groups, was recorded as one group. A total of 46 such sightings was recorded in the intensive study area, out of which 27 were recaptures. Using this method, the estimated number of groups was 32.06. The 95% Confidence Limit (CL) was 17.1 to 46.8 groups. The average number of elephant sightings was 3.2 animals. This would mean that the

estimated number of elephants in the study area was 103 elephants. The 95% CL gave an estimate of about 55 to 151 elephants using the study area during the sampling period. To test whether the elephants in the study area exhibit equal probability of capture, the observed capture distribution was tested using the G-test to see if it fits a zero-truncated Poisson distribution. The fit was poor ($P < 0.001$), indicating that an equal probability of being captured cannot be assumed. This suggests that the estimate is biased, but it is unclear in which direction. It is our opinion that part of the heterogeneity in capture probabilities was due to the sampling methodology, i.e., efforts in some areas were higher.

Ratio method

In the second method, the ratio of sightings of identified animals to unidentified animals (see Densai, 1987) was calculated for the period April 1996 to April 1997. A total of 66 sightings of elephant groups were recorded during this period. The term "group" is used to include sightings of both individual elephants and female groups. The following data was compiled:

- Total number of female groups encountered = 22
- Total number of female groups that were counted fully = 14 (63.6%)
- Total number of sightings of identified groups = 3 (13.6%)
- Total number of individual animals sighted = 44
- Total number of sightings of individual animals that were identified animals = 28 (63.6%)

We can see from the above data that there is a bias in favor of identifying and counting sightings of individual animals, which are usually males (82% of the sightings [$n=40$] of individual animals). It is more difficult to count or identify female groups in a forested habitat. Another point is that in addition to being easy to count, most (>90%) of the males have tusks which have characteristic individual variations in shape and size and therefore are easy to identify. To adjust for this bias against groups that could not be counted, the study applied the mean group size of 10.1 elephants/female group from fourteen fully counted groups to the eight uncounted groups

and included them in the analyses for the total number of elephants that were encountered. Thus:

- Total number of animals in female groups counted fully = 142
- Total number of animals in female groups after correcting for bias against uncounted groups = $142 + 8 (10.1) = 223$
- Total number of elephants counted (including groups and individuals) = 266
- Total number of animals counted in sightings that were of marked or identified elephants = 45 (17%)

Conclusion

The high proportion of recaptures convinced us that the mark-resight method of population estimation should be an appropriate method if the sampling design is proper and the study period is longer than two years. Six radio-collared elephants (four females and two males) and more than 10 identified adult males should give us fairly robust estimates for a population estimated to be around 250 elephants on the western side of the Ganges. The precision will improve as more and more elephants are identified in the study area. In the future we will use estimators which allow for heterogeneity in capture probabilities, like the ones proposed by Minga and Mantel (1989) and Bowden (1993). We are currently carrying out a sample survey, with equal effort in all the areas surveyed. However, a word of caution is that this method will not give you ecological densities, which is of primary importance in many studies.

Acknowledgements

The study team wishes to thank the Uttaranchal (formerly part of Uttar Pradesh) Forest Department for granting permission to conduct the study. Thanks also to Shri Vinod Rishi, Director, Project Elephant, Dr. R.L. Singh, CCF (WL), UP, and Dr. Ashok Singh, former Addl. PCCF (WL) UP for giving permission to tranquilize and radio collar elephants. We would also like to express our sincere

appreciation for the help extended by Shri Sunil K. Dubey, Director, RNP, and other officers and staff of the park, and acknowledge the continued support we have received from the current park Director, Mr. Girija S. Pande to continue our population monitoring work. The study received financial support for equipment from the Bio-diversity Support Program and the National Wildlife Federation. The US Fish and Wildlife Service is collaborating on this project and providing funding. Finally, the author would like to thank Dr. A.J.T. Johnsingh, Dr. Paul R. Krausman and Dr. S.P. Goyal for their encouragement while he carried out this work as part of his Ph.D. thesis.

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BLUE BULL (*Boselaphus tragocamelus*) IN LUMBINI - A WORLD HERITAGE SITE OF NEPAL

by Achyut Aryal

Introduction

Lumbini is the birth place of Lord Buddha and listed as a World Heritage Site. The Lumbini area covers 7.7 km² and is administered by the Lumbini Development Trust (LDT). Lumbini is one of the prime tourism destinations of Nepal. The trust maintains various Buddhist temples and other historical places at the site.

Nilgai or Blue bull (*Boselaphus tragocamelus*) is one of the largest Asian antelopes found in the Lumbini area of Rupandehi district. The LDT area provides a significant habitat for Blue bull.

The Government of Nepal protects the country's endangered flora and fauna through legislation and there are various animals in the protected lists. Blue bull is an important wildlife species, but is not a protected species. The Government of Nepal has established protected areas for the conservation of endangered flora and fauna. These flora and fauna are being depleted day by day due to over-exploitation, pollution, habitat destruction, poaching and human and livestock pressure in their habitat (HMG/Nepal, 2002). The population of Blue bull has been declining at a higher rate over the last five years in Nepal and therefore, conservation of Blue bull is a national and global concern (Subedi, 2001). The population of Blue bull is declining from the Terai area due to hunting and habitat destruction (HMG/Nepal, 2002; Aryal, 2004), but not enough studies have been carried out to understand the population trends. Only two studies on Blue bull have undertaken in Nepal (Subedi, 2001; Khattri, 1993).

Rupandehi and Kaplivastu districts are potential Blue bull habitats, but no conservation measures have been taken, hence the higher rate of decline in the population of Blue bull (Subedi, 2001). It is

necessary to identify Blue bull habitats and their carrying capacity. If the population exceeds the habitat's carrying capacity, a translocation program should be initiated to move the animals to other suitable places in the country. This will also help to reduce the crop damage caused by Blue bulls that is experienced by local people.

The present study assessed the crop damage and extent of conflict between local people and Blue bulls, determined the carrying capacity of the LDT area for Blue bull and the population status of Blue bull in the LDT area. Developing natural sites where tourists can observe Blue bull and Sarus crane is a possible option, so there is an urgent need to develop an effective action plan for Blue bull conservation and management in the LDT area. A participatory approach conservation plan is needed for wildlife management (John *et al.*, 1995); therefore, this study proposes a participatory action plan for effective management of Blue bull which would support sustainable tourism and contribute to the local economy of the study area.

The findings of this research would be useful not only for the LDT area, but also for the proper management of Blue bull populations in other parts of the country to ensure their long-term survival in their natural habitat.

The objectives of the study were to:

- estimate the population of Blue bull in the Lumbini Development Trust (LDT) area;
- analyze the carrying capacity of the LDT area for the Blue bull population;
- assess the crop damage caused by Blue bulls and the impact on local livelihoods; and
- develop a participatory Blue bull conservation action plan for contributing to the local

economy and sustainable tourism in the Lumbini area.

Study area

The study area covered the LDT area and the surrounding Rupandehi district. Of the 7.7 km² LTD area, after excluding infrastructure and road areas, only 5.14 km² could be considered potential habitat of Blue bull.

Methods

The study was carried out through questionnaires and direct field observations. Crop damage was measured on the basis of questionnaires and direct field observations in the affected areas. Previous available data regarding crop damage and interviews with 142 respondents from the study area were also considered. The transect line count

method was used for the population count (Sale *et al.*, 1988) and the carrying capacity was calculated on the basis of assessments of food, cover and habitat of Blue bull. The Z test was used for testing the Null/alternative hypothesis. The testing was conducted at a 5% level of significance, with a value of 1.96.

Carrying capacity

The carrying capacity (CC) of the area for Blue bull was determined from data collected by the field inventory, based on Alberta (2004). The ecological sustainable stocking rate (ESSR) reflects the maximum number of animals [e.g. (ha)/animal unit month (AUM)] that can be supported by the plant community given the inherent biophysical constraints and the ecological goal of sustainable health and proper functioning of the plant community.

CC-

$$\text{Area (ha) available for Blue bull excluding road, infrastructure, river (A)} \\ \text{ESSR (Ecological Sustainable Stocking Rate).}$$

Where,

$$\text{ESSR} = \frac{\text{Amount of feeding (kg)/blue bull per month}}{\text{Biomass (kg)/ha} * \text{Safe use factor (25-50%)}}$$

Alberta (2004) recommended that utilization levels are generally considered to range between 25 to 50% of total production, depending on the ecological site. These percentages of production use are called *safe use factors*. It is the percentage of the total biomass production of the ecological site that is available for utilization by animals. The safe use factor considers the given inherent biophysical constraints and the ecological goals of sustainable health and proper functioning of the area. The remaining biomass production (carry over) is allocated for ecological maintenance. Recommended safe use values vary according to the ecological site and management. For the study it was calculated as 50 percent.

According to data from the Central Zoo, on a daily average an adult Blue bull needs 14 kg of biomass of palatable species (420 kg per month).

The biomass (kg)/ha is calculated by the weight of the food plant multiplied by the available area

(A). The weight of the food plant was calculated by designing a sample plot (1 m x 1 m) for herbs. Plots measuring 10 m x 10 m were laid out to determine the tree species density (Stromberg, 1995). Simple random sampling was used to determine the biomass of species. Altogether, 42 plots were laid out in the study area. Crown cover and ground cover were also observed. Palatable and unpalatable species were identified with the help of knowledgeable local people and weighed.

Results and discussion

Population status of Blue bull in LDT area

A total of 41 Blue bulls were counted in the LDT area: 10 males, 15 females and 16 juveniles. The population density of Blue bull in the LDT area is 8 individuals/km². The sex ratio of male to female is 2:3.

Population trend

Blue bulls have been recorded in the LDT area since the early 1990s. They are believed to have come from Kakrahawa forest (Indian side), which is approximately 10 km away from the LDT's southern boundary. They followed the path of Kakrahawa forest to Sattabazar Forest and to Kothi river ridge to the LDT area. The initial population was estimated to be around 5-10 individuals. The estimated population had reached nearly 200 in 1997, but this was based on public opinion. According to the local people, the Blue bull population kept increasing until 1999. The increased Blue bull population started to exert tremendous pressure on the adjacent cultivated land, causing crop damage. That situation developed a serious conflict with local farmers. The affected farmers requested the government to control the Blue bulls. In response to this request, five animals were translocated to Banke reserve forest in 1998 (Subedi, 2001). Subedi (2001) counted only 11 Blue bulls in the LDT area, but he used only the Bhairawaha-Taulihawa highway as a transect line and hence fewer animals were counted. According to the local people, during 1998-2000, there was a drastic increase in deaths of Blue bulls, which could have been caused by foot and mouth disease (FMD). Two blood samples were taken during the translocation to Banke forest in 1998, which showed signs of foot and mouth disease (Subedi, 2001). This was not the only the cause of the drastic decline of the Blue bull population; other factors included poisoning, revenge killing by farmers and less available palatable vegetation.

Habitat structure

The LDT area was covered with plantation forest dominated by Sissoo (*Dalbergia sisso*), followed by Saguwan (*Tictona grandis*), Eucalyptus, Jamun (*Eugenia jambolana*), etc.

Seventy-nine percent of the potential habitat of Blue bull is covered by forest and the other 21% is grassland or open land. During the field survey, all Blue bulls were seen in the forest and not in open land. Generally Blue bulls use open grassland for grazing.

Approximately 43% of the study area had dense crown cover (75-100%), 27% had moderate crown cover (50-75%), 14% had sparse crown cover (25-50%) and the remaining 16% had very sparse crown cover.

During the study period most of the ground layer vegetation was dry and covered with litter. Most of the ground layer was covered with grass species (e.g., *Imperata cylindrica* and *Cynodon dactylon*); about 16% of the area had dense ground cover (75-100%), followed by 44% with moderate ground cover, 29% with sparse ground cover and 11% having very sparse ground cover. From October/November to April/May, ground herbs become dry and hence, this is a food deficiency period, during which time the LDT authority totally bans livestock grazing in Blue bull potential habitat.

Carrying capacity (CC)

The carrying capacity for a grazing disposition of a given size represents the maximum number of animals that can be sustained without causing a downward trend or without degrading the resources in their habitat. Suggested ecological sustainable stocking rate (ESSR) values provided in the plant community guide are determined from a combination of clipping studies.

In order to sustain the ecological health and function of the plant community, ESSRs are based on a standardized biomass allocation and forage requirements of one Blue bull unit (i.e., 420 kg/month). (Reference: Central Zoo, Kathmandu, 2005).

The LDT area was divided into two parts to calculate the carrying capacity of Blue bull, which were separated by the Bhairahawa-Taulihawa highway. The northern part of the highway is a potential site for the management of wildlife tourism. The carrying capacity of both sites were calculated.

Palatable species preferred by Blue bull were identified with the help of local knowledgeable persons (e.g., shepherds, villagers). Eleven species of herbs/grasses were found in the study area and out of these, 5 species were found to be

palatable species for Blue bull. These included *Imperata cylindrica* and *Cynodon dactylon*.

There were no branches below 7 feet, so the tree biomass was neglected in the calculation of biomass; dry leaves of trees were calculated as unpalatable species.

The carrying capacity of the LDT area north of the highway was as follows:

- Area (ha) available for Nilgai excluding road, infrastructure, river (A): 220 ha
- Amount of feeding (kg)/blue bull per month: 420 kg dry weight
- Total Biomass (kg)/ha: 682.936 kg (dry weight)
- Palatable species spp dry weight: 204kg/ha
- Safe use factor: 50%
- ESSR: 4.11

$$\text{CC- } \frac{220}{4.11} = 53.5 \text{ (=53) individual}$$

The carrying capacity of the LDT area south of the highway was as follows:

- Area (ha) available for Nilgai excluding road, infrastructure, river (A): 294 ha
- Amount of feeding (kg)/blue bull per month: 420 kg dry weight
- Biomass (kg)/ha: 682.936 kg
- Palatable species spp dry weight: 204kg/ha
- Safe use factor: 50%
- ESSR: 4.11

$$\text{CC- } \frac{294}{4.11} = 71.5 \text{ (72) individual}$$

From the above data, the total carrying capacity of the LDT area for the Blue bull is 125 for October-January; the carrying capacity during the dry season will be less. A detailed biomass study should be conducted to identify the carrying capacity in other seasons. Grazing competition from more than 1,000 livestock also reduces the amount of palatable species available to Blue bulls and has encouraged the introduction of unpalatable species in the area, causing the Blue bull to move to private lands in search of food. If livestock grazing pressure is controlled inside the LDT area, the movement of Blue bulls to private lands will be reduced significantly.

Man-Blue bull conflict

Blue bulls have a direct effect on the local livelihoods of the farmers in lands surrounding the LDT area, as they have always been closely associated with farmlands. Due to the open boundary of the LDT area, Blue bulls frequently visit the farmlands surrounding the LDT area and

destroy large quantities of agricultural crops and vegetables. The area around the LDT was highly affected up to 1 km from the boundary; areas 1-3 km from the LDT suffered medium effects, and areas more than 3 km from the LDT boundary were less affected.

Highly affected VDCs are Tenuhawa, Ekla, Madhuwani and Lumbini Adarsha. A large amount of crop damage has been recorded from Hamamapur, Shivagadiya, Ramawapur, Mahilwar, Padariya, Parsa and some parts of Yakla VDC.

Generally, Blue bull prefers the mature growth stage of different crops (e.g., paddy, maize, mustard, chili, cauliflower, cow-pea, black gram, cabbage, etc), while wheat, potato, radish and pumpkin are preferred in the early stages of growth, and lentils are preferred at all stages. Blue bulls were reported to feed on all the major crops grown in the boundary areas. Apart from agricultural crops, Blue bulls also caused considerable damage to vegetables. According to

the local people, male Blue bulls visited kitchen gardens more frequently than females. The local people claimed that about 5% of the total rice production is damaged by Blue bulls in areas 1 km from the LDT boundary, and 2% was damaged in areas 1-3 km from the boundary.

Impact on the local economy

Various factors such as seasonal cropping patterns, the absence of strong fencing and the types of crops grown in the field were the main factors governing the extent of crop damage. The types of crops damaged by Blue bulls varies with the season. Generally, damage incurred during the winter months was found to be higher than during the summer. The distance from the LTD boundary to the field also affects the amount of crop damage. There is an inverse relation between distance and crop damage, i.e., as the distance decreases, crop damage increases and vice versa. Crop types also play a significant role in crop damage. Mainly paddy, wheat, mustard, potato, peas and lentils were found damaged in the area. In interviews with 142 farmers surrounding the LDT area, rice/paddy was reportedly one of the most highly damaged crops, with approximately 5% of total production damaged by Blue bull. This amounts to 1,000 quintal, which is equivalent to NRs 900,000 (NRs 1= US\$74). Wheat crops also suffered damages by Blue bulls equivalent to NRs 1,103,595. So it seems that there is a significant amount of crop damage done by Blue bulls, which has an impact on the local livelihood in the areas surrounding the LDT.

Efforts made to minimize crop damage

Efforts have been made by both villagers and the LTD authorities to minimize crop damage from Blue bull. The Trust erected a brick wall fence along the parsa to the main gate, and most of the LTD boundary was fenced with barbed wire. Unfortunately, there is no fence anymore because the barbed wire was stolen. Local people regularly guard their crops in the field night and day. To deter the Blue bulls, some local farmers used live hedge fences or barbed wire fences around their kitchen gardens, put up scarecrows or used fires to frighten the animals.

Threats

Some of the threats that Blue bulls face include the following:

- Grazing pressure: Every day more than 1,000 livestock graze inside the park, and constitute the main threat by consuming the food plants of Blue bull and inducing the introduction of unpalatable species.
- Disease transmission: Due to the livestock pressure in Blue bull habitat, there is a high probability of transfer of livestock diseases to Blue bull and vice versa.
- Firewood collection and grass cutting

Recommendations

- Barbed wire fencing should be erected around the LDT area.
- Livestock grazing and grass cutting inside the LDT areas should be restricted.
- A public awareness program should be initiated to disseminate conservation education to the local villagers about the importance of wildlife resources, and especially about the newly endangered status of Blue bull.
- A detailed biomass study should be conducted to identify the carrying capacity of Blue bull habitat in the dry season.
- Incentives should be provided to local affected farmers in the form of monetary compensation for crop damage, skill development training, income generation training, etc.
- Non-timber forest products (NTFPs) such as Sarpagantha and Mentha should be cultivated in high crop damage areas (1 km from the Trust boundary) as alternative crops which are unpalatable to Blue bulls.
- The LDT should be actively involved in biodiversity conservation activities, such as the restoration of wetlands, regular patrolling, conservation awareness activities, etc.
- Participatory Conservation Action Plan activities must be implemented for better management of Blue bull and other wildlife and to raise the local livelihoods.

Acknowledgments

The author extends his thanks and sincere gratitude to Shree Prasad Dhoubhadel

(Assistant Dean, IOF); Raj Kumar Koirala (Head of Department, Park Recreation and Wildlife Management, Institute of Forestry (IOF), Pokhara); Basant Bidari (LDT); and Top Br. Khattri (UNDP/PCP) who provided guidance, at all stages of this study; and to TRPAP and WWF Nepal for providing funding for this thesis work.

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LOST WITH FIRE

by Manjula Menon

In India, Western Ghats is one of the richest centers of endemism and a region diverse in fauna and flora. A number of programs are currently being implemented for conservation of biodiversity and sustainable utilization in this particular hot spot region – mainly inventories and *in situ* and *ex situ* conservation. The ecosystem is under severe threat from various natural and anthropogenic pressures. One of the greatest pressures is from forest fires. Forest fires are usually the result of three main factors: a heat source, a fuel that burns, and oxygen to propagate combustion. Ignition sources may be natural or human-caused. Fuel refers to the different components of the vegetation layer, both live and dead materials. The effects of forest fires have in turn created a situation that has resulted in severe climatic conditions leading to a significant loss of biodiversity. In recent years, there has been an increase in forest fires due to land use changes and climate warming.

There has also been much concern regarding forest fires at the global level. According to

researchers of the UK-based University of Leicester, the wild fires that scorched parts of Indonesian forests in 1977 spewed as much carbon into the atmosphere as the planet's biosphere absorbs in a year. This led to a sharp increase in global warming during 1998. Forest fires, especially in the Western Ghats, have led to large scale losses of both wild flora and fauna. The tropical dry deciduous forests of Western Ghats are more susceptible to fire than the moist deciduous and dry thorn forests. This can be attributed to the longer dry season of the dry deciduous forests, and hence, larger amounts of dry matter. Studies in Western Ghats have also revealed higher incidences of fire in areas with a high density of *Sorea roxburgii*.

Forest fires also have considerable effects on the faunal species. There have been observations of Indian rock pythons bearing fire scars in the forests of Mudumalai sanctuary. Many insects and birds (e.g., Yellow-wattled lapwing) build their nests on the ground, which in the event of fire could be charred.

Experts viewing NASA's images of air pollution believe that the pollution in the northern and southern hemispheres is due to the burning of fossil fuels and forest fires respectively. The carbon monoxide plumes in the southern hemisphere, especially Africa, can be attributed to forest fires.

Fire is an integral part of the ecosystem. Studies carried out by Pausas and Ramon (1999) have shown that the assessment of forest fires on a local scale is considered a critical aspect of ecosystem functioning, since fire plays a crucial role in vegetation composition, biodiversity, soil erosion and the hydrological cycle.

Reports of the Forest Survey

Data collected by the Forest Survey of India indicated that the forest area affected by annual fires may be as high as 37 million ha. In India, nearly 600 million rural inhabitants depend on forests for their sustenance and/or their livelihood. This indicates the amount of pressure put on the forest. In response to this pressure, the Forest Department initiated several measures to develop a strategy that would help to conserve the remaining large tracts of natural resources. But the success of any strategy rests with the local people that inhabit the area. Various forest fire prevention committees were formed with the help of the Forest Department, involving the local tribal communities. Each committee was assigned a particular part of the forest for safeguarding from fire. This also provided a means of employment to the local tribals residing within the sanctuary. This action plan was very successful and protected vast tracts of forest, which often suffered the heat scorches of fire, in the year 2002.

Forest fires and indiscriminate grazing are among the most important factors affecting the natural regeneration in the forests and causing its degradation. Some results of the inventories carried out by the Forest Survey of India showed that:

- on an average, 54.7% of the forests are affected by fire;
- 77.6% of the area is subject to grazing incidence; and

- 72.1% of the forest area has no regeneration.

These results further revealed that moist deciduous forests have more incidences of fire, while dry-deciduous and thorny forests are subject to more grazing. According to a Forest Survey of India report, about 50% of the forest areas in the country are fire-prone (ranging from 50% in some states to 90% in others). An IIFN report concluded that 6% of the forests are prone to severe fire damage.

Western Ghats is more prone to forest fires during the period January to May. To control the fires the Forest Departments have set up fire lines of 5-10 m width in areas prone to fire. Forest fire statistics are not reliable because they underestimate the number of fires and the area burned due to the fear of accountability. However, the Forest Survey of India carried out a countrywide study in 1995 that estimated that about 1.45 million ha of forest are affected by fire annually.

Recurrent fires decrease the green cover by preventing regeneration and lead to the slow death of the forest. They also increase erosion and alter the physical and chemical properties of the soil. Two very important species that have been severely affected in southern India by way of human interference and recurrent fires are *Santalum album* – the costliest scented wood in the world – and *Terminalia chebula*, a highly valued medicinal species.

Effects in the wild

Depending on the size and intensity, a forest fire initiates a chain of ecological successions that may last from a few years to well over a century. A low intensity fire will almost always produce a net benefit to wildlife, provided that it occurs outside of the nesting season. This is because most birds and animals prefer habitat diversity or "edges" and low intensity fires promote edge effects. How different tree species grow also helps determine the fire intensity.

Studies in Indonesia have found that thick bark, like that of Ponderosa Pine and Western Larch, protects against fire because fire can penetrate it

deeply without injuring the cambium. Deciduous trees resist fires better than evergreen trees do, because their foliage contains more moisture and fewer organic compounds than the foliage of most evergreen species, and of course deciduous trees can grow new leaves each year. Disturbances like fires cause gaps in the forest canopy, creating a mosaic with different stages of succession. Succession or regrowth may follow different courses at different times within the same area. For example, a fire following an earlier fire – a double burn or reburn – in the same area may produce a varying mix of species. Many botanists believe that what grows after a fire depends on what species happen to get a head start and crowd out any competitors. After severe fires, only ashes remain on the surface, and the upper mineral soil is cooked and discolored by a chemical change. Counteracting this loss, the ash and charcoal from the burned trees add minerals to the soil, which act as fertilizer.

Studies carried out in California by Fuller (1991) have shown that intense fires can kill soil microorganisms up to a depth of 3 inches, but that they soon recover. The lack of soil microorganisms may account for some of the increased plant growth seen after fires; the plants may grow better because they do not have to compete with soil microorganisms for nutrients. Important soil microorganisms are the nitrogen-fixing bacteria, which are more sensitive to fire than other soil bacteria. By means of a process called nitrogen fixation, these bacteria turn the nitrogen in the air into the nitrogen compounds needed by plants. Because the few bacteria left after a fire multiply rapidly, they can quickly overcome the loss of nitrogen compounds in all but the most severe fires.

Large herbivores such as deer, elk, bison, moose and some rodents (e.g., beavers) can alter the composition of a stand of plants when they browse, particularly when they choose certain plants over others. In this way they can affect fire probability and influence fire behavior. Large herds of grazing herbivores can sometimes reduce the fuel supply.

Earthworm populations are significantly reduced by fire as they live mainly in the humus and

mineral layers; they are more sensitive to the reduced moisture content than to heat from a fire.

Responses to fire

The immediate reactions of animals to fire are fairly limited. Very large, intense fires can kill all types of wildlife, including such large animals such as elephants.

Birds have to fear only for the safety of their nests and many bird species take advantage of a fire to catch escaping insects that are normally well camouflaged in their habitat. Some raptors momentarily turn into insectivores after a fire passes. Fire may cause some birds to disappear because the amount of litter or the consistency of the forest floor is modified by the fire. Thus, the disappearance of some birds is thought to be due to the reduction in the forest cover due to fire. The number of birds in a forest is always found to be low where there are higher intensities of fire. Reptiles generally have hiding places in wet areas or underground.

The reaction of animals to fire depends on habitat attachment, mobility, ability to find shelter, and sensitivity to smoke and heat. Spider webs have been found in burned over areas the morning after a fire. Snakes usually avoid fire by taking refuge in burrows or rocky crevices. Since most of the area burned is from high intensity fires, while the preponderant numbers of fires are of low intensity, wildlife mortality per hectare is undoubtedly higher than the scientific literature would suggest. Some flying insects are attracted to heat, smoke or burned trees, which increases the population of the insects soon after a fire break. Although there is evidence that some game animals have been killed by fire, and some investigators consider fire capable of killing many wild animals, it is commonly held that vertebrates are rarely killed in fires, since fire is not a direct cause of mortality in vertebrates.

Fire affords better access to food for water fowl by making edible plants available and destroying weeds and undesirable plants.

Studies have shown that coleopterans (fire beetles and firebugs) are attracted by heat. These animals possess infrared radiation-detecting organs that

can locate forest fires at great distances of 100 to 160 km. One of the most remarkable adaptations to a burned environment is the abrupt melanism exhibited by some invertebrates, mainly acridians; this probably acts as a camouflage for escaping predators, especially birds, which have easier access to food when the plant cover disappears.

Many birds and mammals are attracted by fire to feed on fleeing animals. Birds, in particular, show little fear of fire; some are actually attracted by the smoke. These include North American, African and Australian birds such as eagles, vultures, kites and falcons, that hunt small animals fleeing before the fire. African carnivores such as the lion, the leopard and the cheetah hunt alongside fires in savannas. Komarek (1969) notes that various primates such as gorillas, chimpanzees and gibbons are attracted by wild fires and abandoned camp fires. Some investigators reported that wildlife can move more freely to seek their requirements on a burn than was possible before the fire, particularly in areas with heavy undergrowth. The amount of litter and the hardness of the soil may be modified by fire and afterwards by the action of logging and fire fighting equipment. Removal of litter may make foods that were concealed by it available to birds and mammals. Fires rarely burn evenly and they usually result in a larger mosaic of old and new cover. The vast mosaic of forests of different sizes, shapes and edges created by fire provides heterogeneity of environments, thereby benefiting most animals. Seed-eating birds and mammals increase dramatically when a burn yields large amounts of this kind of food. However, severe and repeated burning may reduce the production of grasses, herbs and shrubs and in turn, grazing and browsing wild life.

Benefiting the wild

The hardness of some plants may be greatly increased after a fire. They may become more prolific because of an increased input of nutrients released by ash. This may lead to a qualitative and quantitative increase in the food supply.

Fire improves food quality by increasing the protein and phosphoric acid content of the most commonly

used species. Studies by Miller (1963, 1964) have shown that protein content apparently increased from 5% before the fire to 42% after a fire, and phosphoric acid content increased by 78%. After a fire, infestations of external and internal parasites may be reduced, to the benefit of the host animals. Some investigators have found that certain wildlife species that depend on fire-generated habitat have evolved to exploit burned areas. In order to properly interpret recolonization data, we must consider how long it takes for animals to reoccupy the burn and the factor of mobility.

Representation of all species remained identical in burned and unburned areas, except for earthworms, whose numbers fell sharply, and ants, whose numbers increased. Fewer mammal burrows are seen in burned areas than in unburned ones.

Forest fires frequently cause problems related to insect attacks on trees. Various studies have described the damage done by bark beetles and woodborers. However, prescribed burning can reduce the number of insects of these species or prevent dramatic population explosions.

An increase in nutrients is another common result of fire. The concentration of chemicals rarely attains toxic levels and the effect on productivity is generally beneficial. Thus, increased algae production at the lowest level of the food chain can increase biomass and further diversify the insect larvae population.

Ahlgren (1966) observed the relationship between vegetation and small mammal populations and hypothesized that the main factor in their population variations is food. The number of nests was found to be similar in burned and unburned areas by Kirsch and Kruse (1973), but clutches were found to be more abundant in burns.

Studies on forest fires have reported the loss of nutrients during burning and increased risk of erosion after burning. The effects of fire on animals change over time, but the biggest impact is the modification of their habitat. Animals with flexible habits and diets thrive after fires, and those animals that eat foods found only in mature forests seldom survive. Because fire destroys the sap that keeps bark insects away, these insects soon move

into a burned forest, followed by the woodpeckers and other birds. The woodpeckers increase after a forest fire, but species requiring old-growth forest, like the Great Gray Owl, decrease. Burned forests offer immediate food for some insect pests, whereas others depend on the food that fire provides in the long run.

Protecting the valuable resources

Forest fires are considered to be a major environmental problem the world over. Protection from forest fires is an interdisciplinary endeavour, which needs to be addressed from both the technological and methodological points of view and necessitates a wide spectrum of various scientific disciplines. (Chuvieco, 1999).

Fire mapping using infrared or similar electronic detection devices is an increasing role for both fixed-wing aircraft and helicopters. Infrared detection devices locate all bodies or objects whose temperature is above absolute zero and emit energy derived from the motion of their atoms in the form of waves. The electromagnetic waves also include visible light and, hence, the infrared waves exhibit many of the characteristics of visible light. Observations from the air need to be validated and checked by field studies, and the data generated from aerial observations must be used in models to provide useful information for operational applications. (Chuvieco, 1999).

Fires should be set at the right time to destroy excess litter and debris. This measure affords good browsing sites, rejuvenates plant life that birds such as grouse feed on, and eradicates plant diseases. (Vogl, 1967). Loss of plant cover due to fire leads to a change in the microclimate, since the temperature increases. The earliest, and probably still the most widely used standard for forest fire control world wide, is the establishment of a goal to burn less than a fixed percentage of the area protected. Successful fire prevention depends on utilizing the three Es – education, enforcement, and engineering – in logical, well planned combinations designed to counteract those fires that cause the most damage within the protection area, and not merely those that result from the most obvious or prevalent causes. (Chandler *et al.*, 1983).

Remote sensing and GIS are helpful tools that provide quick and accurate data acquisition and can describe the forest condition after a forest fire (Sunuprpto *et al.*) The use of advanced information technologies and the collaboration of fire modeling experts, fire managers and remote sensing specialists, can provide alternative solutions to current operational aspects of fire problems, and are certain to be adopted rapidly by fire management entities. (Chuvieco, 1999). Various other fire suppression models are also used to combat the spread of fire in the forest.

In assessing the social and economic impact, fire poses many complex and largely unresolved problems and is the subject of what the forest fire specialists refer to as “fire economics.” The benefits of fire management activities include:

- reduced losses that result from limiting the number and size of destructive wild fires;
- increased forest resource productivity and enhanced environment that result from the use of prescribed fires; and
- successfully monitoring and modifying the suppression of beneficial wild fires. (Jhonson and Miyanishi, 2001).

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SAVING THE TIGER: THE NEED FOR "OUT OF THE BOX" THINKING!

by Chinmaya S. Rathore

Introduction

With shrinking habitats, weak protection and lack of accurate and non-controversial data on tiger populations, it looks like a very bleak scenario for tigers in India. The decline in tiger populations as detailed by the recent tiger statistics released by the Wildlife Institute of India (TOI, 2007) will most certainly spell doom for other animals. Natural ecosystems and populations are governed by a delicate balance that is principally driven by prey and predators operating within the system. The absence of one most certainly means destruction of the other, and activation of a runaway reaction through the food chain. While increased poaching may be a clear and present

danger to tiger populations, the larger threat comes from shrinking habitat. The changes in the forest management paradigm from timber production to habitat conservation also reflect the diametrically changed societal perception of the environment over the last few decades. Society increasingly sees natural forest areas as wilderness refuges in an otherwise man-dominated landscape. Forest areas are now almost like the last wild bastions which are fighting to hold encroaching human armies at bay. As wilderness areas become more threatened, society may increasingly want the State to conserve forests for their biodiversity values alone. The question is whether the State, entrusted with protecting forests, is responsive to making adequate adjustments to its traditional

forest management practices to reflect this changed societal perception? Is there a will to create a long term strategy for habitat management that goes beyond protected areas (PAs)? Should wildlife and biodiversity conservation be an important core value in managing forests outside PAs? The answer to these questions probably holds the key to wildlife conservation in India.

To a large extent, wildlife management in India has been fixated on keystone species and PAs. Areas outside the PA network which are also habitats for many species are generally not managed for biodiversity values. Wildlife values are almost an insignificant part of working plans that outline management prescriptions for these areas. For example, plantation activities undertaken in these areas would most likely not consider planting species that provide food or cover to animals. Values dictating the choice of species could be commercial, for soil stabilization, etc., but rarely for the habitat or as food for wildlife species. Likewise, creating sufficient water holes for animals might not be an important item on the working plan agenda. As part of a long-term conservation strategy, it may be extremely important to initiate programs that provide an increased focus on management outside PA forests for biodiversity values. Unless there is a long-term strategy that aims at conserving and improving habitat outside the PAs, there may not be any real hope for wildlife conservation in India and unwelcome surprises - such as the disappearance of tigers from Sariska Tiger Reserve in 2005 - may occur more frequently.

With the emergence of electronic media that can instantly transmit news around the world, important conservation issues are also being threatened by the 'band-aid syndrome' which is essentially a short duration "accuse-react-forget" loop. There is sudden media hype on a situation where the state is accused of inaction and apathy. This is followed by panic retaliatory firefighting by the official machinery, which usually includes denials and defense. Media then loses interest as it moves to the next big story and all substantive issues are quickly forgotten. The band-aid syndrome metaphorically applies a band-aid on a problem area and then moves on without really treating

the disease. In the process, complex problems that need long-term strategic thought and targeted action are trivialized to a media show. Habitat management and conservation are now becoming the latest victims of this band-aid syndrome.

So what can be done? During the last two years, many opinions have appeared in the press proposing administrative solutions such as hiring young guards, providing potent weapons, better compensation, etc. While not discounting or undermining the need for such measures, this article tries to look at some long-term interventions that may have a more lasting impact on wildlife conservation in the country.

Emulating good practices: The GAP Analysis Program

One of the key features of successful wildlife conservation programs is long-term and holistic planning. Why wait for habitats to degrade or animals to become endangered and then spend millions to conserve them? Would it not be more prudent to read the trends and start conserving what is available in relative abundance. The USGS Gap Analysis program is an excellent example that can be emulated not only to bring in fresh hope for the tiger, but also for a number of other species. The GAP program advocates a proactive approach to biodiversity conservation and aims at identifying areas of high conservation priority. It is essentially a geographic approach to conservation planning which aims to identify conservation 'gaps' in forested landscapes, which are habitat-wise very important for species of interest, but are currently not under protection.

GAP analysis is based on three key principles (USGS, 2005):

- The best time to save species is while they are still common.
- It is cheaper to maintain natural populations, than it is to intensely manage endangered populations.
- While we cannot make a perfect biodiversity model, we can use what we know about the distributions of vertebrate species and vegetation types to assess biodiversity at local, state, regional and national levels.

Using the GAP analysis approach, many areas in the USA have been identified as areas of high conservation value and have received the requisite protection and management interventions that they did not receive earlier. The GAP concept provides a key framework that can provide the building blocks for a long term, non-PA-centric habitat development program. Work of this nature cannot be done by a single organization or institution. It needs a collaborative partnership of many institutions where each partner works on a piece of the jigsaw puzzle. Unfortunately, over the many years of tiger conservation, we have not been able to launch a single multi-stakeholder program of this nature. Overall, we have a very poor funding record of research on tiger ecology, dispersal and habitat utilization. There is a need to invest in research which can provide directions for long-term conservation strategies. Research institutions and forest departments need to evolve a stronger and more trusting relationship in order to make such programs successful.

Leveraging the power of community knowledge networks

The problem of determining the most suitable method for a tiger census has been a subject of debate for a long time now. Critics of the pugmark method currently in use by Project Tiger strongly believe that the current tiger census figures derived using this method are exaggerated (Bagla, 2003). With top technological institutions like the Indian Institute of Technology, and numerous top class software companies in India, could there have been an alternate approach to partner a solution to this problem? Why is it not possible to ask for ideas from the students and faculty of these institutions? Why not build mechanisms that foster knowledge partnerships that bring people of diverse backgrounds together? The police have been using fingerprint identification technology for a long time. Automobile manufacturers use image scanning technology to find defects in parts. Remote sensing scientists analyze satellite images to uncover hidden information. Is it possible to cross-pollinate ideas from diverse expertise domains to solve the tiger census problem? One of the reasons why knowledge communities do not develop is because it is somehow felt that only

the people in charge of a resource can provide solutions to problems in their domain.

When one looks at the evolution of the Linux computer operating system, one marvels at what communities can do if they decide to partner creation and sharing of knowledge. Today, not only is Linux alive and kicking, hundreds of developers across the world write and support open source software for as wide a range of applications as one can imagine. Most of this software is available free to anyone. After the years spent battling with significant problems, there has been no effort to cross-pollinate ideas and bring talented people from diverse fields together to partner solutions. While the world marvels at the power that online communities can wield in a digitally connected world, there is hardly any knowledge networking of this type in the forest and wildlife sectors in India.

DNA fingerprinting

When tiger parts are seized, it is usually not possible to know their origin. If this were possible, seized material could lead investigators to the point of origin. This information could build a picture of areas being targeted by poachers. Every seizure would then not just be a statistic, but would eventually provide very valuable inputs to investigating and enforcement agencies.

DNA printing of hair or blood samples from tigers in PAs can be done and a DNA print database for tigers in each PA can be maintained. This may not be possible for every animal, but can at least be attempted for the breeding stock. If such a database could be developed, the DNA from confiscated body parts could lead investigators back to the locale of the poached tiger and conservation measures could be immediately taken in those areas. DNA fingerprinting has been successfully used in solving the problem of illegal trading of orangutans in Thailand (Nation, 2004). A private safari park owner faced charges when it was discovered through DNA fingerprinting that 12 young apes were not the offspring of the zoo's breeding stock. Orangutans are categorized as endangered species under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), as are tigers. While

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some similar efforts in this direction are underway in India at the Wildlife Institute of India and the National Institute of Immunology, they need the committed support of conservation agencies and forest departments to develop DNA fingerprint databases and to track poachers.

PAs must come under the Central Government

The PAs in India can come under the authority of the Central Government and orders for posting or transfers can be done by the center. This will help to better coordinate conservation strategies, monitor offences, gather and share credible intelligence and equitably prioritize the conservation agenda across parks. It will also reduce regional political interference in park management. It is very much possible to declare all important tiger habitats in India as areas of national and global heritage and bring them under the direct control of a Director of National Parks.

Using professional advertising

Advertising campaigns targeting local communities around forest areas can be undertaken to generate a heightened awareness of the value of forests and wildlife. TRAFFIC USA tried a novel marketing approach to impact the tiger parts trade by shrinking the demand for tiger parts medicines from within the Chinese community in San Francisco. This innovative approach essentially relied on market research to first understand the Chinese belief system. Then they launched a sustained ad campaign using community members to advocate preserving tiger and rhinos as cultural icons (Fox, 2005). This led to a drastic reduction in demand for tiger and rhino part-based medicine within the Chinese community in the San Francisco area. A similar and well structured approach can be tried with local communities around PAs in India to lessen participation in wildlife crime and to develop credible intelligence networks.

Using central forces to guard protected areas

How much power should officers have to deal with wildlife poachers? This subject is as hotly debated the world over as it is in India. There are very valid and convincing arguments on both sides.

Human rights activists have strongly objected to what they term as “coercive conservation.” Herbert and Healy (1999) cite several examples from sub-Saharan Africa, where excessive use of armed force for wildlife conservation has led to many extra-judicial killings. In many such cases it could not even be established if the killed individuals were poachers or villagers. On the other hand, there has been an intense debate as to whether park wardens in Canada should be allowed to carry side arms (pistols, etc). Park wardens strongly felt they should be given the necessary tools to deal with situations of life and death (Canadian Geographic, 2001). However, the Canadian government decided against this and entrusted the enforcement function to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. This led many wardens to seek alternate employment.

In India, what weapons do the officers who guard forest territory have? Pitted against poachers, illegal timber interests, cattle herders and other intruders, how are they expected to fight and enforce the law? Poaching is an organized big money enterprise and many poachers are equipped with very sophisticated weapons. How are forest guards expected to stop them? Patrolling forest territory and accosting a gang of poachers requires immediate engagement. Can patrolling teams wait for the police to arrive in deep forest areas if they accost fully armed poachers? Why should poachers feel scared to poach? After all who is stopping them?

The answers to these questions are not easily found among the arguments highlighting the pros and cons of providing weapons to the forest staff. But can we leave forest personnel at risk of life and expect them to share the blame when a poaching incident is reported? Many forest personnel have been killed by forest gangs and poachers in the recent past and the state forest departments have felt helpless in dealing with such high risk situations. In 1999, 3 forest personnel of Rajaji National Park were allegedly killed by forest gangs (TOI, 1999). Numerous other incidents of a similar nature have been reported from all over India. What motivation is expected from forest officers when their own lives are at risk?

If providing weapons is not feasible for whatever reason, perhaps something like the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) be entrusted with the perimeter security of PAs. If steel plants can be protected by CISF, why not PAs? The ecological battalions under the Ministry of Defense being deployed in Assam forests could be another very viable option worth emulating in other areas.

Beefing up intelligence networks through community participation

The intelligence network around most tigers parks is poor and unorganized (WPSI, 2005). Most tiger parts seizures have been made with the help of information acquired by NGOs like the Wildlife Protection Society of India (WPSI), the Wild Life Trust of India (WTI), and the Traffic and Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA) – not through intelligence gathered by government agencies. Intelligence gathering on poaching around PAs and other forests needs to be substantially strengthened.

In the past, there have been initiatives like the Coimbatore Charter of 2001 on Environment and Forests (MOEF, 2001), endorsed by forest ministers and forest secretaries of all states, which pledges to strengthen intelligence networks. This is, however, easier said than done. While the efforts of the Madhya Pradesh Forest Department to establish five wildlife intelligence bureaus (MPFD, 2005) are a step in this direction, they might not yield the desired results. The problem with this arrangement is that in such formal scenarios, intelligence is usually bought – not sought. When money becomes the prime driving force, the information may go to the highest bidder. The content of the information may depend on who the recipient is. Thus, the information could be about poachers for the forest department to use, or it could be about tigers to benefit poachers. The point being that except through sustained outreach programs, where local communities see adjoining forests as livelihood centers, they may not be motivated to volunteer crucial information. If tigers can earn money for local communities, an efficacious and robust intelligence apparatus can be built that will receive volunteered information. For example, eco-tourism can be a key idea to involve local communities, where

tourists arrive to see tigers and locals act as guides, provide food, supply memorabilia, organize cultural programmes and get involved in habitat improvement activities, etc. With such an arrangement, local communities may feel a higher degree of motivation to protect and side with the conservationists rather than the destroyers. Without the real involvement of local communities, intelligence gathering may never provide useful information. It is also worthwhile to note that intelligence that can protect a live tiger is valuable intelligence. Intelligence that recovers dead tigers may not be so relevant. Current hauls of tiger parts have been made using intelligence coming from the poachers end. When we talk of keeping tigers alive, intelligence will have to come from the people's end. It is because of this important difference, that the involvement of local people will be so important.

Do we have real management data?

Developing biodiversity information systems should be a top priority. Good information is the precursor to good management. In spite of the fact that India dominates the global software market, hardly any PA has a visionary information system that can provide accurate, timely and dependable information for conservation management and planning. This situation can be contrasted with a number of other countries that have excellent information infrastructure that forms the backbone of management decision making. It is one thing to have computers, and something quite different to have fully integrated information systems running on them. PAs and other forest areas do not have really good information systems that can be used for decision making. The forest departments should jointly invest in creating an integrated information system software that can be shared by all and can provide seamless integration at the national level. Project Tiger can help fund the development of such software, standardize it, and make it operational across the country. The framework of an integrated information system should essentially not be species-centric, but cover all important biodiversity dimensions. Such information systems should also have information about the surrounding landscape and pressures from human populations.

Ending mistrust

Whenever tiger deaths are reported from any PA, the causes given by the forest department are hotly contested. For example, in June 2005, a radio-collared tigress with three cubs was found dead in Kanha National Park in Central India (HT, 2005). The forest department claimed that the death of the tigress was due to injuries sustained in a fight with a male tiger. A number of NGO's contested this claim, suggesting that the death was due to the radio collar getting trapped in a bush. It was also claimed by the NGOs that one of the cubs was scorched in a fire started by the forest department; a claim that the department vehemently denied. Whatever the truth, such encounters widen distrust and damage public opinion against the department, even though the department might be doing a good job. Why can't a standard procedure be evolved to document tiger deaths that includes the participation of representatives of NGOs and the press? Why can't the proceedings of recovery and autopsy be videotaped? By observing a predefined procedure involving outside participation, the forest departments can build public trust in their operations.

Conclusions

The tiger population in India is biologically in its most fragile phase. Adding human costs like poaching, other man-animal interaction pressures and shrinking habitats, makes matters very complex and difficult. The attention that the recent tiger count has generated may probably be the last real chance to effect a major systemic reform that may hold some hope, not only for the tigers, but for other animals also. This requires adopting innovative strategies that go beyond strengthening conventional solutions, which obviously have not produced the desired results over the years. It requires courage to admit failures, resist interference, trust local communities and create knowledge networks that can help evolve and sustain holistic conservation strategies.

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CHECKLIST AND DISTRIBUTION OF SAURIAN FAUNA IN THE THAR DESERT OF RAJASTHAN

by Sanjay K. Das

Introduction

The Thar Desert of Rajasthan covers a major portion of the Great Indian Desert (about 62%), which comprises an area of about 191,650 km² and spreads over 13 districts of Rajasthan (Gupta and Prakash, 1975; Dhir *et. al.*, 1992; Baqri and Kankane, 2002). It includes Ganganagar, Hanumangarh, Bikaner, Jaisalmer, Barmer, Jodhpur and Churu districts and part of Nagaur, Ajmer, Pali, Jalor, Jhunjhunun and Sikar districts. It is bounded by the Aravali hills in the east, the fertile Indus and Nara valley in the west, the Rann of Kutch in the south, and the semi arid districts of Haryana and Punjab in the north. It lies between 22°30' to 32°05' N latitude and 68°05' to 74°45' E longitude. It is an extension of the Sahara Desert through the Arabian and Persian deserts and continues to the desert portion of Pakistan on its west.

During the post-independence era, vast areas of this natural region have been explored and additions to the saurian fauna have been considerable. Species inventories of a particular region would provide essential data from a conservation and resource management point of view (Oliver and Beattie, 1993). Hence, in the present study an attempt was made to draw up a detailed checklist and distribution of saurian fauna in the Thar Desert of Rajasthan, including distribution in two protected areas i.e., Desert National Park (DNP) and Talchhappar Wildlife Sanctuary (TWS). It also includes comments on species of conservation significance drawn from distributional data. The work of Boulenger (1890); Smith (1935); Minton (1966); Biswas and Sanyal (1977); Murthy (1990); Tikader and Sharma

(1992); Daniel (2002); and Sharma (2002) were consulted during this study.

Methodology

Intensive field surveys were conducted to search for saurian fauna, during which the visual encounter method of Corn and Bury (1990) was followed.

Discussion

Twenty-nine species of saurian fauna have been recorded in Rajasthan (Tikader and Sharma, 1992; Sharma, 2002), out of which 25 species are found in the Thar Desert. The Thar Desert supports 86% of the total saurian fauna found in Rajasthan, although it comprises only 62% of the total area of Rajasthan. This supports the studies of Pianka, (1986) and Cloudsley-Thompson (1991), who asserted that saurian fauna attains high abundances in desert environments.

Out of the 13 districts of the Thar Desert, Ajmer district alone supports 12 species of the saurian fauna found in this region. Four of these species i.e., *Cyrtodactylus fedtschenkoi*, *Cyrtodactylus madarensis*, *Mabuya dissimilis* and *Sitana ponticeriana*, are not found in the other 12 districts of the Thar Desert. As only a small portion of this district falls in the Thar Desert (Gupta and Prakash, 1975), we may conclude that these species are not common to desert ecosystems.

The Thar Desert supports 3 endangered and 3 endemic saurian species. If we exclude *Cyrtodactylus madarensis* as being uncommon to the desert ecosystem, then the desert supports only five endangered or endemic species of

conservation significance. From distributional data in Table 1, it is evident that only Jaisalmer district supports all five species. As these species differ greatly in their habit, habitat and basic mode of life, it can be concluded that the habitat heterogeneity of Jaisalmer district is most suited to sustain the species of conservation value found in the Thar Desert of Rajasthan.

Twelve of the 25 saurian species (or 48%) found in the Thar Desert are confined to the two protected areas – Desert National Park and Talchhappar Wildlife Sanctuary. Desert National Park supports all 5 species of conservation significance

Among the five species of conservation significance, the habitat of *B. laungwalansis* should be protected in its natural state, free from any kind of human interferences. Not only is it endemic to the Thar Desert of Rajasthan and Sind (Pakistan), but it also has a restricted distribution, being reported from only a few areas of Jaisalmer district (Das, 2004). Immediate conservation strategies should be implemented to conserve this and other endangered species.

Acknowledgements

The author is grateful to the Director, Zoological Survey of India, Kolkata and Officer-in-charge, Desert Regional Station, Zoological Survey of India, Jodhpur for permission to undertake the field studies. Financial assistance was granted by the Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India. Thanks also go to Dr. R. C. Sharma and Dr. N. S. Rathore, Desert Regional Station, Zoological Survey of India for their guidance and valuable suggestions during the study.

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Table 1 Checklist and distribution of saurian fauna in the Thar Desert of Rajasthan

| Family/Genus/ Species | Common English Name | Bikaner | Barmer | Jaisalmer | Jodhpur | Churu | Ganganagar | Hanumangarh | Nagaur | Pali | Jalor | Sikar | Jhunjunur | Ajmer |
|--|----------------------------|---------|--------|-----------|---------|-------|------------|-------------|--------|------|-------|-------|-----------|-------|
| Gekkonidae | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Crossobamon orientalis</i> Blanford, 1875 ^{*12} | Rajasthan Sand Gecko | + | + | + | + | + | † | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| <i>Cyrtopodion scabrum</i> (Heyden, 1827) ¹ | Keeled Rock Gecko | + | - | + | + | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| <i>Cyrtodactylus fedtschenkoi</i> (Strauch, 1887) | Turkestan Rock Gecko | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | + |
| <i>Cyrtodactylus madarensis</i> Sharma 1980 [*] | Luminous Gecko | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | + |
| <i>Hemidactylus brookii</i> Gray, 1845 | Spotted Indian House Gecko | † | † | † | + | † | † | † | + | + | † | † | † | + |
| <i>Hemidactylus flaviviridis</i> Ruppell, 1835 ¹² | Yellow-Bellied House Gecko | + | + | + | + | + | † | † | + | + | † | † | † | + |
| <i>Hemidactylus leschenaultii</i> Dumeril & Bibron, 1836 | Bark Gecko | † | + | + | - | - | † | † | + | - | - | - | - | - |
| <i>Hemidactylus triedrus</i> (Daudin, 1802) | Blotched Gecko | - | - | - | + | - | - | - | † | - | - | - | - | + |
| Agamidae | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Calotes versicolor</i> (Daudin, 1802) ¹² | Indian Garden Lizard | + | + | + | + | + | † | † | + | + | † | † | † | + |
| <i>Trapelus agilis</i> Olivier, 1807 ¹ | Brilliant Agama | + | + | + | + | - | + | - | + | - | - | - | - | - |

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| <i>Bufo laungwalansis</i> Sharma, 1978 ^{*1} | Toad-Agama | - | - | + | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| <i>Sitana ponticeriana</i> Cuvier, 1844 | Fan-Throated Lizard | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | + |
| Uromastycidae | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Uromastyx hardwickii</i> Hardwicke & Gray, 1827 ^{**12} | Spiny-Tailed Lizard | + | - | + | + | + | + | - | - | + | - | - | - | - |
| Scincidae | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Mabuya macularia</i> (Blyth, 1853) | Eastern Bronze Skink | - | - | - | + | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | + |
| <i>Mabuya dissimilis</i> (Hallowell, 1857) | Stripped Grass Skink | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | + |
| <i>Ophiomorus raithmai</i> Anderson & Leviton, 1966 ¹ | Indian Sand Skink | - | + | † | + | - | - | - | + | - | - | - | - | - |
| <i>Eurylepis taeniolatus</i> (Blyth, 1854) | Eastern Yellow-Bellied Mole Skink | - | - | - | + | - | - | - | - | + | - | - | - | - |
| <i>Lygosoma punctata</i> (Gmelin, 1799) | Spotted Supple Skink | - | - | - | + | - | - | - | - | - | † | - | - | - |
| <i>Ablepharus grayanus</i> (Stoliczka, 1872) | Earless Dwarf Skink | - | - | + | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Lacertidae | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Acanthodactylus cantoris</i> Günther, 1864 ¹² | Indian-Fringe Toed Lacertid Lizard | + | + | + | + | + | † | † | + | - | † | + | - | + |
| <i>Ophisops microlepis</i> Blanford, 1870 | Small Scaled Lacerta | - | - | - | + | - | - | - | - | + | - | - | - | + |
| <i>Ophisops jerdoni</i> Blyth, 1853 ¹ | Snake-Eyed Lacerta | - | - | + | + | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| <i>Mesalina watsonana</i> Stoliczka, 1872 | Long-Tailed Desert Lacerta | - | - | + | + | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Varanidae | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Varanus bengalensis</i> (Linnaeus, 1758) ^{**12} | Common Indian Monitor | + | + | + | + | + | † | † | + | + | - | - | - | + |
| <i>Varanus griseus</i> (Daudin, 1803) ^{**12} | Desert Monitor | + | - | + | - | + | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |

Ref: Smith, 1935; Biswas and Sanyal, 1977; Murthy, 1978; Tikader and Sharma, 1992; Anon, 1993; Das, 1994, 2003; Sharma, I. 1996; Sharma, R. C. 1996, 2002; Daniel, 2002; Das *et. al.* 2003; Das and Rathore, 2004; Tikader and Sharma, 1992. **Note:** + Present, - Not present, † Range extension of the species after the present study, * Endemic species, ** endangered species, ¹ Present in DNP, ² Present in TWS, ¹² Present in both DNP and TWS

EVALUATION OF HABITATS FOR AVI-FAUNA AT SHORKOT PLANTATION (WILDLIFE SANCTUARY), PAKISTAN

by M. Anwar Maan, A. Aleem Chaudhry and Muhammad Sajid Nadeem

Introduction

Shorkot plantation is an irrigated forest in Tehsil Shorkot, of District Jhang. The area of the plantation is 4,038.8 ha. It is located 5 km from Shorkot Railway Station on the Shorkot Cantt – Shorkot City link road. The terrain is generally flat, with soil formed by river alluvium. The soil is dark brown in color, loamy in texture, highly saline, and waterlogged.

Haveli canal, originating from Trimu–Head works, and Lakhuana disty mark the north–south and south–west boundaries of the plantation respectively. Agriculture fields flank the northern and southern sides of the plantation. The plantation is under various stages of development. Half of the plantation area has relics of natural vegetation. Every year, according to the forest working schedule, the natural area is cleared and planted with *Eucalyptus*.

Visualizing the importance of the plantation for faunistic variety, the plantation was given the status of wildlife sanctuary in 1986 for a period of five years. The period was extended for a further five years up to 1991, and it is still a wildlife sanctuary today.

The area has a semi-arid climate characterized by extremes of temperature, and erratic and irregular rainfall. June–July are the hottest months, while December–January is the coldest period.

The tropical thorn forest, which was the natural vegetation of the area, once supported a rich wildlife fauna, which was either forced to migrate or adapt to new habitats. With the advent of the agriculture era, the natural vegetation of the tropical thorn forest was cleared and an irrigation network was set up. Patches of natural vegetation

were maintained in the form of groves along the irrigation canal and agriculture land. The plantation provides a variety of habitats for wildlife in the form of thick vegetation cover, sparse to thick under-story vegetation, individual trees and patches of natural vegetation.

Over the years, *Eucalyptus* has been planted in regeneration areas. From nursery to mature crop, *Eucalyptus* provides age-grading habitats. It also provides mixed habitat with *Dalbergia*, *Morus* and mesquite.

In Pakistan, very little work has been undertaken on habitat studies and the preferences of bird species for particular habitats. Previous work is mainly confined to species identification. Dr. Salim Ali and Dr. S. Dillon Ripley have conducted extensive bird surveys throughout the Indian sub-continent since 1930.

Khan (1987) observed the bird life of Daphar and Pakhowal irrigated forest plantations in District Gujrat (Mandi Baha-ud-Din). The major contribution to ornithology in Pakistan in recent years has been made by T.J. Roberts (1991–92). However, habitat selection, densities per hectare and the distribution pattern among bird species have not been described. The present study was carried out from July 1989 to August 1996 and describes the preferences of bird species for different sets of vegetation cover (habitat selection), density and distribution pattern. It will provide guidelines for the development of future management strategies for the wildlife sanctuary.

Materials and methods

From the management point of view, Shorkot plantation is divided into blocks, which are further sub-divided into different compartment units. The

forest crop varies within compartments with respect to age and vegetation composition.

The plantation was stratified according to different vegetation composition units. Five strata were identified with mature crops of *Dalbergia-Eucalyptus*, *Dalbergia-Morus*, *Eucalyptus-Dalbergia*, *Eucalyptus* from nursery to ten years of age, and natural areas. Transects 2 km long with variable widths were laid out and studied, recording bird species on both sides of the transects. With the aid of binoculars, the birds were identified according to Ali and Ripley (1987) and Roberts (1991, 1992). Details about the birds identified were recorded on data sheets. The data was analyzed following standard statistical methods (Davis & Goldsmith, 1984; Odum, 1997).

Results and discussion

The natural vegetation of the area is typical of the central Punjab plains, i.e., tropical thorn forest, with the following species composition: *Acacia nilotica*, *Tamarix aphylla*, *Prosopis cineraria*, *Salvadora oleoides*, *Zizyphus mauritiana*, *Z. nummularia*, *Calotropis procera*, *Capparis decidua*, *Suaeda fruticosa*, *Panicum antidotale*, *Eleusine compressa*, *Cymbopogon jwarancusa*, *Saccharum munja* and *S. spontaneum*, with *Prosopis* that was established later.

Dalbergia and *Eucalyptus camaldulensis* were the main plant species planted in the plantation. *Morus* and *Prosopis* were naturally established, forming the understory cover of the plantation. Patches of natural vegetation between different crops have ecotone effects. Water channels attract paddy birds, kingfishers, and water hens, while electricity wires attract perching birds such as swifts, rollers, bee-eaters and doves. The Little green bee-eater, Red turtle dove, Ringdove, Rose-ringed parakeet and Purple sunbird were prevalent in all six of the identified habitat units. Other bird species were more or less distributed according to habitat preferences.

In *Eucalyptus* crops of various ages, 18 bird species were observed during July 1989. During August 1996, 20 bird species were recorded from all stages of *Eucalyptus*. The density of birds per

hectare was rather low during 1989 (7.6) compared to 1996 (16.5). A high bird density was recorded (36 birds/ha) in the *Eucalyptus-Dalbergia* vegetation type. *Eucalyptus* was preferred by 16.9% of the bird population, while 30.7% preferred the mixed crop of *Eucalyptus-Dalbergia*. The distribution pattern was similar in all six vegetation types. The Dispersion Index (31.6% - 35.4%) indicated a distribution of birds of different species in loose groups. The study suggested that mono-crop *Eucalyptus* plantation is not a preferred habitat for birds compared to the mixed cropping system (i.e., *Eucalyptus-Dalbergia*), which provided better habitat for birds.

Habitats

Mature crops of *Dalbergia-Eucalyptus* provided an extensive and high canopy cover. A total of 15 bird species were observed, with a per hectare density of 5.46 birds. Of the total bird population in the plantation, 7.2 % was distributed in this habitat in groups of various sizes (DI-35.4%).

Eucalyptus, from nursery to mature plants, provided a mono-crop, single story cover. Twenty species of birds were present with a per hectare density of 16.9 birds, in loose groups of various sizes (DI-35.3).

The distribution trend in *Dalbergia-Morus* was different. Twenty-seven bird species were recorded in this habitat unit.

The natural vegetation cover maintained its importance as a selective habitat unit. The preference of 31 bird species for this habitat unit shows the importance of natural vegetation in supporting resident and migrant bird species. The *Eucalyptus-Dalbergia* vegetation composition proved equally good for birds, with 30 bird species preferring this vegetation composition.

Habitat preference is subject to change due to the deciduous nature of the vegetation. During winter when leaves are shed, the habitat units lose some attraction for the birds and their preference is diverted to alternate habitats in the farm lands and to remnants of natural vegetation that provide enough cover for the birds.

Table 1: Distribution of bird species in different habitats at Shorkot plantation (wildlife sanctuary) during August 199

| English Name | Scientific Name | Dalbergia-Eucalyptus | Eucalyptus | Dalbergia-Morus | Eucalyptus-Dalbergia | Uncommanded area | Total |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------|------------|-----------------|----------------------|------------------|-------|
| Ashy wren warbler | <i>Prinia hodgsonii</i> | | | | 3 | | 3 |
| Black Partridge | <i>Francolinus francolinus</i> | | | | 1 | | 1 |
| Black Winged Kite | <i>Elanus caeruleus</i> | | | 1 | | | 1 |
| Black Drongo | <i>Dicrurus macrocercus</i> | 3 | | 11 | 2 | 3 | 19 |
| Common Babbler | <i>Turdoides caudatus</i> | | | 7 | 4 | 2 | 13 |
| Common myna | <i>Acridotheres tristis</i> | | 11 | 5 | 11 | | 27 |
| Common starling | <i>Sturnus vulgaris</i> | | | 2 | | | 2 |
| Pariah kite | <i>Milvus migrans</i> | | | | | 2 | 2 |
| Crow pheasant | <i>Centropus sinensis</i> | | 3 | 1 | 2 | | 6 |
| Booted Eagle | <i>Hieraaetus pennatus</i> | | | | | 1 | 1 |
| Black bird | <i>Turdus merula</i> | | | 1 | | | 1 |
| Fantail Flycatcher | <i>Rhipidura aureola</i> | 3 | 5 | 5 | | 3 | 16 |
| Golden backed woodpecker | <i>Dinopium benghalensis</i> | 1 | 2 | | 5 | | 8 |
| Green warbler | <i>Phylloscopus nitidus</i> | | | | | 10 | 10 |
| Grey partridge | <i>Francolinus pondicerianus</i> | | 1 | | 2 | 1 | 4 |
| Great reed warbler | <i>Acrocephalus stentoreus</i> | | 2 | | | | 2 |
| Golden oriole | <i>Oriolus oriolus</i> | | | 2 | | | 2 |
| Hoopoe | <i>Upupa epops</i> | 1 | | | 2 | | 3 |
| Tailor bird | <i>Orthotomus sutoinus</i> | | | 2 | | | 2 |
| House crow | <i>Corvus splendens</i> | | 5 | 2 | 12 | | 19 |
| Indian robin | <i>Saxicoloides fulvicata</i> | | | 1 | | | 1 |
| Indian tree-pie | <i>Dendrocitta vagabunda</i> | 4 | 14 | 12 | | 19 | 28 |
| Indian roller | <i>Coracias benghalensis</i> | | 4 | 7 | 11 | | 41 |
| Jungle babbler | <i>Turdoides striatus</i> | 14 | 31 | | 37 | | 82 |
| Little green bee-eater | <i>Merops orientalis</i> | 1 | 23 | 11 | 60 | 22 | 117 |
| Large pied wagtail | <i>Motacilla maderapatensis</i> | 1 | | | | 1 | 2 |
| Little egret | <i>Egretta garzetta</i> | 1 | | | | | 1 |
| Lesser kestrel | <i>Falco tinnunculus</i> | | 1 | | 1 | | 2 |
| Pond heron | <i>Ardeola grayii</i> | | | | | 9 | 9 |
| Cattle egret | <i>Bubulcus ibis</i> | | | | | 4 | 4 |
| Common hawk cuckoo | <i>Cuculus varius</i> | | | | 1 | | 1 |
| Pied crested cuckoo | <i>Clamator jacobinus</i> | | | | 2 | | 2 |
| Indian prima | <i>Prinia subflava</i> | | | | | 3 | 3 |
| Pied bush chat | <i>Saxicola caprata</i> | | 2 | | 4 | 14 | 21 |
| Pied King fisher | <i>Ceryle rudis</i> | | 1 | | | | 1 |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---------------------------------|------|------|------|----|------|------|------|
| House swift | <i>Apus affinis</i> | | | | 20 | 46 | 1500 | 156 |
| Red turtle dove | <i>Streptopelia tranquarica</i> | 5 | 8 | 20 | 20 | 40 | 20 | 93 |
| Red wattled lapwing | <i>Hoplopterus indicus</i> | | | 2 | | 5 | 5 | 1 |
| Ring dove | <i>Streptopelia decaocto</i> | | | 17 | | 18 | 3 | 64 |
| Rufous back shrike | <i>Lanius schach</i> | 1 | 25 | 2 | | 8 | 5 | 15 |
| Reed warbler | <i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i> | | | | | | 52 | 52 |
| Rose-ringed parakeet | <i>Psittacula krameri</i> | 28 | 36 | 41 | | 38 | 20 | 163 |
| Shikra | <i>Accipiter badius</i> | | | 1 | | | 2 | 3 |
| Hen harrier | <i>Circus cyaneus</i> | | | | | | 1 | 1 |
| Sparrow hawk | <i>Accipiter nisus</i> | | | | | - | 2 | 2 |
| Long legged buzzard | <i>Buteo rufinus</i> | | 1 | | | | | 1 |
| Purple sun bird | <i>Nectarinia asiatica</i> | 7 | 17 | 19 | | 14 | 12 | 69 |
| White cheeked bulbul | <i>Pycnonotus leucogenys</i> | | | 1 | | 7 | 6 | 14 |
| White backed vulture | <i>Gyps bengalensis</i> | | | | | - | 2 | 2 |
| White eye | <i>Zosterops palpebrosa</i> | | | | | | 20 | 20 |
| White breasted water hen | <i>Amaurornis phoenicurus</i> | | 5 | 3 | | | 8 | 16 |
| Streaked weaver | <i>Ploceus manyar</i> | | | | | | 20 | 20 |
| Indian koel | <i>Eudynamis scolopacea</i> | | | 1 | | 3 | | 4 |
| Red-vented bulbul | <i>Pycnonotus cafer</i> | | | 3 | | 9 | | 12 |
| Common swallow | <i>Hirundo rustica</i> | | | | | 2 | | 2 |
| No. of species in respective habitats | | 15 | 20 | 27 | | 30 | 31 | 55 |
| No. of birds in each habitat type | | 62 | 198 | 201 | | 360 | 328 | 116 |
| Surveyed area in hectares | | 15 | 15 | 10 | | 10 | 21 | 71 |
| Density of birds per ha ² | | 5.46 | 13.2 | 20.1 | | 36.0 | 15.3 | 16.3 |
| Relative abundance of birds per ha ² (%) | | 7.2 | 16.9 | 17.2 | | 30.7 | 28.0 | 100 |
| Dispersion Index (%) | | 35.4 | 35.3 | 35.3 | | 31.6 | 31.6 | 36.8 |

D.I. = 100 means random distribution

**D.I. = Less than 100 means group formation
Greater than 100 means uniform distribution*

The population of resident birds, including scavengers, birds of prey, egrets, partridges, parakeets, king fishers, shrikes, tree pies, Indian rollers and other passerine birds, were consistently associated with their preferred vegetation cover. These bird species have shown little change in their preferences for different vegetation covers.

Habitat disturbances and destruction are important factors that affect the density and distribution of birds. Activities carried out by the Forest Department such as the removal of undergrowth of *Saccharum*, *Prosopis* and grasses, deprive some species of cover, leaving the birds more vulnerable to predation, hunting and netting. Livestock grazing also causes disturbances and hampers the activities of ground nesting birds, particularly during breeding season. The birds are forced to abandon preferred habitat units to adopt less preferred ones.

Conclusion

The list of 55 bird species indicates a good faunistic variety in the sanctuary area. Management of the area under strict sanctuary terms would dictate wildlife conservation-oriented activities by the Forest Department. Planning is needed to develop mixed cropping systems with fruit plants, which is a preferred habitat for birds, and avoid monocultures such as *Eucalyptus*, which is a poor habitat for birds. Patches of undergrowth vegetation should be maintained for persistent cover. In the regeneration areas, patches of natural vegetation should be maintained to preserve the original vegetation for the resident bird species. The farmers should be encouraged to plant commercial trees on their farmlands. This agro-forestry system will provide alternate habitat units to most of the bird species. Disturbances due to

livestock grazing should be minimized and strict enforcement of laws must be ensured. Water-channels and compartment roads should be maintained properly and developed as micro-habitats. With these efforts, the bird life of Shorkot Wildlife Sanctuary could be further improved.

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DAMAGE TO AGRICULTURAL CROPS BY MAMMALIAN FAUNA AT THE FRINGES OF LAWACHARA NATIONAL PARK, BANGLADESH

by M.A. Aziz and M.M. Feeroz

/ Damage to agricultural crops by mammalian fauna at Lawachara National Park, Bangladesh /

Introduction

Crop raiding by wild animals dates back to the early times in many parts of world. It has become one of the crucial management issues in the arena of wildlife conservation, since in severe confrontations of wildlife with agricultural crops, the loss of properties and lives have taken place. In spite of frequent occurrences of wildlife damage in the country – mostly regarding man-elephant interactions – few of them have been reported (Islam *et al.*, 1999; Miah *et al.*, 2001; Aziz, 2003; Feeroz *et al.*, 2003; Aziz *et al.*, 2006).

Lawachara National Park is one of the country's 16 protected areas and 9 national parks, and the only area that harbors 6 of the 10 primate species that occur in Bangladesh. Several studies have been conducted in the area, but were confined to the primate species only (Feeroz, 1991; Feeroz and Islam, 1992; Hasan, *et al.*, 2005). The present study investigated the crop raiding incidents with notes on economic loss incurred by some of the mammalian fauna of the national park.

Study areas

Lawachara National Park is located approximately 160 km northeast of Dhaka and 60 km south of Sylhet in the civil administrative units of Kamalgonj Thana, Maulivibazar District, under the forest administration unit of Lawachara, Chautali and Kalachara. It falls under the Maulivibazar Forest Range of Sylhet Forest Division and within the bio-ecological zone of 9b-Sylhet Hills. The national park lies in the West Bhanugach Reserve Forest, a forest planted in the 1950s with an area of about 2,738 ha, comprising three forest beats, namely Lawachara, Chawtali and Kalachara. Lawachara forest beat currently covers an area of 1,250 ha.

The topography of the area varies from medium to steep hilly slopes. Hillocks, ranging from 10-25 m are indiscriminately situated in the forest. There are many streams that carry the rain water flowing through the forest floor. Numerous walkways enable access to move through the forests. There are four forest villages in the area, two of which are located in Lawachara National Park. The south-east, southern and eastern sides of the park are encompassed by tea gardens, while in the north are bare hillocks cultivated by the land owners. Once, the north sides of the bare hillocks were under the reserve and cultivated with pineapple, banana, jackfruits, lemon and some other vegetables as well.

Study methods

The study was conducted from September 2005 to July 2006, to assess wildlife damages in the northern vicinity of Lawachara National Park. Field visits were made every month, covering all 11 plots of gardens in the northern vicinity of the national park. The wildlife species that were involved in crop raiding were identified by pugmarks, the presence of hairs, quills, scats, teeth marks on the damaged plants, and confirmed by the farmer's observations as well. A questionnaire was also used to interview the land owners and farmers who guard their fields.

To investigate the massive damage of pineapple gardens, 10x10 m quadrates were plotted in the affected areas, which in turn were multiplied by the whole damaged area. Similar quadrates were set up in the intact areas to compare the total number of plants damaged. Direct counts were carried out in the cases of banana, jackfruits and pumpkin damage, while quadrates were employed for lemons. The economic loss was expressed by

the standard market value of the fruit, adding 20% for the costs of cultivation for individual plants.

Results and discussion

Damages to agricultural crops have been reported and have become a serious management problem involving many wildlife species in different parts of the world (Chalise, 1997; Ghimire, 2001; Miah *et al.*, 2001; Chetry *et al.*, 2002; Medhi *et al.*, 2005; Aziz, 2003, 2006). The present study investigated the agricultural crops damaged by some mammalian fauna in the gardens located close to the national park.

The study revealed that wild boar was the principal crop raider, especially before the budding of the pineapples, and Rhesus macaques raided the crops just before harvesting. Groups (sounders) of wild boars come out of the forest to raid the gardens regularly (mean size=7; range=3-12; N=7), mainly during the second half of the night, causing damage from the seedling stage of the pineapple up until harvesting (March-August). It is during the pre-mature stage of pineapple when most of the damage is incurred by wild boars. The plants are uprooted and the roots are eaten along with the piths, discarding only the serrated leaves. The results showed that the boars preferred pineapple plants of about two months age rather than those just planted, as the former are more healthy, tender and palatable. The frequency of raiding increased with the age of the seedlings. Porcupines also caused some damage by eating and boring the roots of the pineapple plants.

Farmers experience severe economic loss when the boar becomes a nuisance just before the budding of the pineapples, as they have invested much labor and money up to the budding stage. Damage to pumpkins and banana roots by porcupine and wild boar respectively, continues throughout the year.

When the pineapple fruits are mature, rhesus macaques (mean group size=26; range=19-34; N=5) enter the forest-fringed gardens and cause massive damage, as each individual gets a hold of

least one fruit during each raid. The macaques raid the gardens mainly during the daytime during July and August when the fruits are about to be harvested.

Macaques also raid jackfruit crops during April and May, targeting mature and ripe fruits. Sometimes the jackfruits and pineapples are left scratched or half-eaten by rhesus macaques and wild boars during their raids.

Hoary-bellied squirrels visit the lemon gardens throughout the year, boring into mature and ripened fruits. Other squirrels species present in the park (e.g., *Dremomys lokriah*, *Ratufa bicolor*) were not reported to come out of the forest to forage in the gardens.

May-July is the peak time for the Short-nosed fruit bat to forage in banana bunches, although they make visits throughout the year when the plants are flowering. The largest Pteropid of the country, *Pteropus giganteus*, occasionally feeds on the banana bunches. Jackfruit buds have been severely damaged by some squirrel species during January and February, while mature and ripe fruits are targeted by rhesus macaques during April and May.

Farmers must spend a large number of man-hours to keep the overnight raiders away throughout the season. They also invest in batteries for flashlights used in guarding their crop fields at night and incur expenses for other kinds of deterrents. The fact is that man invaded or occupied the wildlife habitats and now the animals are coming back to visit their former ranges as their habitats shrink.

The farmers are frustrated as they must guard their fields overnight throughout the pineapple crop season. The same is true during the daytime for the owners of gardens on the forest fringe. The gardens are planted too close to stop the wildlife residing in the park from joining the raids. To eliminate the problem of wildlife raids, a possible option would be the cultivation of alternative cash crops that are non-palatable to the garden raiders.

Table 1 List of crops damaged with mammalian species involved

| Crops name | Scientific name | Parts eaten | Species involved |
|------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| Pineapple | <i>Ananas sativus</i> | Fruits, buds, roots | <i>Ss, Hi, Mm</i> |
| Lemon | <i>Citrus</i> sp. | Fruits | <i>Ce</i> |
| Banana | <i>Musa sapientum</i> | Fruits, central piths | <i>Cs, Ss, Hi</i> |
| Jackfruit | <i>Artocarpus heterophylla</i> | Fruits, buds, seeds | <i>Mm, Ce</i> |
| Mango | <i>Mangifera indica</i> | Fruits, buds | <i>Mm, Ce</i> |
| Pumpkin | <i>Cucurbita moschata</i> | Fruits | <i>Ss, Ce</i> |

Species code: Mm-*Macaca mulatta*; Ce-*Callosciurus erythraeus*; Dl-*Dremomys lokriah*; Hi-*Hystrix indica*; Cs-*Cynopterus sphinx*; Ss-*Sus scrofa*.

Table 2 Area-wise crop damage with approximate economic loss

| Plot No. | Area (acres) | Crops cultivated | Major crops damaged | Economic loss (Tk.) (approx.) |
|----------|--------------|----------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1 | 13.5 | <i>As, Ms, Cs</i> | <i>As, Cs</i> | 2450.00 |
| 2 | 11.0 | <i>As, Ms, Cs, V</i> | <i>As, Ms</i> | 14500.00 |
| 3 | 11.0 | <i>As, Ms, Cs</i> | <i>As, Cs</i> | 23000.00 |
| 4 | 11.0 | <i>As, Ah, Cs</i> | <i>As, Ah</i> | 10400.00 |
| 5 | 5.3 | <i>As, Ah, C, Mi</i> | <i>Ah, Mi, Cs</i> | 27000.00 |
| 6 | 15.0 | <i>As, Ms, Mi</i> | <i>As, Ms</i> | 5200.00 |
| 7 | 15.0 | <i>As, Ms, Cs, V</i> | <i>Ah, As</i> | 13000.00 |
| 8 | 7.5 | <i>As, Ms, Cs</i> | <i>As, Ms</i> | 19000.00 |
| 9 | 6.0 | <i>As, Ms, Mi</i> | <i>As, Mi</i> | 12600.00 |
| 10 | 4.0 | <i>As, Cs, Cm</i> | <i>Ah, Cm</i> | 6200.00 |
| 11 | 8.0 | <i>Ms, Cs</i> | <i>Cm</i> | 4700.00 |

Total economic loss 138050.00 (2125 US\$)

Crop code: As-*Ananas sativus*; Ms-*Musa sapientum*; Mi-*Mangifera indica*; Cs-*Citrus* sp.; Ah-*Artocarpus heterophylla*; Cm-*Cucurbita moschata*; *Land under the Reserve forests.

Acknowledgements

The authors are grateful to the Jahangirnagar University authority for research grants that partially supported the study. They also acknowledge the assistance of the farmers and the forest officials who responded positively during the study.

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FOREST NEWS

Vol. XXI: No. 2 Apr-Jun 2007

WORLD'S FORESTRY OFFICIALS CONVENE IN ROME

The eighteenth session of the Committee on Forestry (COFO) convened 13-16 March 2007, in Rome. The session was well attended by 593 participants, including delegates from 130 countries, representatives of 9 United Nations agencies and programs, and observers from 31 international organizations and NGOs. Five Ministers and approximately 70 Heads of national forestry agencies participated.

Under the theme of “*weaving knowledge into development*,” the COFO agenda focused on the State of the World’s Forests 2007 (SOFO), forests and energy, forest protection, regional action on sustainable forest management, putting forestry to work at the local level, FAO’s forestry programs and activities, and arrangements for hosting the next World Forestry Congress. Plenary sessions were convened each morning and numerous side events were organized in simultaneous gatherings each afternoon. Participants appreciated this format as an effective approach for enhancing substantive exchanges on specific topics of interest.

The 2007 COFO session featured a number of new and innovative aspects:

- A COFO Steering Committee comprising Chairs of the Regional Forestry Commissions rotated the chairmanship of different agenda items in plenary. (The current Chair of the Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission (APFC), Mr. G.K. Prasad, was elected Chair of COFO.)
- An in-session seminar facilitated by UNEP featured active (including APFC) regional participation.

- Document bags were made by a community-based women’s project in Laos, and building pass cords were made by a community-based women’s project in Guatemala.
- The top 20 photos submitted in an international forestry photo contest were displayed in the FAO Atrium, with the contest winner acknowledged at the COFO reception.
- A special exhibit of old forestry books dating to the 18th century was organized in the David Lubin Library.
- An exhibit of 90 posters depicting FAO forestry projects was presented for participants’ viewing.
- Several information sessions featured presentations by partner organizations.
- A “project marketplace” was convened on the evening of 13 March, to give delegates an opportunity to make short presentations on field projects or initiatives.

The COFO session was well covered by the international media and daily internet coverage was provided by the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) through the Earth Negotiations Bulletin, which has 45,000 subscribers: <http://www.iisd.ca/FAO/cof18/>

The first paragraph of the IISD summary report reads as follows:

The eighteenth meeting of the FAO Committee on Forestry (COFO18) may be recorded in the annals of history as one of its most successful forest-related meetings. The meeting was superbly organized, disciplined

but broadly participatory and accommodating, richly informative and always running on time. Delegates found the massive exchange of information gratifying. The FAO, on the other hand, was pleased to receive considerable concrete guidance from delegations in crafting its future action programme. On the last day, some veteran participants described COFO18 as the most substantive forest policy meeting in years.

COFO recommendations

Of particular relevance for the Asia-Pacific region were the following COFO decisions and recommendations (extracted and edited from the full COFO report).

State of the World's Forests 2007 (SOFO)

- Delegates were provided with copies of the *State of the World's Forests 2007*, the seventh edition in the series. The 2007 release highlights regional reports on progress toward sustainable forest management, which were earlier reviewed and supplemented by the six regional forestry commissions, including the Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission.
- The Committee requested FAO to continue reporting on forest resources, products, policies and institutions—working with national focal points, regional forestry commissions, advisory committees, and other partners.

Forests and energy

The Committee recognized bioenergy as an important emerging issue, which affects many sectors. It recommended that FAO:

- assist countries to develop comprehensive and integrated national bioenergy strategies;
- prepare an analytical report on the social, economic, and environmental impacts of changes in the use of wood for energy generation;
- organize workshops to help increase institutional and technical capacity related to bioenergy, including wood energy;
- support countries in updating national information with respect to energy balances and potentials;

- facilitate dialogue with industry, private sector, and policy makers on bioenergy-related technologies;
- finalize guidelines for sustainable woodfuel production; and
- help develop information materials related to bioenergy, including incentives for bioenergy development.

Forest protection

Acknowledging the increasing threats to forest ecosystems from wildfires, pests, and invasive species, the Committee recommended that FAO:

- strengthen technical support to countries to address these threats and promote the exchange of information and experiences through networking, capacity building, and international cooperation;
- work with countries to promote, expand, and create linkages among the regional, subregional, and national networks on invasive species and fire management;
- facilitate the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines on Fire Management, through multi-stakeholder processes; and
- further investigate the link between climate change and forest health.

Putting forestry to work at the local level

The significant contributions of participatory forestry approaches were highlighted at the meeting and FAO was requested to:

- continue supporting member countries in developing and implementing national forest programmes;
- assist communities and smallholders to develop small-scale forest-based enterprises;
- assist countries in integrating forestry into poverty reduction strategies; and
- retain FAO staff capacity to effectively continue work in participatory forestry.

Regional action on sustainable forest management

The Committee held an in-session seminar on ways to boost regional forestry cooperation and action. Representatives of the six regional forestry commissions made presentations on

advancements, challenges, and ways forward, drawing examples from their respective regions. The Committee emphasized the need for greater linkages among regions and subregions to share lessons learned and information on best practices for addressing common problems.

Progressing toward sustainable forest management

The Committee requested FAO to:

- work with countries to develop, promote, and implement management tools to bridge the gap between policy and action at all levels;
- continue supporting the development, implementation and monitoring of national forest programs;
- collaborate with the Global Environment Facility (GEF) to assist developing countries in taking advantage of GEF as one possible source of funding;
- continue giving priority to forest resources assessments;
- work with countries and other partners to implement the Voluntary Guidelines on Responsible Management of Planted Forests; and
- strengthen the implementation of guidelines for reduced impact logging.

Decisions and recommendations of FAO bodies

The Committee appreciated the active role played by the regional forestry commissions and recommended that:

- each commission develop a program of work to facilitate the implementation of sustainable forest management;
- the roles of the regional forestry commissions be strengthened to provide enhanced linkage to the international dialogue of COFO and of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF); and
- FAO increase the allocation of resources and support for the work of the regional commissions.

Shaping an action program for FAO in forestry

FAO announced its intention to review its strategic plan for forestry before the next session of COFO in 2009. The Committee recommended that the regional forestry commissions be involved in the proposed strategic review, and that FAO provide opportunities for countries, the private sector, and civil society to contribute.

COFO supported the cross-sectoral approach of FAO's work in areas such as forests and water, forests and climate change, forests and poverty reduction, and forests and food security.

The Committee requested FAO to:

- continue support for forest policy and economics, outlook studies, institutional strengthening, ecotourism, and forest law enforcement and governance;
- strengthen its role as a knowledge and communication center for forestry, including publication of technical and policy reports, guidelines, and country information, and development of databases;
- work with partners to further harmonize forest-related reporting and terminology;
- support national monitoring, assessment, and reporting on forests, including their social and environmental benefits;
- continue support for sustainable mountain development and other fragile ecosystems, including mangroves;
- assist countries in strengthening their capacities for dealing with climate change; and
- support countries in better managing and using under-utilized wood species and in reforestation with suitable species.

To read the full report of the eighteenth session of COFO, please visit the following website: <http://www.fao.org/forestry/site/cofo/en>

BUREAUX OF THE REGIONAL FORESTRY COMMISSIONS EXCHANGE VIEWS

A meeting of officers from the six Regional Forestry Commissions (RFCs) and FAO regional and headquarters forestry staff was convened 11 March 2007, prior to the eighteenth session of COFO. The Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission (APFC) was well represented by Mr. G.K. Prasad and Mr. P. Dubey (India), Mr. Neil Hughes and Ms. J. Barfield (Australia), Mr. Zhang Zhongtian and Mr. Weng Xiaofeng (China), and Ms. Nguyen Tuong Van and Dr. Pham Duc Tuan (Vietnam).

Representatives of each commission presented summaries of ongoing, planned, and recently completed activities. The Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission report highlighted the following recent and ongoing activities:

- outcome of the twenty-first session of the APFC, convened in Dehradun, India, in April 2006;
- In Search of Excellence: Exemplary Forest Management in Asia-Pacific initiative;
- support for development and implementation of codes of practice for forest harvesting;

- establishment of the Asia-Pacific Forest Invasive Species Network (APFISN) and related network activities; and
- strengthening of capacity in the region for forest policy development and implementation.

The Bureaux meeting considered ways to strengthen the linkages between the regional forestry commissions and COFO, including:

- designating the RFC Chairs as members of the COFO Steering Committee;
- organizing inter-sessional activities of the COFO Steering Committee;
- enhancing the roles of the RFCs in shaping the agenda of future COFO sessions; and
- discussion of some of the same agenda items in RFCs and at COFO.

Officials also reviewed tentative dates and venues for upcoming sessions of the regional forestry commissions. The Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission will convene its twenty-second session in April 2008, in Vietnam.

NEW NFP FACILITY FACILITATOR FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Ms. Fan Xiaojie has been appointed the National Forest Programme Facility's new Facilitator for Asia and the Pacific, filling the position previously held by Thomas Enters. Ms. Fan took up her duties with FAO on 7 May, and will initially work from FAO headquarters in Rome, before relocating to the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific next year.

After obtaining her master's degree in economics from Beijing Forestry University, Ms. Fan joined the Ministry of Forestry, China. During her 13 years at the ministry, Ms. Fan dealt mainly with international cooperation, including 3 years as

Deputy Division Director of Multilateral Cooperation. She was also involved in developing national strategies and plans for international aid and cooperation, and acted as the Government's Focal Point in cooperating with various international agencies such as FAO, the World Food Programme (WFP) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).

From 1998 to 2003, Ms. Fan worked as a Programme Officer with the FAO office in China, where she supervised field operations and provided support to various development projects in the fields of forestry, natural resources

conservation, environmental protection, economic reform, poverty alleviation and others.

In January 2003, Ms. Fan joined the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), a service provider of project management and implementation services to the UN system and developing countries. She first worked as Head/

Portfolio Manager of the UNOPS Beijing Implementation Facility. In November 2004, Ms. Fan transferred to the UNOPS Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific in Bangkok, where she worked as Portfolio Manager, supporting project implementation in Cambodia, Lao PDR, the Philippines, DPR Korea, China, Mongolia and Timor-Leste.

RESOLVING CONFLICTS: TRAINING & MENTORING PROGRAM ON NATURAL RESOURCE RELATED CONFLICTS

Conflict is often an inevitable part of natural resource management, as local communities, NGOs, governments and companies frequently have very different views as to how resources should be managed and utilized. Such disputes, if unresolved, can result in a number of negative consequences, such as environmental degradation, the disruption or failure of projects, the weakening and undermining of livelihoods, and violence. Forestry and natural resource professionals are increasingly being called upon to mediate among various stakeholders in conflict situations.

To address these challenges, the FAO Livelihood Support Program organized a five-phase training and mentoring program on the management of natural resources-related conflicts in Indonesia, from November 2000 to March 2007. The training was conducted in collaboration with the Regional Community Forestry Training Center for Asia and the Pacific (RECOFTC), GTZ, and the Indonesian Ministry of Forestry. The training program was designed as a practical learning experience for professionals in the Ministry of Forestry, NGOs and the private sector working within participatory/collaborative natural resource management and rural livelihood projects. Special focus was given to South Sulawesi, East Kalimantan, and West Java. Participants were selected from these three regions and were required to be familiar with a conflict situation(s) in the course of their work.

The objectives of the training were to increase participants' understanding and ability to apply the overall concept of consensual negotiation, to broaden their knowledge of the role of third party mediation and the mediation process itself, and to enable participants to facilitate the mediation process between conflicting parties in practice. A further longer term objective was to contribute to the institutionalization and building of national capacity for replicating conflict management training courses in the future, particularly through the Indonesian Center for Forestry Education and Training.

The training program was a mix of workshops and practical application work. The five training phases consisted of:

- a workshop on conflict management theory, mediation, conflict analysis, basic communication and facilitation techniques;
- a practical application period of conflict analysis work;
- a training workshop on the development of mediation strategies based on conflict analysis findings and practicing of negotiation and mediation techniques;
- practical application of mediation/negotiation strategies supported by mentors through site visits; and
- a learning workshop to share and reflect on lessons learned, evaluate experience, and present case studies to a wider audience.

Throughout the program, participatory learning methods that centered on the needs and interests of the participants, and active engagement with the participants, were used to bring about changes in knowledge, skills and attitudes. More specifically, the program enhanced learning opportunities and outcomes by combining new information with analytical tools so that participants could reflect on their own work experiences and conflict situations.

The FAO-RECOFTC-GTZ-MoF training and mentoring program on “Managing Natural

Resource Related Conflicts” was ambitious and challenging, but ultimately successful and rewarding for all involved. The feedback from participants indicated that participants gained considerable insights into conflict analysis and conflict mediation and management processes and, importantly, that participants now have the confidence to apply these new learnings.

This commentary was provided by Peter Stephen, Capacity Building Services at RECOFTC; E-mail: opjs@ku.ac.th

HARMONIZING AND BROADENING NATIONAL FOREST INVENTORIES

Contributed by Masahiro Otsuka, FAO Forestry Officer, Forest Monitoring Assessment and Reporting

A training workshop on national forest inventories (NFIs) in Asia and the Pacific was held 26-31 March 2007 in Beijing, China, under the “Strengthening Monitoring, Assessment, and Reporting (MAR) on Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) in Asia Project” (GCP/INT/988/JPN). The workshop was organized by FAO in collaboration with the State Forest Administration of China and the International Network for Bamboo and Rattan (INBAR). Representatives of 19 countries attended the workshop to present and discuss broad technical issues on NFI.

The objectives of the workshop were to:

- enhance the capacity of NFIs through harmonization, broadening, and cross-sectoral integration of its methodology and content to limit the variations and ambiguities;
- deal with new information needs; and
- enhance linkages with other development sectors.

Country presentations on NFI revealed differences in techniques and terms of sampling, tree measurement, and statistical analysis. Due

to the lack of expertise, few countries have ever successfully assessed biomass or carbon levels. Systematic sampling is common for long-term monitoring of forests with GIS data, but randomization of numerous plots is required for economical sampling. Nine countries have applied stratified sampling using 2 to 40 strata for a more reliable inventory. Six countries have used cluster sampling to divide the population into selected clusters of proximate attributes to reduce the number of plots. Wide variations were observed in the participants’ understanding of sampling methods.

The presentations revealed that countries occasionally measure all or selected living tree species having diameters more than 5-10 cm with geo-references in their plots. They also estimate growing stock for important tree species with DBH and total height, using particular volume equations or tables. However, the different methods need to be further harmonized. Difficulties in maintaining permanent sample plots also impede accurate estimates of forest resource potentials.

There are considerable variations among countries in the definitions of commercial and non-commercial species depending on policy objectives. Accurate assessments of non-wood forest products will also be important. Meanwhile, increasing variables arising from diverse international demands are placing heavy burdens on field measurements and increasing survey costs. The annual allowable cut (AAC) for natural forests has tended to decrease in many countries, under pressure for their protection and the decrease in forest areas. Viable methods should be explored for estimating unrecorded wood removals. Some countries have developed socio-economic indicators, while a few others include them in the NFI system.

China presented the interim results of the Outlook Study for the Forestry Sector in 2020, comprising four scenarios in economic, environmental and institutional aspects. The participants suggested the formulation of a comprehensive scenario encompassing these aspects with emphasis on rural socio-economic factors, and the elaboration of a group of scenarios among countries with close linkages.

China also tested the application of the FAO manual on *Environmental and Economic Accounts for Forestry (EEAF)* at two sites. The EEAF provides strong support for research and coordination of cross-sectoral policies, but requires

improvement of the current statistical system through staff training. The participants underscored the importance of assessing the intangible values of forests, the sustainability of communities' resource use, and environmental benefits from forests.

Participants reviewed the methodologies of NFI and data management in the National Forest Assessment Programme supported by FAO. They also learned of incentives to reduce emissions from deforestation under UNFCCC and the Australian Initiative on Forests and Climate.

The participants discussed the development of a regional network of experts on NFI to share and exchange expertise on NFI systems among the Asia-Pacific countries. They suggested electronic networks using e-mail and internet, and back-to-back meetings with other conferences for easy and efficient organization.

The workshop examined the similarities and differences in NFI systems among the participating countries. The participants agreed to discuss and share expertise on broadening, harmonization, and cross-sectoral integration of their NFIs through the development of the NFI network. FAO was requested to provide countries with technical support using relevant guidelines and frameworks to strengthen capacities for NFI.

Korea provides additional support for MAR-SFM project

The Republic of Korea has signed an agreement with FAO, promising additional resources to strengthen sustainable forest management, joining an existing bilateral agreement between FAO and Japan. This marks the first time that the Republic of Korea is supporting an FAO forestry project.

Japan and the Republic of Korea will work together with FAO and participating countries to improve monitoring, assessment, and reporting (MAR) on forests, making it easier for national decision makers to use MAR information for development of forest policies and planning and to enhance the efficiency of national forest management regimes. The joint efforts will also aim to adequately link the national MAR systems with MDGs and overall sustainable development processes including poverty alleviation. Harmonization, broadening and strengthening of forest-related MAR are therefore of key importance for moving towards a better and strengthened sustainable forest management.

INCREASING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF FOREST POLICIES - LEARNING ABOUT THE POLICY PROCESS

Contributed by Thomas Enters, Forestry Consultant, Singtanaa

It appears that most forest policies in the Asia-Pacific region have not been sufficiently effective in bringing about sustainable forest management. Few people would contest this broad observation. Available information shows that the region's natural forests continue to decrease in area, and remaining forest resources in many locations are degraded to such an extent that the delivery of vital goods and services is severely strained. Comparing the content of forest policies with the reality on the ground can only lead to one conclusion: something is seriously wrong!

There is widespread agreement that the "something" is of a multi-faceted nature, and that a "one-size-fits-all" solution does not exist. Although most forest policies read well enough, many "could win prizes for science fiction because they are so filled with fantasy" (Byron, 2006, p. 11). Some are based on unrealistic assumptions (e.g., that the number of appropriately trained and paid staff is sufficient to enforce the law); others are based on unreliable data (e.g. protected areas and plantations that exist on paper only), wishful thinking (e.g., doubling the forest area within x number of years) or conventional wisdom (e.g., the contributions that tree planting can make to avert natural disasters).

The *implementation* of a good policy may suffer from the selection of poor policy instruments and a plethora of disincentives that encourage forest destruction instead of sustainable use. Policy formulation may have excluded the majority of key forestry stakeholders, who thus do not feel ownership or commitment toward the policy, whether they agree or disagree with it. There may not be adequate monitoring and evaluation mechanisms in place, which makes it ultimately impossible to say anything about the impact and effectiveness of the policy. In addition, it is often overlooked that forest policy is only one of the

factors influencing and impacting forests. There are many other factors – also called "drivers" – that determine the future of the region's forests. Many of these cross- or extra-sectoral factors are located outside the realm of forestry.

It is not difficult to see that many problems – in fact, all of the above – point to unsatisfactory policy processes. The process – or policy cycle – comprises four components or phases:

- problem identification and analysis;
- policy formulation (development, design);
- implementation; and
- review, including monitoring and evaluation (also called by some, "management and control").

Integral elements of the process include effective communication and coordination, data gathering and generation of information, awareness raising, stakeholder involvement and consultations, and institutional capacities.

The last of these elements – institutional capacity – was the focus of a recently launched initiative entitled "Executive Education – Forest Policy Short Course." The course was organized by the Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission (APFC) in collaboration with the National Forest Programme Facility (NFPF), the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), the USDA Forest Service, the Thailand Environment Institute (TEI), the Economy and Environment Program for Southeast Asia (EEPSEA), and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). The first short course was conducted 22 April - 4 May 2007, in Thailand.

The course brought together experienced international foresters, forest policy makers, and professional educators to address a curriculum that integrated analytical and communication skills with

an in-depth exploration of the economic, environmental and social issues that make forestry uniquely challenging with respect to policy making and implementation.

The 18 participants attending the first course came from Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Palau, Philippines, Thailand, Timor Leste, Vietnam and the Land Resources Division of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, based in Suva, Fiji. The core trainees consisted of mid- to upper-level forestry professionals playing important roles in all or parts of the policy process.

The rigorous course was put into a real-world context through the use of case studies and experienced practitioners from a range of areas, who led discussions on fundamental and topical issues related to forestry policy and the future of the region's forest resources.

A pre-course assignment formed the basis for the development of policy briefs on such important initiatives as the imposition of logging bans in natural forests, the provision of incentives for forest plantation development and land tenure issues.

A mid-course field visit brought participants in touch with the complex reality on the ground by visiting a paper and pulp processing plant, forest plantation areas and Khao Yai National Park.

Most indoor activities were held on the premises of TEI. A visit to the Regional Community Forestry Training Center (RECOFTC) was used to familiarize participants with how to effectively engage stakeholders in the policy process and conflict management.

The objectives of the course were to:

- raise awareness and improve understanding about the nature of analytical tools, as well as pitfalls in their application;
- present effective approaches to communication;
- demonstrate the importance of constructive stakeholder identification and involvement;
- recognize the diversity of regulatory and market-based policy instruments; and
- demonstrate the importance of practical monitoring and evaluation methods.

Can a two-week course really make a difference? Obviously, two weeks are not sufficient time to fully develop and build skills, but they are sufficient to improve understanding and convey knowledge. At the end of the course, participants had grasped the concept of the "Curse of Knowledge," as a barrier to simplicity and concreteness in communicating policy aspects, problems and solutions. They had learned to appreciate the effect of discounting on net present values of alternative courses of action. They could easily answer the question of whether involving key stakeholders in the policy process was necessary and distinguish between "command-and-control" approaches and market-based policy instruments. And last, but not least, they had become aware that many policy processes in the real world exist only in a truncated form and are often guided more by politics than in-depth analyses.

The course evaluation on the last day brought two main issues to light. First, the course was generally viewed as a success overall. Twelve of the 18 participants gave the course the highest possible rating of "very good." The other six participants assessed it as "good." On average, all the sessions were rated "good." Sessions actively involving participants in discussions and group work received higher grades.

Second, the evaluation confirmed that there is no room for complacency. There is plenty of scope for improvement, in particular with regard to engaging participants more in the sessions. Future courses will shift further from presentation-style training methods and give more opportunities for participants to provide inputs that will then be critically reviewed by course participants and trainers alike.

If you are interested in suggesting further recommendations to be incorporated in the next short course, or to obtain a copy of the report of the Executive Education – Forest Policy Short Course, please contact Patrick.Durst@fao.org.

Byron, N. 2006. Challenges in defining, implementing and renewing forest policies. *Unasylva* (223):10-15.

ASIA-PACIFIC FORESTRY CHIPS AND CLIPS

INDONESIA EMBARKS ON MASSIVE REFORESTATION PROGRAM

The Indonesian government has embarked on a large reforestation program to rehabilitate 52 million ha of degraded forest throughout the country. The government plans to plant two billion seedlings on two million ha of land this year, involving government institutions, timber companies and forest concession holders. Funding of 4.1 trillion rupiah (US\$445 million) has been earmarked to finance the program.

– *Jakarta Post* –

SARAWAK TIMBER ASSOCIATION CALLS FOR SIMPLER REGULATIONS

The Sarawak Timber Association (STA) urged the Malaysian Timber Certification Council (MTCC) to avoid factoring in too many new social and environmental variables in developing its new timber certification scheme. STA argued that this would help to prevent NGOs and local environmentalists from exploiting them, in order to prevent concession holders from obtaining certification.

– *ITTO TTM Report 12:8* –

PNG SIGNS AGREEMENT TO DEVELOP TIMBER INDUSTRY

The Government of Papua New Guinea signed an agreement with a subsidiary company of Malaysia's Yayasan Sabah Group to develop the country's timber industry. The PNG Minister of Forests claimed that the island nation could be exporting three times its current export levels and, as such, the industry had huge potential for growth.

– *ITTO TTM Report 12:8* –

GLOBAL FURNITURE EXPORT TO REACH \$100 BILLION IN 2007

World exports of furniture have been growing steadily for the last ten years, from \$42 billion in 1997 to an estimated \$100 billion in 2007. The growth is due to increased global demand for furniture and opening of markets in many countries. The main importing countries are the USA, Germany, UK, France and Japan. The main

furniture exporters are China, Italy, Germany, Poland and Canada.

– *ITTO TTM Report 12:8* –

VIETNAM LOOKS TO INCREASE FOREST COVER

Vietnam is targeting to increase its forest cover from the current 37 percent to 43 percent by 2010. The forestry sector also aims to boost annual export earnings from forest products to US\$7.8 billion, a threefold increase from last year's earnings of US\$2.16 billion. The Forestry Development Department under the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development will try to achieve these targets by creating an enabling environment for investment in reforestation and facilitating greater involvement of local communities in its forestry activities.

– *Viet Nam News* –

CHINA IS THE WORLD LEADER IN BAMBOO FLOORING

China's bamboo industry leads the world in size and technology. The country has 5.2 million ha of bamboo forests and 35 million farmers are involved in its plantation management and manufacturing of bamboo products. China produced 30 million m² of bamboo flooring in 2005, 60 percent of which was exported to Europe and North America.

– *ITTO TTM Report 12:6* –

ELEPHANT DUNG HELPS SCIENTISTS DEVELOP NEW BIOFUEL

A fungus discovered in elephant dung helped scientists produce a yeast which can efficiently ferment wood sugars. Biofuels are currently produced by extracting sugars from crops such as grains and sugar beets. Development of new technology to produce ethanol from fibrous materials such as straw and wood will greatly expand the potential of bioenergy, although it is expected to take five years or more until the technology becomes commercially viable.

– *Reuters* –

U.S. MANUFACTURERS DOMINATE CHINESE FURNITURE EXPORTS

According to some statistics, 60 percent of the furniture exported from China to the USA in 2005 was manufactured by U.S. companies based in China. Analysts predict that the output capacity of U.S. furniture companies in China will reach US\$10 billion in the next few years.

– *ITTO TTM Report 12:7* –

EU SUSPENDS IMPORTS OF RAMIN FROM MALAYSIA

The European Union has suspended imports of ramin wood (*Gonystylus* spp.) from Malaysia related to its listing in Appendix II of CITES, which took effect in January 2005. The suspension came as a surprise to some as the authorities in Malaysia had supposedly done what was required to protect the species under CITES regulations.

– *ITTO TTM Report 12:7* –

TROPICAL FOREST FELLED FOR BIOFUELS, ENVIRONMENTALISTS SAY

A number of environmental organizations claim that tropical rain forest is being felled for biofuels and urges government action. They cite cases of deforestation in Brazil, Indonesia and Malaysia to make way for energy crops, calling for the governments there to act, and for the EU to drop plans for mandatory blending of biofuels in transport fuels as part of its efforts to curb carbon emissions.

– *Planet Ark* –

AUSTRALIA LAUNCHES GLOBAL INITIATIVE ON FORESTS AND CLIMATE

Australia has committed A\$200 million over five years to a new fund to combat deforestation and global warming. Australia's Environment Minister said that the fund would be mostly spent in neighboring Indonesia, where illegal logging is stripping 2.1 million ha of forest every year in trade worth \$4 million. The fund will be modeled on an Asia-Pacific climate pact drawing together six of the world's biggest greenhouse gas emitters – Australia, China, USA, Japan, India and South Korea.

– *Reuters* –

JAPAN-FINANCED FOREST FELLED, EXPOSING LOCALS TO CALAMITIES

Residents in Quang Nam province are opposing an ongoing felling of forest that was planted by a Japanese-funded project. The forest protected the local people against extremely harsh conditions of high winds bringing in a severe chill in the winter and dry winds blowing up sands in the summer. The local government has zoned the forest area as a cemetery and issued a note last November allowing felling of the forest and mining for titanium. Recently, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development called for the mining to be halted and for the forest to be replanted.

– *Thanhniem News* –

CHINA SETS GUIDELINES FOR OVERSEAS FOREST PLANTATIONS

The State Forestry Administration (SFA) has formulated guidelines for the establishment of sustainable forest plantations abroad by Chinese enterprises. Once approved, the Ministry of Commerce and SFA will select some companies to implement the guidelines overseas on a trial basis. Under the guidelines, companies are to abide by all binding international conventions signed by China or host countries, and illegal logging and forest conversion are strictly prohibited.

– *ITTO TTM Report 12:7* –

THE SEVENTH SESSION OF THE UNFF

The Seventh Session of the United Nations Forum of Forests convened at the UN Headquarters in New York, 16-27 April 2007. Non-legally Binding Instrument (NLBI) on All Types of Forests and Multi-year Programme of Work (MYPOW) of the UNFF for 2007-2015 were discussed and adopted. Details are available at:

<http://www.un.org/esa/forests/session.html>

– *United Nations Forum on Forests* –



A NEW FOREST POLICY FOR THE MALDIVES

Contributed by Jeremy Broadhead, Assistant Coordinator, Forestry Programme for Early Rehabilitation in Asian Tsunami-Affected Countries

During 2006 and 2007, the Government of Finland-funded FAO project “Forestry programme for early rehabilitation in Asian tsunami-affected countries,” executed by FAO, provided support for the development of a foundational forest policy for the Maldives. The policy not only provides a first step along the road to creation of a forest sector, but provides important environmental and social provisions in relation to the forests and trees of the Maldives.

The geography of the Maldives creates interesting challenges for forest policy, and several factors had to be taken into consideration from the very beginning of policy development. The Maldives consists of 1,192 islands grouped into 26 atolls. The total land area of 30,000 hectares is scattered over 900 kilometers stretching north-south in the Indian Ocean. The total population of 300,000 is spread over just 200 inhabited islands. Another 100 islands are designated as tourist resorts and 56 are reserved for industrial use. Of the inhabited islands, only 28 have a land area of more than 100 hectares and the average elevation of the islands is just 1.5 meters above sea level. Although outer reefs protect the islands from ocean waves, 88 of the inhabited islands suffer major problems due to beach erosion, and rising sea levels resulting from global warming are a major risk for the Maldives.

The forest area of the Maldives is not known precisely, although the FAO Forest Resources Assessment of 2005 estimated a total of 1,000 hectares and the Agricultural Development Master Plan of Maldives (2006-2020) includes an estimate of 3,716 hectares. The forests of the Maldives play an important role in providing timber and other products for local use, and environmental services important in conserving the natural heritage of the Maldives. Littoral forests and bushes also have an important role in coastal protection, acting as barriers against strong winds

and deflecting salt spray, while preventing the influx of salt water into the islands’ fresh water aquifers during the spring tides or floods. Trees and other woody vegetation cannot, however, protect the islands from rising sea levels, and their capacity to prevent serious coastal erosion is limited.

Forests and trees are traditionally highly valued in the Maldives, but until now there was no official policy to maintain, protect, conserve and sustainably utilize the forest and tree resources. The 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami demonstrated the vulnerability of the Maldives and its forest and trees; it also confirmed the importance of the protective function of forests and trees. There is a broad-based understanding in Maldives that it is now time to establish an official forest policy to secure the continuing existence of forests and trees, and the maintenance of their contribution to the well-being of the Maldivian people.

Maldivian society is closely linked with the forest and trees available on the islands, particularly coconut palm, fruit trees and several timber trees. The lack of metals and stones, (other than coral stone) means that wood and other forest products have traditionally been used to construct practically all items including boats, rafts, piers, houses, coconut husk ropes, wooden pegs to join timbers, mats made of coconut palm or screw pine leaves, furniture, cooking utensils, fishing equipment, etc.

Forests and trees have several important functions in the economy of Maldives today. The direct benefits for the economy are becoming relatively less important in comparison with the increasingly important indirect benefits.

As regards direct benefits, the most obvious and measurable ones are from the wood used in the construction of houses, boats and furniture, to make handicrafts, and for firewood. Secondly, and probably of greater economic importance, are the

non-timber forest and tree products such as coconuts and other fruits and nuts; leaves used to make mats for roofing, walls and other covering applications; gums and resins used in boat building and various traditional medicinal products which are still widely used.

Increasingly important are the indirect benefits of forests and trees that include: i) coastal protection (against wave erosion, salt spray, wind); (ii) amenity and aesthetic values that are vital for the success of tourism; and (iii) the provision of shade in making everyday toils bearable. It is also noted that forests and other growing vegetation act as carbon sinks.

Apart from the limited land area available for growing forest and tree products, the high cost of transport is one of the main bottlenecks hindering increased forest and tree-based production. Consequently, high value added and high unit value products must be targeted instead of bulk products.

The new draft policy covers the management of forests, trees and bushes within and outside forests, whether publicly or privately owned. The goal and objective of the proposed new forest policy is:

Green Maldives with protected coastline, plant diversity, amenity and income to local people, through participatory management of forests and trees by local communities.

The policy goal will be reached through the following policy objectives:

- *Protection of coastlines:* The inherently unstable shores of the low-lying coralline islands of Maldives, threatened by a rising sea level due to global climate change, will be protected by well stocked and sustainably managed buffer zones, 30 meters wide wherever possible, composed of multi-purpose, salt-tolerant trees and bushes.
- *Biodiversity conservation:* The fragile terrestrial ecosystems of the Maldives, threatened by population pressure, economic development, the invasion of exotic plant and

animal species, and coupled with the small size of the islands, will be protected through sustainable multi-purpose management of the remaining forest areas, the re-introduction of rare and threatened tree and other plant species, and conservation of adequate samples of terrestrial ecosystems by establishing a network of conservation islands.

- *Landscape beauty:* In order to maintain and enhance the charm of the landscape of the Maldives, and to provide a pleasant and cool environment for everyday life in urban areas, appropriate and well-growing shade and other amenity trees, including suitable fruit trees, will be maintained and planted in increasing numbers throughout the country.
- *Forest- and tree-based income:* Further processing (high value added) and marketing of local timber and non-timber forest produce (high unit value) is encouraged. Bulk products are mainly to be imported. The sustainable supply of high-value timber and non-timber forest products is to be secured through efficient and planned management of multi-purpose forests. This will provide income to local people, both in procuring the necessary forest-based raw materials, and in the processing of the products (i.e. wooden boats, souvenir items, etc.).

The key management approaches suggested include switching to decentralized management by devolving rights and responsibilities to local communities. The strategies and key actions for each of the forest policy objectives are organized according to the main types of islands: inhabited islands, uninhabited islands used for agricultural production, and tourist resort islands. A major awareness raising campaign on the threats and opportunities related to forests and trees in Maldives is required to support the new policy. As such, the present forest policy will be launched and communicated through a major awareness raising and information campaign utilizing the mass media, including radio and television.



(Photo: Thomas Loosli, FAO Forestry Photos)

MANGROVES FOR THE FUTURE

A strategy for promoting investment in coastal ecosystem conservation

The initiative known as ‘*Mangroves for the Future*’ was launched in December 2006 in Phuket, Thailand, by former US President Bill Clinton, under the auspices of the United Nations. The initiative will address restoration and conservation priorities alongside livelihood aspects in all coastal ecosystems, from mangrove forests to coral reefs. Although the initiative uses mangroves as the flagship species, it works in all types of natural coastal ecosystems.

Mangroves for the Future (MFF) is a partnership-led initiative aimed at promoting investment and action in ecosystem conservation for sustainable coastal development. The objectives of the initiative are:

- To strengthen the environmental sustainability of coastal development; and
- To promote the investment of funds and effort in coastal ecosystem management for sustainable development.

The initiative seeks to effect demonstrable changes and results across four key areas of influence: regional cooperation, national programme support, private sector engagement and community action. It uses a strategy of generating knowledge-empowering institutions and people to use that

knowledge and thereby promoting good governance in coastal areas. The initiative builds on the long history of coastal management interventions in the region, as well as from the recent lessons learned during post-tsunami reconstruction.

Although it is impossible to prevent natural disasters from happening, it is possible to take steps to reduce people’s vulnerability to them and mitigate their impacts. *Mangroves for the Future* initially targets countries that are recovering from the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami. During its inception phase the focus will be on India, Indonesia, Maldives, Seychelles, Sri Lanka and Thailand (MFF “focal countries”). Dialogue and sharing of information will also be initiated with other countries in the Indian Ocean region. These “dialogue countries” will be included in MFF national activities at a later stage.

At the regional level, implementation of the initiative will be overseen by a Regional Steering Committee, which is intended to:

- provide strategic oversight and guidance;
- mobilize resources and facilitate allocation of resources to areas of greatest need;

- promote regionally harmonized monitoring and management of coastal ecosystems;
- promote regional dialogue, information dissemination, and sharing of lessons learned about coastal ecosystems and livelihoods; and
- support national capacity building.

The newly-formed Regional Steering Committee met for the first time in May 2007, in Bangkok, at the invitation of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Conservation Union (IUCN). The Regional Steering Committee is comprised of government representatives from India, Indonesia, Thailand, Maldives, Seychelles and Sri Lanka, and from UNDP, IUCN, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), CARE, Wetlands International and World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF). Key contributors such as the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and Norway also attended the first Steering Committee meeting as observers.

To date, the *Mangroves for the Future* initiative has raised US\$13 million from bilateral donors such as Australia, Germany, Norway and Sweden, as well as UN agencies, for actions at both regional and country levels. Fundraising efforts will continue to ensure sustained investments in coastal ecosystems.

“National Coordinating Bodies” will now be set up in the six MFF focal countries, with representatives of state agencies, UN organizations, NGOs and civil society defining priorities. The need for more emphasis on awareness and private sector engagement was highlighted. The National Coordinating Bodies will coordinate the implementation of the initiative at the national level, and foster learning and dialogue among partners. A call for project proposals – the template of which is currently under preparation by the MFF secretariat – will soon be released.

Although infrastructure investments made by the private sector in coastal areas, especially the tourism industry, are huge, Indian Ocean shorelines are under threat as never before. Both natural disasters like the 2004 tsunami and man-made hazards such as over-fishing, marine pollution and coastal erosion, demonstrate the

vulnerability of Indian Ocean coasts and call for an urgent response.

A general consensus has emerged, essentially post-tsunami, that unless development and reconstruction efforts address the broader conditions of poverty, coastal populations in South, Southeast Asia and in the Western Indian Ocean region will remain highly vulnerable and ill-equipped to withstand future pressures and disasters.

During the inception phase (early 2007-March 2008) the *Mangroves for the Future* partner organizations will undertake immediate management and technical actions, identified as essential steps upon which to build up the full initiative. Within this framework, FAO will develop various activities, including:

- preparation of a summary of the status and trends of mangroves in the MFF focal countries, based on previous FAO-led work (mainly the worldwide mangrove status and trends – a thematic study within the framework of the Forest Resources Assessment 2005 – and also the proceedings from the Khao Lak Workshop on coastal protection and other documentation prepared by the forestry programme for early rehabilitation in Asian tsunami affected countries), which will be shared with the countries and the partner organizations as a technical background paper for forthcoming MFF actions;
- support for a review of lessons learned and best practices on coastal ecosystem restoration (focusing on mangroves);
- preparation of a roster of mangrove experts, to support the establishment of a Technical Advisory Group to the MFF; and
- a gap analysis of existing knowledge and data sources as compared to the needs of coastal managers (conducted in collaboration with UNEP, other RSC members and additional partners).

For further information, please visit the website www.iucn.org/asia or contact:

Kent Jingfors, Regional Programme Coordinator, IUCN-The World Conservation Union, Asia Region; Tel: +02 662 4391; E-mail: kent@iucnt.org

FAO ASIA-PACIFIC FORESTRY CALENDAR

6-8 August 2007. Bangkok, Thailand. **Asia-Pacific Tropical Forest Investment Forum: Issues and Opportunities for Investing in Natural Tropical Forests**. Contact: Simmathiri Appanah, NFP Adviser, FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, 39 Phra Atit Road, Bangkok 10200, Thailand; Tel.(662) 697-4136; Fax: (662) 697-4445; E-mail: Simmathiri.Appanah@fao.org

21-22 August 2007. Manila, Philippines. **Regional Workshop on Establishing an Asia-Pacific Forest Policy Think Tank**. Contact: P. Durst, Senior Forestry Officer, FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, 39 Phra Atit Road, Bangkok 10200, Thailand; Tel.(662) 697-4139; Fax: (662) 697-4445; E-mail: Patrick.Durst@fao.org

30-31 August 2007. Hua Hin, Thailand. **Fourth Meeting of the Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission Executive Committee**. Contact: Regan Suzuki, FAO Associate Consultant, FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, 39 Phra Atit Road, Bangkok 10200, Thailand; Tel.(662) 697-4112; Fax: (662) 697-4445; E-mail: Regan.Suzuki@fao.org

3-7 September 2007. Bangkok, Thailand. **International Conference on Poverty Reduction and Forests Tenure, Market and Policy Reforms**. Co-organized by RECOFTC, FAO, RRI, Asia Forest Network, Finland Embassy, JICA and the World Bank. Conference website: <http://conference.recoftc.org>

11-13 September 2007. Manila, Philippines. **Regional Workshop on Forest Law Compliance and Governance**. Co-organized by FAO, ITTO and the Philippines Department of Environment and Natural Resources. Contact, Eva Muller, Chief, FOEP, FAO Forestry Department, Via delle Terme di Caracalla, 00100, Rome, Italy; E-mail: Eva.Muller@fao.org

September 2007 (dates to be confirmed). Chengdu or Beijing, China. **APFISN Workshop on Pest Risk Assessments**. Contact: K.V. Sankaran, APFISN Coordinator; E-mail: sankaran@kfri.org

10-12 October 2007. Nadi, Fiji. **Workshop on Monitoring, Assessment, and Reporting for Sustainable Forest Management in the South Pacific Region**. Contact: Masahiro Otsuka, Forestry Officer (Forest Monitoring Assessment and Reporting), FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, 39 Phra Atit Road, Bangkok 10200, Thailand; Tel.(662) 697-4130; Fax: (662) 697-4445; E-mail: Masahiro.Otsuka@fao.org

16-18 October 2007. Chiang Mai, Thailand. **The Future of Forests in Asia and the Pacific**. Contact: P. Durst, Senior Forestry Officer, FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, 39 Phra Atit Road, Bangkok 10200, Thailand; Tel.(662) 697-4139; Fax: (662) 697-4445; E-mail: Patrick.Durst@fao.org

19-20 October 2007. Chiang Mai, Thailand. **APFSOS National Focal Points Workshop and APFSOS Scientific Committee Meeting**. Contact: P. Durst, Senior Forestry Officer, FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, 39 Phra Atit Road, Bangkok 10200, Thailand; Tel.(662) 697-4139; Fax: (662) 697-4445; E-mail: Patrick.Durst@fao.org

21-25 April 2008. Hanoi, Vietnam. **22nd Session of the Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission**. Contact: P. Durst, Senior Forestry Officer, FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, 39 Phra Atit Road, Bangkok 10200, Thailand; Tel.(662) 697-4139; Fax: (662) 697-4445; E-mail: Patrick.Durst@fao.org

FOREST NEWS is issued by the FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific as part of TIGERPAPER. This issue of FOREST NEWS was compiled by Patrick B. Durst, Senior Forestry Officer, FAO/RAP.

FORESTRY PUBLICATIONS: FAO REGIONAL OFFICE FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC (RAP)

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