

2 cobras rescued from Navi Mumbai housing complexes

Due to the sudden change in night temperatures in the ongoing winter season, many reptiles like snakes seek warmer nooks within buildings and houses in order to maintain their body temperatures. In this regard, two bespectacled cobras have been rescued from Ghansoli and Koparkhairane areas in a span of three days recently after the snakes trespassed into the society complexes.

Reptile expert and snake rescuer, Akshay Dange, told Mumbai Mirror: "As the winter season has crept in, and there is cold night chill of as low as 14 degrees Celsius at certain places in the city, the snakes often feel uncomfortable and so start searching for warmer places, like building compounds and ground floor houses. I have rescued two cobras of length 3.5 ft to 4 feet from Ghansoli and Koparkhairane housing complexes." Dange further added, "The cobra rescued from Ghansoli had tried to hide itself around the wheel of a bicycle, while the Koparkhairane cobra was also trying to settle in one corner of a flat to escape the cold wind. We have rescued both the snakes and released them safely in the wild." A city based green activist added: "While it is understandable that snakes will try to protect themselves in the winter, as they are cold-blooded creatures, the rampant destruction of tree cover, wetlands and mangroves have further destroyed the habitats of snakes, and other dependent wildlife species. Hence, we have a sorry situation of snakes seeking warmer spots inside buildings which were once their wildlife havens before humans started construction activities there. Hence, our trees and forests must be protected." — **VIJAY SINGH**

After sedation, Bullet lodged in kraal at ATR; elephant yet to recover fully

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

@ Coimbatore

A day after sedating the tusker, nicknamed Bullet aka Kottamalai Baskar, it was lodged at a kraal at Varagaliyar in Anamalai Tiger Reserve (ATR) by Saturday afternoon.

Sources said after releasing the elephant inside Varagaliyar forest on Saturday morning, it was lodged in a kraal by 2 pm with the help of kumki elephants. This was done as per the instructions of Chief Wildlife Warden (CWLW).

“The animal was soft-released. In this process, three to four kumkis will be stationed nearby, and the veterinarians will moni-



The jumbo after sedation | EXPRESS

tor the animal by watching his behaviour at a close distance. This method has less human interference. It will be shifted inside the reserve forest after its stress and aggressive nature reduce. He might have to be in the kraal for just over a week,” said

an official of ATR.

The condition of the animal will be known in the next few days as it is slowly recovering from the sedation and is trying to adapt the new atmosphere. It quenched its thirst and consumed green fodder that was taken from the forest and kept inside the kraal. “The animal is slowly recovering from sedation, but not yet fully recovered,” the official pointed out.

The elephant which was frequently damaging crops and houses was captured at Ayyankolly on Friday evening 5pm by a team of 50 forest staff headed by Gudalur DFO N Venkatesh Prabhu and transported in a lorry to Varagaliyar in ATR.

Bid to tranquillise tiger Zeenat fails, forest officials remain on their toes

Shrabana Chatterjee
KOLKATA

Tranquilliser darts were used on the female tiger Zeenat that is on the prowl in West Bengal's Jangalmahal region, but attempts to capture it has failed. On Saturday, the tiger was located in Bankura district, the third district of southern Bengal since it strayed to West Bengal after running away from the Similipal National Park in neighbouring Odisha on December 10.

The three-year-old stray wild cat has been changing her location every few days and has kept the West Bengal Forest Department on edge ever since she entered the State from Jharkhand on December 19.

Multiple attempts to catch Zeenat have failed and she has reportedly



Tiger Zeenat was last sighted in the Ranibandh area of Bankura in West Bengal on Saturday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

killed over three domestic goats.

She was first spotted in Jhargram district, and then she travelled to the Bandwan area of Purulia district on Thursday. She moved to Purulia's Dangardi forests in Manbazar for only a day. She was in Purulia's Bandwan for over five days. Now, she is in the Ranibandh area of Bankura, ac-

cording to Forest Department officials.

Speaking to *The Hindu*, Debal Roy, Chief Wildlife Warden, said: "We made an attempt to tranquillise her at 4 p.m. on Saturday, December 28, but that failed. Our teams are on constant watch. We are trying our best and setting up cages in multiple locations. We are using both active

and passive methods to get hold of her."

Mr. Roy mentioned that there have been no reports of any locals being injured or attacked by the tiger to date even as the big cat remains on the move across three districts of southern Bengal. Officials have set up fencing across multiple locations to avoid any conflict. According to Forest officials, they now have three teams on constant watch in Bankura's Ranibandh area, where the tiger was last sighted.

They are employing modern technology, such as drones with thermal imaging, night vision devices, and monitoring teams, and even using goats as bait to manage the situation and either capture the tiger or guide her back along the path she entered.

Cancel New Year festivities: Cubbon Park walkers

NT Correspondent

BENGALURU

Walkers at Cubbon Park have urged the state government to cancel New Year's Eve celebrations within the park, citing violations of park rules and potential disturbances to wildlife.

Spread over 300 acres in the heart of Bengaluru, Cubbon Park is surrounded by

prominent landmarks such as Vidhana Soudha, K.R. Circle, and M.G. Road. Traditionally, the area sees a surge of activity on the day.

However, S. Umesh, President of the Cubbon Park Walkers Association, has pointed out that the Cubbon Park Conservation Committee has explicitly banned activities such as playing music and consuming alcohol.



Sunday Midday

Mumbai, 29 December 2024

Down the spider trail



Hasarius mumbai

YOU are probably lounging at home, sipping a warm cup of chai while reading the papers this Sunday morning. Meanwhile, arachnologist and research scholar, Rishikesh Tripathi, is leading Mumbaikars on a spider trail at Sanjay Gandhi National Park. The walk's participants will meet *Hasarius mumbai*, a spider native to the city who is saved from high rentals as its habitat is Yeoor.

The *Hasarius mumbai* is a jumping spider, meaning that it does not trap its prey in a web. Instead, it pounces on it. With a bulbous body covered in hair and eight eyes, this spider was discovered roughly two years ago. "Once this spider was discovered, we got more curious to see what other species we could find. The speed of development in the city could mean that we might lose species that have not been described yet. Through this spider trail, we want to tell people about the *Hasarius mumbai*, but also educate them about spiders," says Tripathi. So far, Tripathi has described 30 species of spiders across India.

Participants will learn all about spiders, and how to identify them. As natural pest controllers, they are important to the environment. Follow

@sanjaygandhinatio
nalpark_yeour
on Instagram
to learn more
about the next
walk.



Rishikesh Tripathi

Eye on the tiger



In 2024, K'taka lost 13 tigers, but experts say numbers may not be telling the whole story

| Garima Prasher
garima.prasher@timesofindia.com

TWEETS @BangaloreMIRROR

As many as 13 tiger deaths have been reported in Karnataka in 2024. According to the latest statistics, 124 tiger mortalities were reported this year from 13 states nationwide.

The highest number of deaths (45) this year have been recorded in Madhya Pradesh, followed by 18 in Maharashtra.

Over the last four years, Karnataka has lost 58 tigers. In 2023, total tiger mortality in Karnataka was 12, whereas in 2022, 18 tiger deaths were reported by the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA). In 2021 15 tiger deaths were recorded. Out of 13 mortalities reported in Karnataka this year, 12 were adult tigers and one was cub.

Out of 13 deaths, 11 were reported between January and June; only two deaths have been reported over

the last six months.
“On average, the number of tiger deaths in a year, as per NTCA, has been hovering around the same number. Moreover, the majority of the deaths take place in the first few months due to territorial fights,” said a city-based conservationist.

Unreported deaths
However, experts say the number projected by NTCA is downplayed and unreported. Moreover, the agency must consider the number of tigers that are being captured as well.

“Some cases of tiger deaths are surely going unreported due to various reasons. Poor on-foot patrolling is one of the main causes leading to unreported mortality cases. The forest department should strengthen the team of forest guards and watchers. NTCA should also include the number of tigers that are being captured and removed from their natural habitat,” said Joseph Hoover, former State Board of Wildlife member and founder of the United Conservation Movement and Charitable Trust.

Monitoring system
Experts underline that the Monitoring System for Tigers: Intensive Protection and Ecological Status (MSTripes) platform by NTCA can be used more effectively. The platform modern technology to assist forest watchers and guards in effective patrolling, assesses ecological status, and mitigates human-wildlife conflict in and around tiger reserves.

MSTripes uses Global Positioning System (GPS), General Packet Radio Services (GPRS), and remote sensing; to collect information from the field, create a database using modern Information Technology (IT) based tools, analyse the information using GIS and statistical tools to provide inferences that allow tiger reserve managers to better manage their wildlife resources.

Conservationists say, the application, if used effectively, can help in better patrolling and timely discoveries of dead animals.

“In many cases, the carcass of elephants goes unnoticed for several months. The patrol module of the programme maintains a spatial database of patrol track logs, crime scenes with geo-tagged photographs, and important observations made by field staff while on different types of patrol duties,” said a wildlife conservationist.

“Poor on-foot patrolling is one of the main causes leading to unreported deaths. The forest dept should strengthen the team of forest guards, watchers
-Joseph Hoover, United Conservation Movement and Charitable Trust

Foresters worried over environmental pollution around Pobitora

STAFF REPORTER

GUWAHATI, Dec 28: Loudspeakers, bursting of crackers and similar environmental pollution near Chanaka hills adjacent to Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary is having detrimental effect on wildlife, leaving foresters worried.

Ahead of the picnic season, the district administration had imposed several restrictions, but revellers have been blatantly violating the directions.

Gatherings have been banned after 5 pm, and the use of high volume loud speakers etc has also been prohibited. But sources said little has been done to enforce them.

It is learnt that Pobitora Range Officer Pranjali Baruah has now written to the Morigaon district administration officials to control the environmental pollution around the habitat as they have been severely "disrupting wildlife".

Loud noises, including



bursting of crackers have been causing stress to the animals, besides affecting their natural movement.

Resort owners at Chanaka have set up multiple temporary huts and tents in the sand bars for attracting visitors. Use of high intensity lights was also repelling winter visitors like migratory birds.

"Parties are being held till late in the night. The revelers have been bursting high intensity crackers, using loud sound systems. A lot of plastic waste is also been gener-

ated in the area. Worse, the resort owners are also erecting fences which is restricting animal movement," a local said.

The foothills of Chanaka - part of the erstwhile Rajamayang Reserve Forest - is rich in ecotone species, having both aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems. The area attracts migratory birds during the winters, serving as a vital site for roosting and feeding. Among different endangered species, the area is home to the oriental pied hornbill, mon-

itor lizard, ganges soft-shell turtle, leopard, fishing cat, golden jackal, civet, pangolin, hedgehog, Gangetic river dolphin, sambar etc.

There have been several incidents of man-animal conflict around the sanctuary in recent times, leading to loss of human lives and properties.

Several species rely on sound for communication, navigation and hunting like bats, dolphins and certain birds. Noise pollution can drown out these essential sounds, leading to difficulty in finding food, avoiding predators and attracting mates. Noise can also interfere with breeding rituals of animals.

"If animals become too accustomed to human activity, they may lose their natural fear of humans, leading to dangerous interactions. Continual disturbance from human activity can cause long-term changes in wildlife behaviors, population distribution, and even species survival," foresters said.

Koppal greens oppose N-plant near bear sanctuary, monolithic site

RAGHOTTAM KOPPAR @ Koppal

KOPPAL farmers, social activists, ecologists and history lovers have opposed a survey to set up a nuclear power plant near Arasinakeri Bear Sanctuary and Hirebenkala Megalithic sites.

The central government has planned a nuclear power plant in Koppal district, but environmentalists and farmers have raised concerns over its impact on wildlife, human settlements and Tungabhadra reservoir. The Gangavati taluk administration recently conducted the survey



near Chikka Benakal and identified 1,200 acres for the power plant and submitted a report to the district administration.

Hirebenkal is one of largest

megalithic sites in Karnataka. Protected by the Archaeological Survey of India, it has approximately 400 megalithic structures built about 2,800 years ago. History lovers say it has been proposed to be included in the UNESCO World Heritage site list. If the nuclear power plant is set up here, it may harm the site. Villagers around Hirebenkal said they will face health issues if the power plant is set up in the vicinity.

The Arasinakeri forest along with Methgal and nearby agricultural lands falls under the

Bear Sanctuary's jurisdiction. The region is known for its rich wildlife, including bears, leopards, wolves and rabbits. Recent road accidents, human encroachments and deforestation have already harmed the bear population. If a nuclear power plant is set up, it will definitely impact wildlife, environmentalists argue.

Arasinkeri villagers said the district administration can identify other land which is safer. If the administration goes ahead with its plan, the villagers threatened to protest in front of the

deputy commissioner's office. Former MLC HR Srinath of Koppal told the media that the proposal should be cancelled or they will stage an intense protest.

Lingaraj Hosamani, a farmer, said, "The district administration is silently conducting surveys. But DC Nalin Atul very well knows that the Bear Sanctuary and Monolithic sites are like cynosures of our district. We have to save them. If a nuclear power plant comes up here, we all know the effects. We are already suffering from thick, black smoke from industries."

Marine heatwave killed four million Alaska seabirds

The Hindu Bureau

The 2014-2016 Pacific marine heatwave wiped out more than half – roughly four million – of Alaska’s common murre (*Uria aalge*) seabirds, representing the largest documented vertebrate die-off linked to warming oceans, according to a new study. “Although research on the impacts of global warming on marine birds has clearly suggested major shifts in

species’ ranges and abundance, documented changes have been gradual (years to decades). To our knowledge, this study is the first to show that climate impacts can be swift (one year) and intense (eliminating half of the population),” authors of a study write. “Seabird mortalities are often observed in association with heatwaves, but population impacts are not well understood.” Marine

heatwaves – intense, prolonged, and expansive ocean warming events – are becoming increasingly common due to climate change. They are profoundly reshaping marine ecosystems globally.

These heatwaves lead to mass mortality of key habitat-forming species like kelps and corals, triggering cascading trophic effects that alter ecosystem productivity, displace lower-trophic-level species, and

amplify food shortages for top predators. Although many upper-trophic-level species suffer from reduced reproductive success, increased mortality, and even mass die-offs due to marine heatwaves, broader population impacts are poorly understood.

Analysing colony counts before that period (2008-14), and after (2016-22), the authors documented a 52-78% population decline

across 13 murre colonies, equating to the loss of four million birds within the span of less than two years. According to them, this represents the largest documented wildlife mortality event in the modern era. Moreover, the findings reveal no evidence of population recovery since, suggesting potential long-term ecosystem shifts and an overall diminished capacity to support historical seabird populations. “Recent

population abundance estimates since then have found no evidence of recovery, suggesting that the heatwave may have led to an ecosystem shift,” the Editor’s summary says. “We suggest that the pronounced decline of an abundant and widespread upper trophic predator to less than half of its former population size in Alaska may signal a new threshold of response to global warming,” they write.

M'laya grapples with elephant poaching, man-wildlife conflict

By Our Reporter

SHILLONG, Dec 28: While human-elephant conflict in Meghalaya often dominates conservation discussions due to its impact on crops, property and lives, a troubling statistic remains overlooked—the state recorded 14 elephant poaching cases between 2019 and 2023, the second-highest in India, according to data from the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC).

Meghalaya accounts for nearly 28 per cent of the 50 elephant poaching cases reported across India during this period, trailing only Odisha, which recorded 17 cases. Tamil Nadu reported 10 cases, while states like Assam, Kerala and Nagaland reported three or fewer.

The rise in poaching adds

another layer to the decades-long human-elephant conflict in Meghalaya. Between 2009 and 2021, over 10,500 incidents of human-elephant conflict were reported, resulting in 66 human deaths, 50 injuries, and extensive crop and property damage.

The dual threats of habitat loss and targeted killing now loom large over the state's elephant population.

Experts attribute the poaching to illegal ivory trade networks and retaliatory killings, both exacerbated by human encroachments into elephant habitats. Deforestation, mining and agricultural expansion have fragmented forests, forcing elephants to venture into human settlements. These incursions often lead to crop raids and violent encounters.

The rapid loss of forest cover further compounds

the issue.

Census data from 2017 shows Meghalaya hosts a significant elephant population, particularly in Balpakram National Park and Khasi Wildlife Division. However, the state's elephant reserves and corridors remain underdeveloped.

For instance, a proposed elephant reserve in Khasi Hills—an area with the highest conflict density—has yet to materialise.

While South Garo Hills has seen a decline in crop damage incidents, Khasi Hills continues to report steady or increasing cases of conflict.

Adding to these challenges is the transboundary movement of elephants between Meghalaya and Bangladesh, which often leads to encounters in agricultural fields, escalating tensions further.

New turtle nesting season begins with first batch of 65 Olive Ridley eggs at Agonda beach

THE GOAN NETWORK

CANACONA

In a boost to the South Goa Marine Range of the Forest Department, the new turtle nesting season got its first batch of 65 Olive Ridley turtle eggs at the Agonda Turtle Rehabilitation Centre (TRC) early Saturday morning.

The turtle nesting season got delayed this time, as the season normally begins in October end or beginning of November.

An Olive Ridley turtle arrived at the Agonda beach at about 5.48 am on Saturday and dug

out a pit to lay 65 eggs, before returning to the sea.

The Forest Department appointed guards monitoring the shore since October later shifted all 65 eggs to Pit 1 at the Agonda Turtle Rehabilitation Centre, marking the first pit of the turtle nesting season.

It may be recalled that during the last turtle nesting season, a total of 22,965 eggs were protected at 231 pits in Agonda and Galgibaga.

A total 13,561 Olive Ridley hatchlings were released into the Arabian Sea from Agonda (9,661) and Galgibaga (3,471). However, the mortality rates

DELAYED, BUT WELCOME ARRIVAL

■ An Olive Ridley turtle arrived at Agonda beach around 5:48 am, dug a pit, and laid 65 eggs before returning to the sea

■ Forest Department guards, monitoring the shore since October, moved the eggs to Pit 1 at Agonda TRC

were high with as many as 8,190 eggs having failed to hatch and an additional 1,214 hatchlings dying in the pits.

■ The Forest Department anticipates more Olive Ridley turtle arrivals at both Agonda and Galgibaga TRCs

■ The nesting season, which typically starts at the end of October or early November, was delayed this year

RFO Rajesh Naik, incharge of the South Goa Marine Range, which is headquartered at Galgibaga, informed

that the Forest Department is expecting more arrivals of Olive Ridley turtles at both the Rehabilitation Centres Nesting Sites of Agonda and Galgibaga.

Naik informed that the Olive Ridley turtle eggs laid on Agonda beach shore is shifted to the TRCs Nesting Site, while eggs laid at Patnem, Palolem, Rajbag and Khola beaches are also shifted to the Agonda TRCs Nesting Site.

“Turtle eggs recovered from Baina, Varca, Benaulim, Mobor and Talpona beaches are shifted to the TRC’s Nesting site at Galgibaga,” said Naik.

Nilgiris elephant 'Bullet' tranquilized, shifted to Anamalai Tiger Reserve

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Udhagamandalam: The forest department on Friday evening tranquilised and captured a male elephant, which has been roaming around human habitats and damaging houses in Cherambadi and Pandalur areas in the Gudalur forest division in the Nilgiris, after its failed bid to chase it away into deep forest. Local residents had nicknamed the tusker 'bullet'.

Profiled as CT-16 by the forest department, the tusker had been damaging houses in Cherambadi and Pandalur areas for the past few months.

After the elephant damaged seven houses at Cherangode last week, local residents had staged a protest, urging the forest de-



CAPTURING BULLET: A kumki and mahout herd the wild elephant

partment to capture the troublemaker tusker.

The forest department subsequently deployed teams comprising forest field staff and kumkis to track the movement of the pachyderm and chase it away into the deep forest

areas, whenever it returned to human habitats.

Three kumkis — Bomman, Vijay and Srinivasan — from the Theppakadu elephant camp in the Mudumalai Tiger Reserve were involved in the operation.

According to Venkatesh Prabhu, district forest officer, Gudalur division, while steps were taken to chase away the elephant to ensure the safety of local public, the tusker kept returning to human habitats and damaging houses.

"Hence, we obtained an order from the Tamil Nadu chief wildlife warden to capture the elephant. A team of forest veterinarians headed by Dr Kalaivanan tranquilised the elephant at Kolapalli Ayyankolli near Pandalur on Friday and captured it," the DFO said.

He said more than 50 forest staff were involved in the operation.

"The elephant was shifted to the Anamalai Tiger Reserve on Saturday for observation. It will be relocated soon."

On the wild side

Plans to open wildlife hospital at Bannerghatta National Park at Rs 8-crore budget



| Garima Prasher
garima.prasher@timesofindia.com

TWEETS @BangaloreMIRROR

The Forest Department of Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) is all set to open its first-ever wildlife hospital in the city. The multi-storey hospital building at Bannerghatta National Park will be constructed in 2025 at a total cost of Rs 8 crore.

The hospital with the latest technological advances in veterinary science will treat non-domesticated animals only.

"The infrastructure will be only for wildlife and their treatment. Bengaluru hosts a variety of wildlife such as snakes, monkeys, mongoose, birds, etc. These animals, more often than not, are involved in road accidents. The facility will treat these animals," said BLG Swamy, Deputy Conservator of Forest, BBMP.

According to BBMP, while there are non-governmental organisations operating hospitals to treat wildlife, they are overflowing with patients. The BBMP's upcoming hospital will plug that gap. Forest Department officials say they are flooded with calls to rescue injured birds, monkeys, small mammals, and snakes from across the city.

"There are NGOs in the city treating injured animals and birds, but there is a requirement for more and thus the department has decided to come up with a treatment facility. The number of calls about injured wildlife has been increasing every

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6 »

Animal welfare workers hope the project will take off

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

day. Apart from animals getting injured in road accidents, we also receive calls about birds injured due to kite strings, dehydration, and electrocution. This number is increasing every day," said a BBMP official.

Shortage of hospitals

Experts say as Bengaluru continues to expand, cases of injured wild animals and birds have gone up. Given the current scenario, BBMP's hospital will prove to be the much-needed respite for animal rescuers and animal welfare workers in the city, once the plan materialises.

"There is a shortage of good hospitals in the city to treat injured wildlife and thus it is a welcome step. However, the civic agency announced a rescue centre for animals at

BBP (Bannerghatta Biological Park) a year ago and the project has not taken off yet. BBMP must ensure that this project takes off," said a city-based animal welfare worker. Notably, BBMP had also come up with a plan to set up a wildlife rescue-cum-rehabilitation centre in association with BBP and city-based NGOs. The plan was to effectively manage increasing cases of wildlife rescue calls from various parts of the city. The centre, with a capacity to rescue and rehabilitate at least 30 animals, and birds, was proposed to be located at BBP and managed by BBP officials along with veterinarians from NGOs such as the Wildlife Rescue and Rehabilitation Centre (WRRRC).

The decision to create the centre was taken after noticing an increase in the number of wildlife rescue calls from various parts of the city.

Season's 1st Olive Ridley comes to Agonda beach, lays 65 eggs

Albert Fernandes

Canacona: After a record turtle nesting season last year, where over 22,000 eggs were laid on the two Olive Ridley nesting sites in Canacona, the first flippered visitors for the 2024-25 season arrived at Agonda beach on Saturday. Much to the delight of the forest department guards, the crawling creature laid 65 eggs in her second attempt after she was earlier spotted at the beach in the early hours of Friday.

The wildlife staff then transferred the 65 eggs along the beach stretch to the Turtle Rehabilitation Centre. The eggs will hatch after 48 to 62 days, a forest official said.

Last season, Galgibaga beach had 43 turtle nesting



Forest department staff has transferred the eggs to the Turtle Rehabilitation Centre

pits, with the first pit of 56 eggs protected on Jan 3. Agonda had seen 181 turtle pits, the highest number on the two beaches in the last few years.

► **'More turtles', P 4**

'More turtles expected this season'

► **From P 1**

The first pit at Agonda beach was protected on Nov 16, 2023, with 150 eggs laid. The total eggs laid for the whole season were 18,011 for Agonda, of which 9,661 hatched. At Galgibaga, the eggs protected were 4,369, of which 3,471 hatchlings were released in the sea.

Range forest officer Rajesh Naik said that this season, even more turtles are expected to arrive at the two beaches that are designated turtle nesting sites.

Naik has requested the locals and the tourists to immediately report to the forest officials if any turtle eggs are spotted on any of the beach stretches. Though the beaches are protected, increased human presence is always a cause of concern for authorities, said a forest official.

Soon, strict safety steps in wildlife conflict zones

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Kochi: The district development committee meeting held on Saturday decided to enforce stringent security measures in the Kothamangalam forest region, where conflicts between humans and wildlife continue to be a significant concern.

Antony John MLA urged officials to maintain caution in regions experiencing frequent wildlife attacks. Recently, two people lost their lives in elephant attacks in the region. Engineering student Ann Mary was killed after a palm tree, pushed by an elephant, fell on the bike on which she was riding pillion.

Days later, a daily wage worker Eldhose Varghese was trampled to death by a wild elephant while walking to his house at night on a panchayat road passing through the forest in Kuttampuzha. The MLA claimed that so far, 13 people were killed by wildlife attacks in the Kothamangalam constituency. He said that security arrangements related to human-wildlife conflict should be coordinated by divisional forest offi-

Trenching and solar fencing works are progressing in the Kuttampuzha area

cers. Areas such as Kuttampuzha, Keerampara, Neriamangalam, Pindimana, and Kavalangad require heightened alertness. The MLA also instructed to make the operations of rapid response teams more efficient.

District collector NSK Umesh said that trenching and solar fencing measures are progressing in Kuttampuzha. A meeting was held recently to assess the situation following the elephant attacks. Trenching activities are in progress, and the project is expected to be completed within six months. Due to a lack of bidders for the hanging fencing tender, it has been decided to assign the task to the firm that secured the trenching contract.

Streetlights are being installed along the road passing through the forest. To avoid delays, the collector will grant permission for a short tender under the Disaster Management Act.



Tiger sighting at Amrabad Tiger Reserve Zone thrills tourists

PNS ■ NAGARKURNOOL

In the Amrabad Nallamala Wildlife Sanctuary (Amrabad Tiger Reserve Zone) in Nagarkurnool District, tourists on a safari ride spotted a big tiger. Suddenly, a large tiger emerged from the bushes beside them and walked towards the safari vehicles. The tourists, seeing the tiger up close, were filled with excitement, as the safari ride became a success. However, there was also fear and anxiety wondering if the tiger might approach them.

The tiger, after observing the tourists, calmly walked ahead of the safari vehicles and went back into the forest.

The Amrabad Tiger Reserve, part of the Nallamala Forest, is a scenic and ideal spot for wildlife viewing. Currently, safari rides, forest trekking, and staying in cottages surrounded by lush green landscapes are available at the Farahabad area.

Various accommodations like the Chenchu Mud House, Tree House, and Air-conditioned Houses are available. This tiger reserve is the largest in India.

Spanning across 5,937 square kilometers, the Nagarjunasagar-Srisailem Wildlife Sanctuary covers parts of Nagarkurnool and Nalgonda districts, attracting tourists to the Nallamala forests. Tigers, along with some migratory birds and the Krishna River flowing through the forest, are the major attractions of the sanctuary.

Currently, there are 42 tigers and 187 leopards in Telangana, with 34 tigers residing in the Amrabad Tiger Reserve Zone. Among them, there are 15 female tigers, 11 male tigers, and 8 tiger cubs. Eight tigers roam within the jurisdiction of the former Adilabad district. The Amrabad Tiger Reserve Zone is located about 155 km from Hyderabad, and a two-day trip is sufficient for a visit.

Tigress Zeenat reaches Bankura after travelling over 120 km, forest guards on their toes

The big cat has so far not touched the baits kept in trap-door cages but devoured domestic goats that strayed into the forests

KOLKATA, Dec 28: Tigress Zeenat, who escaped from the Similipal Reserve in Odisha 17 days back, reached Ranibandh in West Bengal's Bankura district on Saturday after terrorising villagers and eluding forest guards on its way.

Chief Wildlife Warden Debal Roy told PTI the tigress reached Gopalpur jungle in Ranibandh from Manbazar in Purulia district.

Forest personnel from West Bengal's Sunderbans and Jharkhand, and Odisha are ready with tranquiliser guns and cages to capture her, he said.

"She is now some distance away from the Gosaidihi village in Ranibandh. The locality has been surrounded by nylon nets. The waiting game continues but she will

be trapped soon," he added.

Another forest officer said tranquiliser shots had been fired targeting her on the basis of the location of her radio collar.

"However, since visibility is poor in the jungle due to the prevalence of misty conditions, forest personnel cannot directly go near her. It is yet to be verified whether she has been hit," he said.

Zeenat travelled about 15 km to seek refuge in a forest in Manbazar block on December 27 from Bandwan where she was holed up between December 24 and 26. She has been in West Bengal for nearly a week after crossing over from Jharkhand.

The big cat has so far not touched the baits kept in trap-door cages but devoured do-

mestic goats that strayed into the forests. She has been travelling shorter distances over the last few days, officials said.

Drones have been deployed to monitor her movements but heavy forests are affecting the surveillance, they said.

The tigress has covered over 120 km, roaming the forests at the tri-junction of West Bengal, Jharkhand, and Odisha, in search of new territory after leaving Similipal. She has shown no signs of heading back to Similipal so far, they added.

Zeenat was brought to Similipal from Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve in Maharashtra last month with the goal of introducing a new gene pool to the tiger population. — PTI

Sanctuary: 40 years and counting

Bittu Sahgal

It seems like yesterday. I can still smell the wood smoke. Remember the conversations. Feel the warmth of the campfire under the banyan tree that gave birth to *Sanctuary*, the magazine, which the late Fateh Singh Rathore, virtually coerced penniless-me into launching. I had been visiting Ranthambhore for years and would continually harangue Fateh with "how can I help you?" questions in the late 1970s. A few drinks down, at our usual campfire under the famous Jogi Mahal banyan tree, in December 1980, a frustrated Fateh retorted: "When you go back to Bombay, have a big party every month. Talk to all your friends about how they can help us save tigers. Then, come back and ask me the same question you ask every time you come: 'Fateh, how can I help you save the tiger...' what else are you city people good for? You keep talking and talking, while the tigers keep dying." Stung to the core I responded testily: "This is the last time I will ever come to Ranthambhore, unless you tell me just how I can actually help." Silence ruled for ten full minutes. Then, as the fire died down and we turned to Jogi Mahal and bed, he muttered: "Bittu, there are hundreds of *bekaar* (useless) magazines on Indian politics, sports, films... not one wildlife magazine. Start one! Win public support. That will help. But I know you will do nothing! Then on your next visit, you will ask the same question." Exactly nine months later,

in October 1981, I handed him the inaugural issue of *Sanctuary Asia*. A lot of whiskey was drunk that night. Some tears were shed. Hugs were exchanged. And we drove up to 'Ghazal Hill' to listen in the dark of night to Fateh's favourite *ghazals*. What plans we had! So many highs and even more lows. Fateh, Valmik Thapar – who shot this image of a tiger under 'our' banyan tree – and I, would sit late into the night and talk about the magic of tigers and how the forest was springing back to life, without anything but protection from humans. Fateh and I would sometimes climb to the ramparts of the fort to get a birds eye view of the forest that was his life... What tales were told around his campfire. Of defenders of the fort such as Raja Hamir and the Akbar Nama that mentions not just the fort he conquered, but also the banyan tree under which we sat. "Who knows," Fateh would say, "whether 500 years from now either the tiger or this forest will still be here." I find myself asking the same question 40 years later. The Sanctuary Nature Foundation's flagship *Sanctuary Asia* magazine has been in continuous publication since 1981, and remains India's best-loved magazine in its genre. The edition for younger readers, *Sanctuary Cub*, has been inspiring young naturalists since its launch in 1984. The organisation was converted into a Section 8 Foundation under the Ministry of Corporate Affairs in 2015. The express vision is to help shape a

world with abundant biodiversity, a sustainable climate, and an equitable future for all. Kids for Tigers is an educational outreach programme. The Mud on Boots Project is designed to empower grassroots conservationists in India. COCOON Conservancies demonstrate how rewilding can help moderate climatic extremes, while delivering social and environmental paybacks. Sanctuary programmes include Kids for Tigers, Mud on Boots Project, and Community Owned Community Operated Nature (COCOON) Conservancies. Kids for Tigers, founded in the year 2000, has reached over a million children and was certified by the Limca Book of Records for having created the world's largest 'Save The Tiger' scroll. It is an educational outreach programme that touches the lives of rural kids living right next to the tiger and urban kids across India has been in operation for almost two decades. The Mud on Boots Project is a programme designed to empower grassroots conservationists in India. Since its inception in 2017, the Mud on Boots Project has supported over 34 grassroots conservationists from 15 different states and one Union Territory in India. COCOON Conservancies started in 2014 by way of the blueprint, consultations, rationale and strategy. The Conservancies demonstrate how rewilding can help moderate climatic extremes, while delivering social and environmental paybacks. The Sanctuary Nature Foundation has successfully rewilded 105 acres of marginal farmland next to the tiger forests of the Umred Pauni-Karhandla Wildlife Sanctuary. The Sanctuary Debate is an Oxford Union style exchange that raise dissent on burning issues on the tri junction of Biodiversity, Economics and Climate change.

Nature needs all

Rithwik Sundar

We need all kinds of people to go out into the natural world, meet others, and find different ways to use their skills to further the message of nature conservation, and ensure intersectionality* in the movement. When you think of a conservation career; images of a wildlife biologist soaked in mud tracking elusive species, or a ranger patrolling vast reserves might come to mind. Perhaps even a scientist in a lab analysing data. While these roles are essential, is that all conservation entails? Not quite. With each passing day, the effects of climate change become more

visible, the clock ticks on humanity's future, and we risk losing rich wildlife forever. Now, more than ever, we need people with diverse skills to join the fight and ensure intersectionality in conservation. We need storytellers to inspire action, lawyers and policy experts to push for environmental justice, fundraisers to drive projects, and businesses to shift to sustainability. Historians, artists, journalists – everyone has a role to play. No matter your background, the planet needs you. Sanctuary spoke to professionals in conservation who have carved out their niche and are working to build a healthier planet.



From The Newsroom

NDTV senior news anchor and environmental reporter Gargi Rawat graduated with an honours degree in economics. While her classmates pursued careers in business management, she found that path unappealing. Drawn to nature since childhood, she joined NDTV with aspirations of creating wildlife documentaries, ultimately becoming part of India's first wildlife television programme, *Born Wild*. At NDTV, Rawat has reported on several pressing issues, particularly the growing human-animal conflict. She emphasises, "Even if young people don't choose environmental journalism, they can still support important causes by staying informed and educated."



Musician-Turned-Naturalist

In 2017, Nikhil John had no special connection with birds; he was focused on his urban planning degree, enjoying his time in a boy band, and preparing for the Indian Army. A volunteering opportunity with WWF-India that year changed everything. Now, when he's not leading nature trails and conducting biodiversity surveys as a naturalist for WWF-India, he is busy identifying warblers for his former students over WhatsApp. He says, "Adaptability is key. You might start in one profession, but your passion for the environment can open unexpected doors. Whether you're in the corporate world, teaching, or behind a camera, you can contribute. Learn new skills, try different approaches, and find ways to give back. Have grit and be ready to get your hands dirty."



The Power Of Narrative

Megha Moorthy, editor-in-chief of Roundglass Sustain, was initially uninformed about the nature surrounding her. However, setting up her organisation marked a turning point. She realised that the roads she once walked without noticing were suddenly alive with birdsong and butterflies. Through her work, this is the gift she wants to give readers and audiences – a new way of seeing the world around them. Her advice for young people entering the field is, "There is no right or wrong path; we need all kinds of people. Get out into the natural world, meet others, and find ways to use your skills to further the message."

First published in Sanctuary
November 2024

History Tells Us...

Growing up in the Palamau Tiger Reserve, Raza Kazmi harboured a curiosity about the past, often asking elders about the animals that used to be seen, in what numbers, and where. Yet, Kazmi did not follow a conventional path to a career in conservation. He completed an electrical engineering degree but went on to establish himself as a wildlife historian, writer, and conservationist. Today, he is an archivist with the National Centre for Biological Sciences and a conservation communicator with the Wildlife Conservation Trust. "I had a strong desire to write about wildlife history and lesser-known places, places that had no conservation voices, and I kept writing. After persisting, I got my writing breakthroughs, and my work started to be well received by readers and editors," he says. Not everyone working to protect the planet is in the Arctic tracking polar bears or in the Sahara searching for vipers. Some are in libraries, some in newsrooms, some counting dragonflies in their backyard, others raising funds for conservation, and some... reading this issue of *Sanctuary Cub*.



TRASH- INFESTED HABITATS

Plastic has infiltrated every possible ecosystem, manifesting as towering piles of garbage and as microplastics in the deep sea. Trash has become a stark symbol of human presence, yet we have neglected the responsibility of disposing or treating it properly. However, the consequences of this negligence are not borne equally; wildlife bears the burden of our entitlement, suffering from the plastic waste we irresponsibly discard. Our trash lures wild animals to scavenge among discarded water bottles, plates, and food wrappers. These food scraps draw wildlife closer to humans, leading to conflict and disrupting their natural way of life. The following are a fraction of the hundreds of images we have received in the past few years. Our #InOurFilt campaign highlights the urgent need to use resources wisely, segregate waste, reject single-use plastics, advocate for better waste management, and hold global corporations accountable for polluting our planet. These images are part of Sanctuary's InourFilt campaign, collated by our Photo Editor Prachi Galange and curated by Cara Tejpal.

First published in Sanctuary Asia October 2024



Giants Amidst Litter

An aerial view captures five wild Asian elephants *Elephas maximus* foraging through a garbage dump in the Eastern Province of Sri Lanka. The stark scene underscores their adaptation to a habitat invaded by human waste, forcing them to consume plastic and sharp objects. Ingesting plastic can severely affect their digestion, cause internal injury, intestinal blockage, starvation, and a slow and agonising death.

PIC: LALITH EKANAYAKE/SANCTUARY PHOTOLIBRARY

Stripes in Peril

In Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve, a tiger picks up a discarded plastic bottle, a sight we wish we would never have to share. Unregulated and uninformed tourism places an enormous strain on nature. Those visiting national parks and sanctuaries must consider their impact on these pristine landscapes.

PIC: ARIF AYYUB/SANCTUARY PHOTOLIBRARY



A Bitter Snack

In Tamil Nadu's Valparai, a lion-tailed macaque *Macaca silenus*, a distinctive canopy-dwelling resident of the Western Ghats, slouches on the forest floor with an empty PET bottle in its mouth, highlighting the pervasiveness of the plastic menace. Caught between anthropogenic pressures including habitat loss and their natural way of life, this endangered primate is forced to raid homes for human food.

PIC: SIVANANTHAM G./SANCTUARY PHOTOLIBRARY



Mount Debris

Bear the Consequences: On the outskirts of Tamil Nadu's Kotagiri, a sloth bear *Melursus ursinus* trio sifts through the town's dumpyard for scraps. Having ventured out from their forest habitat in search of food, the bears stand amidst the remnants of rapid consumerism, urbanisation, and inadequate waste management. This poignant moment raises critical questions about our growing trash problem and the risks it poses to both wildlife and human communities.

PIC: CHANDRASEKAR DAS/SANCTUARY PHOTOLIBRARY

Content Courtesy: Sanctuary Nature Foundation (www.sanctuarynaturefoundation.org)

Two new safaris planned in BR hills tiger reserve

HANS NEWS SERVICE
CHAMARAJANAGARA

WHO doesn't enjoy wandering through the wilderness? For wildlife enthusiasts and tourists captivated by wild animals, the authorities of the Biligirirangana Betta Tiger Reserve have some sweet news. Chamarajanagara district currently has four famous safari centres, and there is a strong possibility of adding two more new safari centres soon.

The Biligirirangana Betta Tiger Reserve is a renowned wildlife destination in the state. A safari center has already been opened in the K Gudi range of this forest, attracting hundreds of tourists who visit to enjoy bird-watching and the safari experience. However, the existing safari area has limitations in the number of visitors who can view the animals. This has led to an



increased demand for setting up new safari centres.

In response, the forest department officials have prepared plans to establish two new safari centres in different locations.

In addition to opening new safari centres at Gundal in the Kollegal taluk and Budipadag in the Chamarajanagara taluk, we will also work to raise awareness about the environment among the public.

We aim to promote ecotourism, which will not only

offer tourists the chance to observe wildlife but also help educate people about nature, the forest officials stated.

Overall, there is already a safari centre at K.Gudi in the Biligirirangana Betta Tiger Reserve, where tourists are flocking on weekends. With the opening of two additional new safari centres, visitors will have even more opportunities to immerse themselves in the beauty of wildlife, birds, and natural landscapes.

Wildlife safaris start packing a punch in Amrabad tiger reserve

Matriarch tigress' cubs steal the show as visitors see animals frequently

BALU PULIPAKA | DC
HYDERABAD, DEC. 28

The Amrabad tiger reserve, home to at least 30 tigers, including cubs, appears to have turned a corner in terms of wildlife sightings during safaris, with visitors not only seeing a variety of wildlife but also tigers, and with increasing frequency.

It's thanks to just one tigress – F6, the matriarch of Amrabad — that more sightings of the big cat are becoming possible. F6, nicknamed Farah female as its territory falls in the Farhabad range had given birth to two cubs, a male and a female, in 2018. On Saturday, the female — F18 — a second-time mother herself, was spotted during the morning safari, sending a buzz of excitement among the visitors, and the reserve officials who posted a video of the sighting on their X social media platform account.

"After we started wildlife tourism, all human activities, be it the occasional felling of trees, setting of fires and the like have come to a naught,



Tigress F18, the daughter of Farah Female F6, spotted during a safari in Farhabad range on Saturday morning in Amrabad tiger reserve.



A sloth bear seen during an earlier safari in December in Farhabad range of Amrabad tiger reserve.



A pack of dholes, or Indian wild dogs, seen during an earlier safari in December in Farhabad range of Amrabad tiger reserve



A large tiger seen during a safari earlier in December in Farhabad range of Amrabad tiger reserve.

Consequently, animals feel more safe and secure and the sightings have definitely improved. We just have to work harder, and ensure even better protection to the forest,"

Nagarkurnool district forest officer Rohit Gopidi said, when asked about the increasing wildlife encounters visitors are experiencing during the safari drives.

It was in 2021 that wildlife tourism activities were launched in Amrabad out of Mannanur village where facilities were created for visitors to stay. It was also the year

• **IN 2021** that wildlife tourism activities were launched in Amrabad tiger reserve out of Mannanur village where facilities were created for visitors to stay.

when F18, Farah Female's first born, gave birth to four cubs — three females and a male, F (female) 36, 37 and 38, and M (male) 39.

Officials believe that Farah Female, had another litter after her first which may not have succeeded. She is now believed to have given birth to two more cubs. Incidentally, F18 which was sighted on Saturday, too is believed to have two young cubs to look after, her second litter.

Farah Female, and her offspring, are moving freely in the area and while the younger ones may strike out in search of their own territories later, a large male tiger has also been putting up an occasional appearance for tourists, as was the case on December 18. His territory overlaps that of F6 and F18.