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VANA PREMI

Nav Se Nawvey Saal Tak Ke Bachhon Ka Saathi

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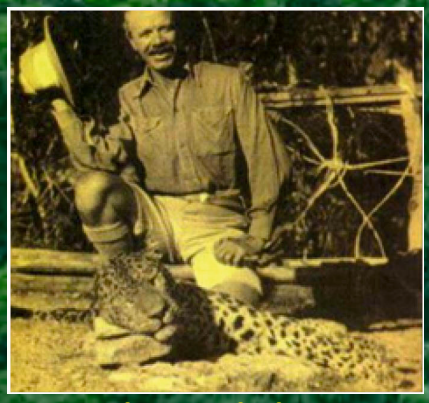
Vol.26 AUGUST - 2025 No.8

Vanapremi wishes it's readers a Happy Independence Day

150th Birth Anniversary of Jim Corbett

Head of Champawat Tiger with broken canines



Jim Corbett with the corpse of Leopard of Rudraprayag

Will I have a safe passage?

Daisy the Tiger from Tippeshwar TR

Photo Credit: Indaram Nageshwar Rao

JOURNAL OF THE ASSOCIATION OF RETIRED FOREST OFFICERS, TELANGANA & ANDHRA PRADESH

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TELANGANA FOREST DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION Ltd

DECCAN WOODS AND TRAILS

- A wholly-owned, financially robust State Government enterprise, engaged in the large-scale establishment of plantations to meet the demands of the wood-based industries.
- A watershed approach has been adopted for the development of plantations, ensuring ecological sustainability, social acceptance, and commercial viability, with the long-term objective of enhancing the site quality of plantation areas.
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- The TGFDC has undertaken the ambitious task of developing Eco-Tourism activities within the State. Existing attractions open to the public include the Botanical Garden, Vruksha Parichaya Kshetram, Virtual Wildlife Safari and Pala Pitta Cycling Park in Kondapur, the Mahavir Nischalvan Eco-Tourism Centre in Vanasthalipuram, Aranya at the Shameerpet Deer Park, and Mrugavani at the Chilkur National Park. These initiatives are proving to be highly appealing, resulting in a growing influx of visitors.
- The TGFDC has also developed urban parks at Lalgadi Malakpet (Vanadrushyam), Thumkunta (Veduru Vanam), Gowdelli (Chandanavanam), and within the Chilkur Reserve Forest (Forestrek Park).
- The TGFDC has introduced new commercial species within the Regional Ring Road region, including Seethaphal, Sandalwood, Red Sandalwood, Rosewood, Teak, and *Casuarina Junghuhniana*, among others.
- Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Initiatives 2021–2025: Empowering lives through the distribution of three-wheeler scooters to the differently-abled, support to schools with sports kits and furniture, and establishment of modern pre-fab health sub-centers — driving inclusive growth with care, commitment, and compassion.
- Eco-Tourism projects have been launched at various locations under the brand name of "Deccan Woods & Trails".

Smt. Sunita M. Bhagwat, IFS
Addl. Principal Chief Conservator of Forests
Vice Chairman & Managing Director (FAC)
Telangana Forest Development Corporation Ltd.,
(A Government of Telangana Undertaking)

VANAPREMI

Vol. : 26 **AUGUST - 2025** **No.8**

An English monthly on forestry, wildlife, environmental issues, and topics of general interest that blends in-depth knowledge with engaging content for all age groups.

Editor : Dr. Kota Tirupataiah

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From the Editor's Desk...

Dear All, Greetings on India's Independence Day.

The South-West monsoon has set across the nation and its festival time to express gratitude (through Bonalu) to the village deities who provide rain and protect the water bodies.

It's very interesting to note that the Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi presided over the National Congress only once in 1924 at Belgaum (now Belagavi) to be succeeded in 1925 by Sarojini Naidu. He kept himself above the one party to work for a coalition and tried his best to avoid partition of India. August is also for Quit India Movement (8th), Partition Horrors Day (14th). This year is more special as Group Captain ShubhanshuShukla became the first Indian to the International Space Station and made every Indian proud.

July 25th was the 150th Birth Anniversary of anglo-Indian Jim Corbett, the pioneer hunter of man eaters-turned-top conservationist. His pioneering efforts paved the way for setting up National Parks and later the Project Tiger in the 70s. Vanapremi remembers his conservation leadership.

The World Wide Web day is observed on the first of aug.While scientific progress has to be lauded, in August one must also remember Hiroshima and Nagasaki to remember to pursue ethical science. The Russia-Ukrain war, the war in Gaza and conflicts elsewhere bring out the sufferings of the common people, especially Women and children, and the role of World Humanitarianism (19thaug). India always advocated "VasudhaivaKutumbakam", that's where the role of Friendship (4thaug), Rakshabandhan (9thaug) comes in.

Someone said that it's the youth that are fighting the wars of "old men". Youth is the future and it should not be sacrificed for unworthy causes. Remember that on the International Youth day (12th Aug), the birthday of Swami Vivekananda.Civilization does not mean erasing of indigenous people and their knowledge. To make us remember this, the National Indigenous People's day is observed on 9thaug. The World Elephant day on the 12thauggives us one more opportunity to take care of these gentle giants.

A picture is worth a thousand words. So it is said. The iconic picture of the "Napalm girl", from Vietnam war, the 'boy with his dead brother on this back" from Hiroshima, pictures of Covid19, etc won't leave our minds for times to come. And none better than 'Sebastiao Salgado' of Brazil who took some immortal pictures of workers from mines in Africa, Brazil and India. The World Photography day is observed on 19thaug.

Back home, this issue of Vanapremi has rich articles on broad issues like plastic pollution, stress in Western Ghats, need for adoption of Environment, Social and Governance framework, the Indus water treaty and perceived threat from China, restoration of a forest devastated by a rare weather phenomenon.

Who forgets the training days of a probationer? Read and recollect your own sweet memories. Get-togethers like those held at Visakhapatnam and Warangal are the way to continue these memories and read about such events. Of course, the GBM of the association held on 29th June 2025 has been the biggest of such get-togethers.

A number of articles have come on Wildlife. They range from the need for conservation, disease monitoring, the recent poisoning of Tiger and its cubs in Karnataka, the efforts to develop Tiger corridor between Maharashtra and Telangana and the story of Cheetah in India. Recently some non-wildlifers expressed concerns on the perils to dams from the crocodiles in reservoirs. However, experts amply clarify this and explain the benefits.

Regular features like Legal Note and Green Quiz bring in new knowledge for the inquisitive. The cartoon tickles the mind to think and the details of dates of birth help you reach out and greet your friends.

A young conservationist, Radheyshyam Bishnoi is no more and Vanapremi pays Shraddhanjali to the departed soul.

Happy Independence Day once again…. Happy Reading.

Dr.K.Tirupataiah
Editor

FEEDBACK on Articles of Dr.K.ThulsiRao published in July issue of Vanapremi...

What a beautiful story, Thulsi! Your approach that combines science with intuition and empathy is inspiring and rare. I ope many learn from your wisdom.

Davy Davison, San Francisco USA

Miraculous. A thought provoking article, you have put in a human touch. Great attempt made. Congratulations and best wishes.

SurendraPandey, IFS (R)

Dear Dr.Rao, I thoroughly enjoyed reading the story. A very well written piece. Keep it up. With best wishes….

Dr.Negi, former PCCF (MP) & Member/Secretary, NTCA

Thank you Thulsi for an emotional article laced with philosophy, science and conviction.

Professor B.C.Chowdhury, WII, Dehradun

Dear Dr.TRao, Greetings…….

I opened your article, just tried to glance…and continued to read as it was interesting with episode after episode of incidences about your story's hero…male lion suffering with fractured hind legs.

It navigated my interest to know its struggles, resilience rather its determined foster father figure…Dr.TRao to save its life from declared euthanasia to its revival to normal life….

I felt that letters in the mobile not visible for me & turned it to horizontal mode to enhance its size& completed it rather it took me to the end.

Your decision to save it & your flash back of the hero lion's infant stage as weakling..

Generally, the last cub to be born in a litter will be a weak one for which mother cats take special care as seen in tigers…but lions start eating themselves leaving cubs due to limited source of food in the pride in the wild.

I heard and read that cubs are eaten away by the rival males of big cats to induce their mother to oestrus…. but you fear that the mother lioness may eat away her weakling cub…..have you read or heard?

The narration of your experience in nursing of early natal stage of a weakling cub by keeping with you and your bold instinct and forcing euthanasia team to allow you two week time to test its fate on your experiment….of separating the suffering King lion to immobilization, with isolation and treatment through piped food for 10 days to fall within your 14 gays grace time has worked wonders in curing king to stand up on its legs.

Wonderful story narration with quotes of great men….and slokas of Bhagavad Gita…. Depicts your authorship with well read efficiency in writing. Your narrative skill of secret lies in the information about the cause for the fracture of 2 limbs to a healthy lion….in the end.

A very good article.

Keep it up to spread your knowledge to the younger generation for reference to do better for the nation.

Regards,

Sri.BMT Rajeev, Bengaluru

Dear TulsiRaogaru, it's a pleasant surprise after a long time we have come in touch with an enlightening story. Hearty congratulations and I salute your understanding and approach to life as precious whether animal or human that should be given a respectful opportunity to regain its physical strength and the mental faculties so as to facilitate its will to liv. An excellent piece of writing on empathy, hope, resilience, patience and an unconventional yet practical approach to a problem on hand. Your style of writing is very emotional and touching and at the same time the progress of its expression in words is based on reason and faith guided by emotional intelligence. A great read dealing with human action for animalwelfare even under trying and hopeless circumstances. I admire your felicity with words and ideas which find their own place as you start pouring your feelings on paper.Quite impressive and inspiring.. Keep it up. Wish you good health that brings you happiness to toy with new and unconventional ideas, make your life enriching.

Vidyasagar, IAS (R)

Dr.TulsiRaogaru,

Your narration of a real life story of an old and sick lion recouping, regaining and recovering completely from the ailment is wonderful. It shows how not just humans but animals, that too wild animals, repose faith in us and crave for love and affection. True love transcends all forms of life. It even extends to plants and there is proof for it. You have demonstrated to the world by your compassion and deep love that no animal would die as an orphan when timely intervention takes place. It's a great inspiring story.

Dr.JSSN Murthy

Conclusion

Urgent, Collective Action is no longer optional, but compulsory & Obligatory

"Beat Plastic Pollution : permeating every corner of the planet, even in our bodies as microplastics"

Theme for 2025 (UNEP Campaign)

Dr. B Raghotham Rao Desai

Exordium:

This year's World Environment Day came at a pivotal moment as UNEP also said, Republic of Korea host it with a focus on ending plastic pollution globally—-ridding the planet of plastic pollution being an important contribution to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, including those on climate action, sustainable production and consumption, protection of seas & oceans and repairing ecosystems & retaining biodiversity. The nations being in the midst of negotiating a Global Plastics Treaty: it will be alegally binding agreement that is designed to manage the entire life cycle of plastics—-from production to disposal.

Once celebrated as a breakthrough in material sciences—-when invented by Leo Baekeland in 1907 as Bakelite (the first fully synthetic plastic), marking a significant turning point in the development, moving beyond materials derived from natural sources—-plastic has now become one of the greatest ecological threats that we face. During the duration to read this article, not less than 3000 tons of plastic will have been produced—-most of it designed for single use and discarded—-India generating millions of tones, being one of the largest producers & consumers in the world, 43% of which being for single use (and ending up in a landfill): some of it incinerated, while the rest often finding its way sadly into a water body!

Factfile:

Plastic pollution knows no bounds—-having even been found at the bottom of the Mariana Trench—-an ocean trench: deepeston the planet (36,070'deep & 43miles wide, 200 miles away from Guam, the US having its jurisdiction over it) inside Arctic ice, and also in human bodies (in the blood, lungs, breast-milk, etc.,), merely breaking down into smaller fragments and lingering in the environment indefinitely, but never decomposing! These tiny fragments (or microplastics) are formed (as larger plastics degrade),which can have alarming health impacts—-including, but not limited to cancer, respiratory and cardiovascular diseases, neurological & cognitive disorders(i.e., disorder pertaining to

mental process of acquiring knowledge through thoughts) and gastrointestinal issues.

But still, India argued that limiting production would not necessarily change consumer behaviour, and opposed binding targets (on the production of primary plastic polymers), citing economic concerns—-stating further that treaty should focus on addressing plastic pollution rather than restricting plastic production, emphasising the scope of the treaty be strictly limited to avoiding plastic waste leakage: cautioning against overlapping with existing multilateral environmental agreements (with a common mandate to protect the environment and human health from hazardous chemicals & wastes)----this position aligning with country's developmental priorities (including economic growth), industrial competitiveness, and employment generation.

However, while the view reflects the reality of

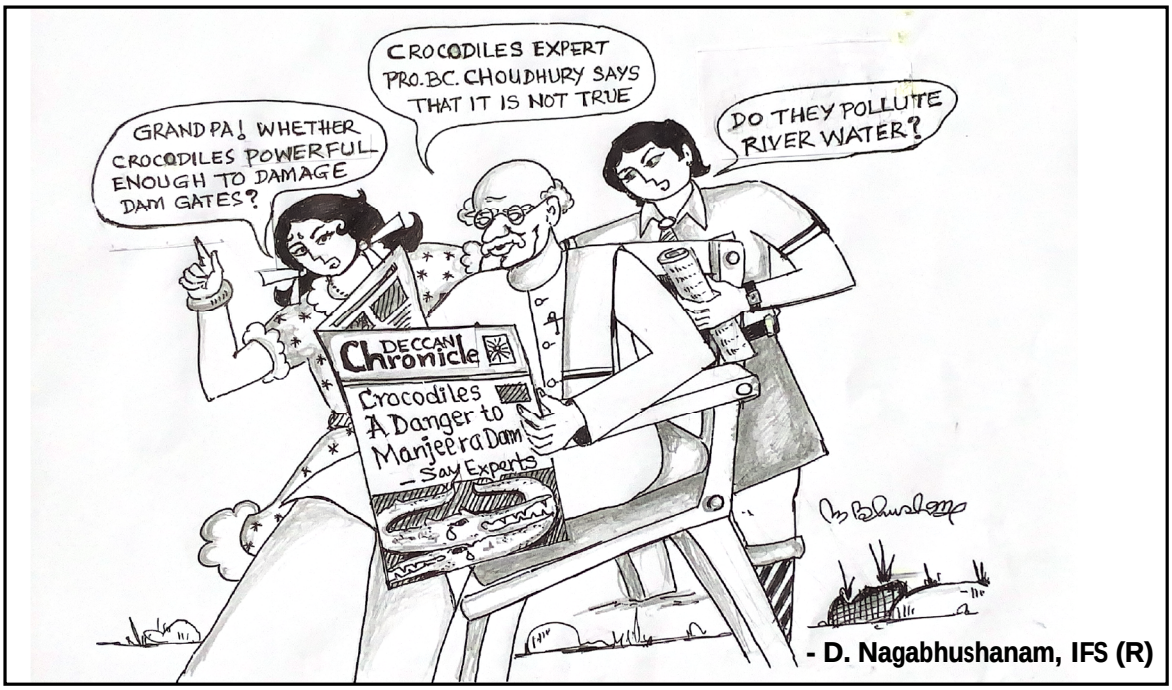
protecting domestic economic interests, it may slow down the country's shift towards circular economy models—-without upstream controls, downstream waste-management and recycling systems continuing to face unsustainable burdens.

India's position holds significant sway in the global plastics treaty negotiations—-having been a key voice among emerging economies in the Global South, being well-placed to shape the treaty, particularly on principles such as different rated responsibilities and support for capacity building, advocating for a framework (that includes robust provisions for technology transfer, financial assistance and mechanisms) for global cooperation that prioritizes the needs of developing nations.

The strength of India's international advocacy, however, depending heavily on its domestic actions—-systemic change must be anchored in national-level reforms across governance, industry practices, and consumer behaviour—-by moving beyond raising awareness to establishing real accountability across the entire plastic value chain, safeguarding its own environmental future by adopting bold domestic measures and steer the world towards a truly sustainable approach to plastic production & waste management.

Combating plastic pollution is more than an environmental mandate offering broad benefits to public health, economic resilience, and ecosystem restoration. Cleaner landscapes, safer food chains, reduced health risks and more sustainable jobs being all part of the promise. While individual action is a powerful lever of change, systemic transformation demands a collaborative strategy fueled by social innovation, technology, and collective will—-real accountability requiring action across the entire plastics value chain. Companies must embrace eco-design principles and invest in reuse & refill systems.

The Author is a former PCCF, Karnataka, M-9886157158



- D. Nagabhushanam, IFS (R)

WESTERN GHAT IS IN STRESS

Dr.UMA SHANKER SINGH & Dr.PRAKRITI SRIVASTAVA

ORIGIN OF WESTERN GHATS

A chain of mountains running parallel to India's western coast, approximately 30-50 km inland, the Ghats traverse the States of Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Goa, Maharashtra and Gujarat. These mountains cover an area of around 140,000 km² in a 1,600 km long stretch that is interrupted only by the 30 km Palghat Gap at around 11°N. Older than the great Himalayan mountain chain, the Western Ghats of India are a geomorphic feature of immense global importance. It is one of the 36 hotspots of biological diversity in the world. States surrounding the range depends heavily on Western Ghats for irrigation, agricultural purposes, and tourism. The Western Ghats are older than the mighty Himalayas. It is formed after millions of years of chaos. They are considered as the mountainous faulted and eroded edge of the Deccan Plateau. Geologic evidence indicates that they were formed during the break-up of the supercontinent of Gondwana some 150 million years ago. Gondwana has consisted of modern South America, Africa, Madagascar, India, Australia and Antarctica.

When the Gondwana break-up happened, the Indian plate detached and travelled towards the Eurasian plate. There is a theory that the west coast of India came into being somewhere around 100 to 80 million years ago after it broke away from Madagascar. After the break-up, the western coast of India would have appeared as an abrupt cliff some 1,000 metres in height. Soon after detachment, Indian plate drifted over Reunion hotspot, a volcanic hotspot in the earth's lithosphere near the present-day location of Reunion (21°06'S, 55°31'E). It moved up in this drift and the heat beneath the generated basaltic magma rose upward causing uplift by crustal arching. This geological event that took place about 120–130 million years ago gave rise to the Western Ghats and the Indian plate was inclined in an easterly direction. Afterwards, a series of volcanic eruptions for million years gave rise to the extensive Deccan Traps and thereby moulded the Northern Western Ghats to a large extent. Since the Western Ghats are the result of upliftment the underlying rocks are ancient. In some parts of Nilgiris, we could find ancient rocks as a piece of evidence for this. These ancient rocks are 200 million years old.

A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF WESTERN GHAT

The Western Ghat is called "a treasure trove of biodiversity" and "the water tower of Peninsular India". It is one of the global 'hotspots' of biodiversity. It consists of a wide variety of forest types such as tropical wet evergreen, montane stunted evergreen (shola), moist deciduous, dry deciduous and dry thorn forests, and grasslands. Some of these are critical habitats for plants and animals. The landscape is the headwaters of all major peninsular rivers in India, ensuring water security for the region. The Western Ghats is also

critical for as many as 58 major Indian rivers that originate from it, including Godavari, Krishna, Cauvery, Kali, Bedthi, and Sharavati.The Western Ghats landscape is dominated by forests. The total area under the Western Ghats is about 1,29,037 sq. km, out of which about 87,307 sq. km is under forests.According to the Forest Survey of India, area under forests in the Western Ghats is increasing marginally in recent years. But this includes increase in area under plantations such as coffee, coconut, areca, cashew, cocoa and mango which are included in the definition of forests.A study in the southern region, comprising the states of Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu, showed that between the period 1920 and 1990, about 40 per cent of the original vegetation cover was lost or converted to another form of land use.westernGhat is very important in terms of its biodiversity. Nearly 4000 species of flowering plants or about 27% of country's total species are found in Western Ghat. It is home to many endemic species of flowering plants including medicinal plants, endemic fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds, mammals and invertebrates.

Photo courtesy: Vinayaka SG – Sharavathi Valley Wildlife Sanctuary, Western Ghats

The Western Ghats is a megadiverse region that is home to the largest wild population of Bengal Tigers and the Asian elephants in India, in addition to being home to thousands of other rare and endemic species of flora and fauna. The Western Ghats, therefore is not only important for India but also holds immense value for the world, due to which it has been recognised as a UNESCO heritage site. The Western Ghats are also home to millions of people, many of whom still reside inside forests and protected areas. It is estimated that presently there are 10,976 households present inside Protected Areas (PAs) of the Western Ghats in the states of Karnataka, Kerala (Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary), and Tamil Nadu (Mudumalai and Sathyamanglam Tiger Reserve).

Photo courtesy: Kalyan Varma – Lion Tailed Macaque (Macacasilenus), Western Ghats

While Western Ghats is known for its biodiversity as well as rich cultural heritage, the landscape has experienced a spurt in economic and infrastructure development in the past few decades. This is causing large-scale fragmentation, loss of ecological value and negative biodiversity impacts, which is also negatively impacting the human populations outside the forests due to a loss of ecosystem services.

Photo courtesy: Kalyan Varma – BRT Tiger Reserve, Western Ghats

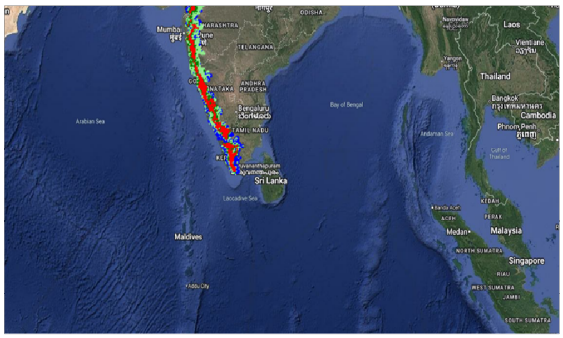
WESTERN GHAT IS UNDER DIFFERENT STAGES OF DEGRADATION

Land use changes in the Western Ghats over the last century caused by agricultural expansion, conversion to plantations and infrastructural projects have resulted in loss of forests and grasslands. While land use change remains the major threat to Western Ghats biodiversity, the intensive harvesting of non-timber forest products (NTFPs) such as fuel-wood, bark, leaves, fruits, exudates, etc., has also contributed to loss of biodiversity and forest cover. NTFP extraction con tributes significantly to local household income in tropical regions and has been viewed as preferable to con version to other land uses when it is sustainable. However, non-sustainable resource extraction can have deleterious consequences for biodiversity and affect the livelihoods of the users. The spatiotemporal analyses of land use show that Western Ghats, which is among 36 global biodiversity hotspots, saw a loss of 5% evergreen forest cover with an increase of 4.5% built-up cover, and 9% agriculture area. Fragmentation analyses also highlight that interior forest constitutes only 25% of the forest landmass, depicting the fragmentation pressure, impacting local ecology. A study on ecological fragility has revealed that 63,148 km2 area under very higher ecological fragility, 27,646 km2 under high ecological fragility, 48,490 km2 as moderate and 20,716 km2 as low ecological fragility.

Threats

Much of the original forests of the Western Ghats still persist, but they are highly fragmented, and under tremendous threat of both outright conversion and further fragmentation. These threats emanate from illegal habitat conversion by anthropogenic activities like livestock grazing, forest fires, collection of non-timber forest products and illegal logging, encroachments as well as poaching. Construction activities for infrastructure development in the form of roads, dams, mining activities also are a major threats.

The region witnessed large-scale land cover changes during the past century due to unplanned developmental activities with industrialisation and globalisation. This necessitates implementing mitigation measures involving stakeholders to address the impacts through location-specific conservation measures. Framing conservation and sustainable developmental policies entail delineation of ecologically sensitive regions by integrating bio-geo-climatic, ecological, and social factors representing dynamics of socio-ecological systems, impacts, and drivers.



LOSS OF FOREST IN WESTERN GHAT

A study on the deforestation in the Western Ghats show that the estimated changes in forest cover between 1973 and 1995 in the southern part of the Western Ghats using satellite data. The study area of approximately 40,000 km2 showed a loss of 25.6% in forest cover over 22 years. The dense forest was reduced by 19.5% and open forest decreased by 33.2%. As a consequence, degraded forest increased by 26.64%. There has been a great deal of spatial variability in the pattern of forest loss and land use change throughout the region. Our estimates of deforestation in the region for the contemporary period are the highest

reported so far. In yet another study it tells a different story. In this study the deforestation was quantified over a period of past nine decades. The classified forest cover maps for 1920, 1975, 1985, 1995, 2005 and 2013 indicates 95,446 (73.1%), 63,123 (48.4%), 62,286 (47.7%), 61,551 (47.2%), 61,511 (47.1%) and 61,511 km2 (47.1%) of the forest area, respectively. The rates of deforestation have been analysed in different time phases, i.e., 1920–1975, 1975–1985, 1985–1995, 1995–2005 and 2005–2013. The grid cells of 1 km2 have been generated for time series analysis and describing spatial changes in forests. The net rate of deforestation was found to be 0.75 during 1920–1975, 0.13 during 1975–1985, 0.12 during 1985–1995 and 0.01 during 1995–2005. Overall forest loss in Western Ghats was estimated as 33,579 km2 (35.3% of the total forest) from 1920's to 2013. Land use change analysis indicates highest transformation of forest to plantations, followed by agriculture and degradation to scrub. The dominant forest type is tropical semi-evergreen which comprises 21,678 km2 (35.2%) of the total forest area of Western Ghats, followed by wet evergreen forest (30.6%), moist deciduous forest (24.8%) and dry deciduous forest (8.1%) in 2013. Even though it has the highest population density among the hotspots, there is no quantifiable net rate of deforestation from 2005 to 2013 which indicates increased measures of conservation. According to Global Forest Watch data (2017) says thatthe four districts of Karnataka lost 2,208 ha of forest area Dakshin Kannada district lost 955 ha, followed by Udupi (857 ha), Uttara Kannada (236 ha) and Kodagu (160 ha).Since 2001, the two districts namely, Dakshin Kannada and Udupi lost more than 70 % of total trees coverage areas. These two districts account for 14,400 ha of tree cover loss out of a total of 20,000 ha. The report about the forest cover published in ISFR Table: 1Loss Forest Cover in Western Ghats between 1999-23 was studied in detail then it was found that between 1999 and 2023 Western Ghats lost 11861 square kilometres of very dense forest and 5247.2 of square kilometres MDF.

TABLE: 1 LOSS FOREST COVER IN WESTERN GHATS BETWEEN 1999-23

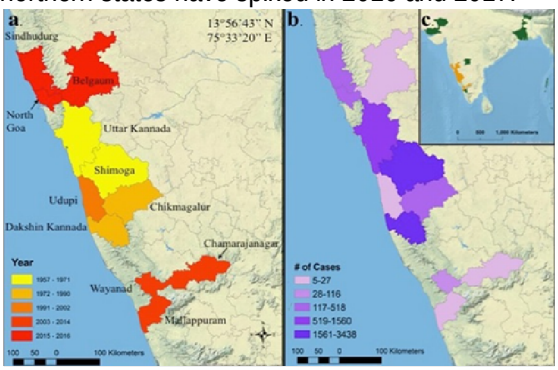
LOSS FOREST COVER IN WESTERN GHAT					
(AREA IN SQ.KM)					
YEAR: 1999-23					
STATE	**DF**	**VDF**	**MDF**	**OF**	**TOTAL**
GOA	-530	-7	-686	-12.17	-1235.2
GUJARAT	-2328	0	-1330.8	0	-3658.8
KARNATAKA	-3695	-1	-1964	-1947	-7607
KERALA	-2144	-1	-125	-7	-2277
MAHARASHTRA	-2507	-77	-997.36	-3448.5	-7029.9
TAMIL NADU	-492	-79	-144	-1541	-2256
GRAND TOTAL	**-11696**	**-165**	**-5247.2**	**-6955.7**	**-24064**

THE PRESENT CARBON STOCKS IN WESTERN GHATS

As per a study carried out by Ramachandra and Bharath (2019), the forests of Western Ghats currently store a total of 1.23 MGg (million gigagrams or tetra metric Tt) of carbon in both above ground biomass as well as in soil, with a carbon sequestration potential of 0.81 MGg per year. In case of the biodiversity-rich primary forests in central and southern Western Ghats, the forests store 600 Gg/ha of carbon.

FOREST LOSS AND KYASANUR FOREST DISEASE : A DIRECT CONNECT

Over the past two decades, scientists have been alarmed by the rapid spread of an infectious disease transmitted by tick bites that afflict forest-dwellers in the verdant, biodiverse tropical forests of the Western Ghats running parallel to India's west coast. Caused by a virus, Kyasanur Forest Disease, or 'monkey fever' as it is also known because it infects and sometimes kills monkeys too, sickens about 400 people in the region each year, although cases vary each year widely. A vaccine exists, but it is weak; new infections continue and a death was reported in the year 2020. The disease was first identified in the state of Karnataka in 1957, but post-2000, scientists have been puzzled by its expansion northward to the states of Goa and Maharashtra and southward to Tamil Nadu and Kerala. And cases from the northern states have spiked in 2016 and 2017.



Cases of Kyasanur Forest disease in India depicted by (a) year of the first case in each district (n = 16), (b) number of human cases (n = 9594), and (c) and all seroprevalence antibodies discovered outside of this study's region of interest (n = 6). Map and description from Chakraborty et al. 2019.

According to data released by Global Forest Watch in 2019, the rate of forest loss in the Western Ghats has intensified from 2012 to 2017. Many villagers have been displaced from their original lands into deforested areas, often at the periphery of new agricultural plantations. Scientists have long-suspected that forest loss might have played a role in the rise of Kyasanur Forest Disease (KFD). Now, a team of scientists has found concrete evidence for this association. Using models, a team of researchers examined the relationship between the landscape suitability of KFD and forest loss and mammalian species richness. They mapped the total outbreaks between 2012 and 2019 and gathered satellite data on forest loss.Their analysis found that an increase in both forest loss and mammalian species richness was associated with an increased risk of KFD outbreak. Generally speaking, forest loss reflects a more significant human presence in that landscape and deforestation can alter the composition of communities of populations in an ecosystem, which in turn can affect the way individuals of a species interact with each other and other species including humans.Curiously, another study published early in 2019, reported that in 1983-84, there was a massive outbreak of KFD with 2,589 cases. Coincidentally, they noted in a 1983 news article that 400 hectares of virgin forests in the Western Ghats were cleared around that time a huge amount compared to previous years to establish cashew plantations. Yet another study on the Impact of Plantation Induced Forest Degradation on the Outbreak of

Emerging Infectious Diseases in Wayanad District by KakoliSaha, Kerala, based onGIS tools, remote sensing data, extensive field work and disease data to discover the relationship between the LULCC and disease outbreak. The study revealed that the emerging infectious diseases (EIDs) have increased recently due to forest degradation. The study was done in two parts. In the first part, land use and land cover change of the Wayanad district was analysed for the period of 1950 to 2018. The result of the analysis shows that a significant amount of forest has been converted into agricultural and forest plantations over the time. The second part involves understanding the impact of plantations on the outbreak of EIDs. It was found that cases of EIDs were high in those gram panchayats where forests were encroached by plantations.

RIVERS FLOWING FROM WESTERN GHATS

The Western Ghats are a major watershed, with many rivers originating there. Specifically, there are 81 rivers that have their source in the Western Ghats. These rivers flow both east and west, with west-flowing rivers emptying into the Arabian Sea and east-flowing rivers eventually joining larger rivers like the Kaveri and Krishna. The west flowing rivers, such as the Periyar, Bharathappuzha, Netravati, Sharavathi, and Mandovi, have a shorter and faster flow due to the shorter distance and steeper slopes. The major east-flowing rivers are Godavari, Krishna, and Kaveri along with numerous smaller tributary rivers like the Tunga, Bhadra, Bhima, Malaprabha, Ghataprabha, Hemavathi, and Kabini.

WHY MOST OF THE RIVERS ARE DRYING UP?

In April 2024, two shocking news reports revealed that the upper reach of the Cauvery River at Dubare in Kodagu and its tributary, Hemavathi near Sakleshpur in Karnataka, had dried up. This unprecedented event has caused widespread concern,

as the perennial rivers from the Western Ghats are the lifelines for farming and drinking water in both urban and rural areas. Several factors contributed to the drying of the Cauvery River, including global warming and El-Nino, which affect the SW monsoon rains in India.El-Nino, characterised by warm air from the central and eastern Pacific Ocean, disrupts SW monsoons, while La-Nina, characterised by cool air from the same region, tends to ensure better SW monsoon rains in India and droughts elsewhere in the world.Tree felling and an ineffective Forest Act have further degraded and shrunk the forests. Since the 1990s, invasive weeds such as Lantana,Parthenium, Sennaspectabilis, etc, have further disrupted forest ecosystems, affecting natural regeneration. The remedies to tackle the catastrophic drying up of the Cauvery and other perennial rivers in the Western Ghats require committed effort from stakeholders and governments.

DAMS AND MINING ARE THREAT TO THE ECOSYSTEM

Mini-hydro projects are still a major threat to Western Ghats, let us consider. Let us cite an example of a 24-MW hydro power project proposed for the Kumaradhara in Dakshina Kannada's Putturtaluk has become a reality despite it is sanctioned on 'private land' prior to the Karnataka High Court order banning hydro projects. This hydel project could submerge 1,882 hectares of land, including agricultural fields and prime forests (Report commissioned by the Western Ghats Task Force in April) despite company claims that the project involves "no submergence of land, hence no loss of species or any resettlement or rehabilitation of the people. Cropland and plantations account for

36 % of the land that could submerge while forests constitute 46%. The submergence of reserve forest areas (falling under Kunthur and Panaja range) haverare medicinal plants, endemic evergreen trees and endangered fish, and a perfect habitat for other animals.The other eye-opening example is 113 MW wind power project being developed near the Bhima Shankar Wildlife Sanctuary in Maharashtra. The Rs 772-crore project, spread over 14 villages and 194.66 hectares of reserve forestland, is promoted by Enercon (India) Limited. The Gadgil report says that the project has caused substantial forest destruction and triggered large-scale soil erosion and landslides because of poor construction of roads on steep gradients. The construction rubble ends up on fertile farmland and in reservoirs of tributaries of the Krishna river. It says that the hills where wind mills have been installed receive high rainfall and are biodiversity-rich. The evergreen forest is contiguous with the Bhimashankar Wildlife Sanctuary, which is home to Maharashtra's state animal, the Malabar Giant Squirrel or Ratufaindica. Reportedly, land rights of forest dwellers of the area have also not been settled. They are even being denied free movement in the area. Similarly, Illegal quarrying and mining are rampant in the Western Ghats. This despite the government's claims that steps have been taken to check mining. We have seen as to what happened in Wayanad in the recent past. After the 2024 landslide in Wayanad, an analysis of satellite imagery revealed that the district housed at least 48 stone quarries, 15 of which were located in Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESAs). These areas, identified in 2013 by a High-Level Working Group led by the space scientist Krishnaswamy Kasturirangan, are defined by having at least a fifth of their landscape under natural ecosystems, including biodiversity-rich zones, wildlife corridors, and heritage sites. Quarrying, mining, and other environmentally harmful activities are prohibited in ESAs to safeguard their ecological integrity but who cares?

FOREST LAND ENCROACHMENT IN WESTERN GHATS

The Western Ghats, which covers about 60 % of forest area of Karnataka, is recognized as one of the bio-diversity hotspots of the world. These forests are shrinking in recent years due to anthropogenic pressures, especially encroachment of lands for agriculture. It has led to forest fragmentation, loss of habitat and corridor for movement of wild animals, etc. A study carried out in the year 2014 on GIS based assessment of forest encroachment scenario over a period of three decades in Chikmagalur district of Karnataka revealed that the forest encroachment has considerably increased from 0.98 % to 6.63 % between 1975 and 2010 and the majority of encroachment has taken place during 1990 and 2000. Higher encroachments prevailed in moist and dry deciduous forest in the district. Another study carried out by G.R. Pramod Kumar in the year 2012 reveals that the encroachment in reserve forest of Kodgu districts accounts for 291.6 ha, 284.8 ha and 173.7 ha respectively for the year, 2010, 2000 and 1990.

COMMUNITIES LIVING WITHIN FORESTS:

Amongst the communities living inside the forests of the Western Ghats, there are a large number that feel isolated and marooned, especially from the younger generation who are eager to partake in the benefits of economic development, and desperately seek better lives and a good future for their children outside the protected areas. They seek better livelihood options, healthcare, education and access to basic facilities like electricity, public ration shops, etc.

In addition to the lack of proper facilities inside the forests and the associated social issues, the

forest-dwelling communities also live in constant threat of human-wildlife conflict . There are numerous examples where such forest-dwellers have lost their lives or have been gravely injured during incidences of human-wildlife conflict while carrying out simple, daily-life activities such as using toilets, collecting forest produce, etc.

Figure1. An elephant walking through an agriculture farm in Karnataka (Pic. courtesy Ashwin Bhat)

Often forest-dwelling communities continue to live in the forests facing huge adversity due to the lack of financial opportunities, education and awareness, as well as the fear of the unknown, even though they wish to go out and are desperate to seek a better life. They ultimately become a prisoner of their circumstances and continue living a sub-par live inside the forests often against their will. In their pursuit for better education for their children as well as to escape human-wildlife conflict, the forest-dwelling families take loans from money lenders, and become indebted for life. These circumstances limit their ability to exercise their democratic right to a better life.

CONCLUSION

If the government would have paid a heed on MadhavGadgil's word on the western Ghats we would not have reached this stage of destruction but who hears the sane voice in today's world? The report, headed by noted ecologist MadhavGadgil, recommended that the government phase out mining projects, cancel damaging hydroelectric projects, and move toward organic agriculture in ecologically-sensitive sections of the Ghats. Recently dubbed a UNESCO World Heritage Site, the Western Ghats is one of India's largest wildernesses and home to thousands of species, many found no-where else.Many studies suggest that loss of remnant forest patches from these landscapes is likely to reduce biodiversity within Agro-ecosystems and exacerbate overall biodiversity loss across the Western Ghats. Conservation of these remnant forest patches through protection and restoration of habitat and connectivity to larger forest patches needs to be prioritized. In the densely populated Western Ghats, this can only be achieved by building partnerships with local land owners and stakeholders through innovative land-use policy and incentive schemes for conservation as well as attractive packages for voluntary relocation.Panchayats can play a pivotal role in conserving the environment while a committed political resolve and administrative support is essential.

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Old age is always "fifteen years" older than I am

- Oliver Wendall Holmes

Embedding ESG in Indian Forestry: A Policy Blueprint for Sustainable Stewardship

Dr. D. Nalini Mohan

As India advances toward its net-zero targets and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) frameworks offer a strategic lens for forest policy reform. Forests, covering nearly a quarter of India's landmass, are not only ecological assets but also engines of rural development and climate resilience. For policymakers, integrating ESG into forestry is a pathway to align environmental priorities with inclusive growth and transparent governance.

Understanding ESG: Definition, Origins, and Indian Evolution

Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) refers to a framework for evaluating how organizations manage their impact on the planet, people, and internal systems. It originated from global financial and sustainability movements, notably the UN's "Who Cares Wins" report (2004) and the Freshfields Report (2005), which emphasized ESG's relevance to long-term investment performance.

Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) is a framework used to evaluate how responsibly an organization operates. It's especially important in sustainable investing and corporate accountability. The UN's "Who Cares Wins" report, officially titled "Who Cares Wins: Connecting Financial Markets to a Changing World," was published in 2004 by the UN Global Compact, in collaboration with the Swiss government and 23 financial institutions. It focused on integrating environmental, social, and governance (ESG) issues into investment decisions and asset management. The report was a landmark initiative, aiming to connect the financial sector with global sustainability challenges.

The 2005 Freshfields report, officially titled "A Legal Framework for the Integration of ESG Issues into Institutional Investment", was a landmark study commissioned by the United Nations Environment Programme Finance Initiative (UNEP FI). It argued that institutional investors are legally permitted and even required to consider financially material environmental, social, and governance (ESG) factors as part of their fiduciary duties. This report played a significant role in shaping the understanding of ESG integration in investment practices and contributed to the launch of the Principles for Responsible Investment (PRI) in 2006.

Embedding ESG in Indian Forestry: A Policy Blueprint

- National Forest Policy (NFP) 1988: India's foundational forest policy prioritizing environmental stability, biodiversity conservation, and community-driven forest management.
- Carbon Sink: A natural system (like forests) that absorbs and stores atmospheric carbon dioxide, helping mitigate global warming.
- Biodiversity Arks: Forest ecosystems that serve as sanctuaries for diverse species, safeguarding ecological richness.
- Rural Livelihoods: Income and well-being of forest-dependent communities, especially in tribal and remote regions.
- Governance Dimension: The legal, institutional, and participatory frameworks guiding

forest policy, management, and stakeholder accountability.

Aligning ESG with NFP 1988

The National Forest Policy 1988 laid the groundwork for ecological and community-entered forestry in India. ESG integration reinforces its core mandates:

- Ecological Priority: Managing forests primarily for environmental protection and not commercial extraction.
- Afforestation & Social Forestry: Promoting tree planting on barren and community lands to restore ecosystems.
- Community Participation: Strengthening Joint Forest Management (JFM) and recognizing forest dwellers as stakeholders.
- Equitable Access: Providing priority access to local communities for minor forest produce and livelihood support.

Environmental Dimension: Forests as Carbon Sinks and Biodiversity Arks

India's forests absorb ~15% of annual CO emissions sequestering approximately 138 million tonnes of CO each year. ESG-aligned forestry enhances this through its climate functions:

- Afforestation and Reforestation Prioritizing native species over monocultures (e.g.,Terminaliaarjuna vs. Conocarpus erectus). Satellite Monitoring Tools such as ISRO's Bhuvan and FSI's GIS platforms support precision mapping and carbon accounting and Monitoring. Reforming CAMPA to promote biodiversity and ecological health
- Forests also act as biodiversity arks, hosting 80% of India's terrestrial flora and fauna across hotspots like the Western Ghats and Eastern Himalayas.
- Additional ecosystem services include groundwater recharge, microclimate stabilization, and soil conservation.

Social Dimension: Strengthening Rural Livelihoods

Forests sustain over 200 million people, especially tribals and marginalized groups. ESG's social pillar emphasizes:

- Livelihood Security through access to fuelwood, fodder, and non-timber forest products (NTFPs) such as honey, tamarind, and herbs.
- Inclusive Development: Empowering women through Self-Help Groups and schemes like Van DhanVikas Kendra to lead forest produce value chains.
- Education and Awareness: Promoting eco-literacy and cultural engagement through local schools, youth clubs, and regional arts.

By recognizing the socio-economic value of forests, ESG fosters dignified livelihoods and participatory stewardship.

Governance Dimension: Transparency and Accountability

Effective governance ensures that environmental and social goals translate into outcomes. ESG strengthens:

- Policy Cohesion through coordinated frameworks like the Forest Rights Act (2006), NFP 1988, and updated ESG disclosure norms.
- Institutional Oversight: Forest departments, Gram Panchayats, and civil society collaborating in planning and implementation.
- Transparency Tools such as e-Green Watch and the India State of Forest Report (ISFR) improve public accountability.
- Certification and Audits: ESG-aligned certifications (FSC, PEFC) and KPIs ensure sustainability compliance and attract green

investments.

Integrating ESG into governance fortifies stakeholder trust and regulatory efficiency.

ESG in India: Evolution Timeline:

Year Milestone

2007 PM's Ten Point Charter on responsible business

2009 Voluntary CSR Guidelines by Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA)

2011 National Voluntary Guidelines (NVGs) on Social, Environmental, and Economic Responsibilities of Business

2012 SEBI mandates Business Responsibility Reports (BRR) for top 100 listed companies

2019 MCA releases National Guidelines on Responsible Business Conduct (NGRBC)

2021 SEBI introduces Business Responsibility and Sustainability Reporting (BRSR)

2023 Launch of BRSR Core and BRSR Lite frameworks for ESG disclosures

Present Status of ESG Implementation in India:

Mandatory ESG reporting for top 1000 listed companies via BRSR from FY 2022–23

BRSR Core requires assurance and value chain disclosures for top 250 companies by FY 2024–25

BRSR Lite introduced for unlisted companies to encourage voluntary ESG adoption

ESG integration is still nascent in smaller enterprises, but gaining traction through supply chain pressure and investor demand.Challenges and Opportunities

Key Challenges:

- Fragmented land records and overlapping jurisdictions
- Monoculture plantations reducing biodiversity
- Weak ESG reporting and data gaps
- Limited rural access to forest benefits

Strategic Opportunities:

- Forest Stack:Forest Stack: "Forest Stack" generally refers to a digital infrastructure or platform designed to integrate and manage forestry data, enabling better forest management, conservation, and sustainable resource utilization create economic opportunities like carbon credits. This initiative, developed by JICA and BCG, seeks to improve forest conservation and management by integrating data, technology, and governance into a coherent system. It's a concept that leverages data and technology to support various stakeholders, including governments, private sector players, NGOs, researchers, and local communities. A forest Stack being developed, can unify data, governance, and carbon markets to unlock $18–22 billion in annual economic value by 2030.
- Climate Finance: Mobilizing green bonds and carbon-linked investments and the ' Green Credits Programme' of Ministry of Environment, Forests & Climate Change are aimed at mobilizing and incentivizing climate finance for sustainability.
- PPP Models: Corporates engaging in agroforestry and afforestation similar to ITCs Agroforestry model.
- Technology Integration: Drones, satellite AI, and mobile apps for monitoring

ESG frameworks unify these opportunities into implementable strategies leading to:

Environmental stabilityby pursuing ESG's environmental goals

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KARAKORAM ANOMALY - RE-LOOK INDUS WATER TREATY - CAN CHINA TAKE PAKISTAN'S REVENGE?

B.K.Singh

Islamabad's preference for terror on India's civilian and armed forces using ISI trained terrorists,as compared to the belief in conventional warfare has misfired after Pahalgaon terror attack on 22nd April, where 26 civilians, mostly tourists including a Nepalese national lost their lives. Immediately after the attack India expelled Pakistani nationals, reduced diplomatic presence and kept Indus Water Treaty (IWT) in abeyance. In response to 22nd April attack, India launched operation Sindoor in the wee hours of 7th May and hit and decimated terrorist infrastructures at nine locations – five in POK and four in Pakistan's Punjab province including Muridke and Bahawalpur, the headquarters of two major terrorist organizations Lashkar-e-taiba or Jaish-e-mohammed. The operation also resulted in killing more than hundred terrorists in these camps. Pakistan's response using Turkey and Chinese made weapons were foiled and in four days long conflict, considerable damage was inflicted to Pakistan's eleven air bases and air defense system. Even after the ceasefire was announced at 5.35 pm on May 10th, IWT was continued to be kept under abeyance. The two countries have fought several wars and India has faced many terrorist attacks orchestrated by our neighbor, but it is for the first time since 1960 IWT has been suspended. A permanent cost has been inflicted on Pakistan for the misadventure.

In recent years, India has been seeking bilateral modification of IWT. The treaty signed in 1960 divides six rivers of the basin between the two. Indus, Jhelum and Chenab are the western rivers allocated to Pakistan, while Ravi, Beas and Sutlej are the eastern rivers allocated to India. Further, the treaty allocated 80% water for Pakistan and only 20% for upper riparian state, India. No other water treaty in the world has ignored upper riparian state like this and has been the most generous treaty favoring the lower riparian state. The treaty also did not take into account global warming, climate change issue and environmental impact assessment, as brought out in departmentally related Standing committee report 2021.

While the treaty was operational, Pakistan has continuously objected to India's hydroelectric projects. In recent years, the objections to Kishenganga and Ratle hydroelectric projects are for anyone to take note off. In hydroelectric projects, water is stored in the reservoirs for generating electricity, and thereafter, it is released back in to the river and the flow in the river is maintained. With such baseless objections, Pakistan moves International court of Justice, Hague, which is quite irksome and hampers our growth. Further it is challenging for the union territory of Jammu and Kashmir to progress economically. Reports have substantiated that UT sufferedhundreds of millions rupees annually due to IWT.

Sixty-five years into the treaty, climate change has altered the scenario considerably. The glaciers located on the eastern side that feed water to Sutlej, Beas and Ravi riversare at relatively lower altitude as compared to the glaciers in Karakoram mountain ranges that feed water to western rivers namely Indus, Jhelum and Chenab. The glaciers at lower altitude are losing mass at a higher rate and are retreating faster. In higher Karakoram mountain ranges, glaciers are not losing masses, and are relatively stable. In the scientific community it is called 'Karakoram anomaly'. From the depleted glacier mass there have been

considerable reduction in the flow of water in the eastern rivers namely Sutlej, Beas and Ravi. This has impacted water availability for irrigation and power generation in Indian states of Punjab and Rajasthan, as well as in the UT of J&K. Thus, despite IWT allocated 20% water share for India, we got only 5%.

'Karakoram anomaly' is termed as the stability or the anomalous growth of glaciers in the central Karakoram, in contrast to the retreat of glaciers in other nearby mountainous ranges of Himalayas and other ranges of the World. Studies have highlighted the role of temperature in establishing and sustaining the anomaly over the years. Western disturbances are the primary feeder of the snowfall for the region in winters. It has also been found in the study that 53% of precipitation and 65% of snowfall in the region is powered by the western disturbances. This has resulted in an increase of precipitation intensity in Karakoram ranges by 10% in last two decades. This explains the role of western disturbances in sustaining the anomaly. In other words, flow of water in western rivers namely Indus, Jhelum and Chenabis sustainable and may increase by 10%, while that in eastern rivers Ravi, Beas and Sutlej show a depleting trend. In view of scientific finding, IWT must undergo a change.

Post Pahalgaon, PM Modi has reiterated that the treaty will remain suspended till our neighbor stops supporting terrorism in all forms and manifestations. Defense Minister Rajnath Singh has asked them to return to us MaulanaMasoodAzahar and HafeezSaeed, who are UN designated terrorists roaming freely in Pakistan and are masterminds of several terror attacks in India, if we are to start any meaningful dialogue between the two neighbors.

Especially in view of 'Karakoram anomaly' owing to the climate change, IWT in the present form cannot be revived, even if Pakistan sheds supporting terrorism.PM Modi has directed officials to expedite planning and execution of projects on Chenab, Jhelum and Indus rivers. Central government has also committed to fast-track environmental clearances of all pending and proposed projects in the Indus river basin in J&K to utilize maximum amount of water from the river-system. Canals on Chenab is also being planned to be extended to cover more areas for irrigation. Uri Stage II, Kirthal-II and Sawalkot projects are for generation of power and also for irrigating agricultural fields, are already listed for single window clearance. The work on Tulbul navigation barrage in the Wullar lake in north Kashmir, essential for providing navigation in Jhelum river, was suspended in 1980s, under pressure from Pakistan, can now be revived.

After keeping IWT in abeyance, India released water from Baglihar and Salal dams for de-siltation of reservoirs. This caused swelling of Chenab river and flooding in Pakistan. After completion of de-siltation, the gates are closed, disrupting the agriculture sowing/ paddy transplant in Pakistan's Punjab and Sindh. Even India is not obliged to share rainfall data now. Pakistan has come up with another bluff, saying that China in a similar way can stop Brahmaputra water, where India is lower riparian state.

China can never punish us in that way. Brahmaputra originates in Angsi glacier in Tibet and flows through China as YarlungTsangpo before entering India's Arunachal Pradesh. It is called Siang and Dibang in Arunachal Pradesh and Brahmaputra in Assam and Bangladesh. China has already announced to build a hydropower dam on YarlungTsangpo, but Indian experts opined that it cannot cut the flow of water in Brahmaputra. IDSA's peer reviewed data suggests that even during lean periods YarlungTsangpo's annual outflow from China is far lower than Brahmaputra's total discharge in India. Once the river plunges through the Siang gorge, its character changes in India Tibetan catchment contributes only 14% of the river

volume while Indian catchment contributes the balance. So, China does not enjoy domination of the river as India dos on Indus. Assam CM HemantaBishwaSarmah recently responded to this bluff and posted on X, "Brahmaputra is not a river India depends on upstream-it is a rain fed Indian River system, strengthened after entering Indian Territory." Regarding the source of water, only 30 to 35% flow is fed by glacier melting and some rainfall in Tibet in Chinese territory and the remaining 65 to 70% is fed from Indian monsoon through the rivers Subansiri, Lohit, Kameng, Manas, Dhansiri, Jia-Bharali, Kopili, Krishnai, Digaru and Kulsi in the catchments spread in Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Nagaland and Meghalaya. Any Chinese upstream intervention will have little or no impact in India. However, erratic floods, especially during pre-monsoon season, and lean season crunch could possibly be causes of concern for India. China's dominance is not of water but of weather information which it does not share.

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Community engagementby ESG's social emphasis

Sustainable resource useby ESG's governance framework

Potential Benefits of Integrating ESG into Forestry:

- ESG offers a structured pathway to protect these ecological functions while enabling measurable climate and biodiversity goals.
- India's biodiversity hotspots (Western Ghats, Eastern Himalayas) are prime zones for ESG investment in restoration and carbon credits.
- Together, these principles align ESG pillars with long-standing national policy objectives, ensuring consistency and impact.
- Policymakers should consider setting up ESG cells within forest departments to coordinate cross-sectoral policy design.

ESG offers a policy-ready framework to future-proof Indian forestry. By aligning the National Forest Policy's 1988 goals with ESG pillars, India can:

- Enhance ecological resilience
- Ensure inclusive growth
- Foster transparent governance

A Policy Mandate for the Future:

In conclusion, we can understand, that forests serve not only as carbon sinks and biodiversity arks, but also as socio-economic lifelines for millions. Forests are central to India's ecological security and rural prosperity. Aligning environmental priorities with community welfare and transparent governance creates a resilient blueprint for future-ready forestry. India's forest sector is well-positioned to embrace ESG integration. Embedding ESG into forestry policy is not just sustainability imperative—it's a governance innovation. Aligning ESG with national priorities can unlock capital, build institutional trust, and position India as a global leader in nature-based solutions.Policymakers have a unique opportunity to institutionalize ESG as a cornerstone of forest governance—ensuring that India's forests are not only protected, but also equitably and transparently managed for generations to come. By embedding ESG into forest planning, India can meet global climate commitments while ensuring equity and accountability at home. Let ESG be not just an evaluative tool—but a stewardship ethic embedded in India's forest governance future.

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Probation: A Toast to Our Training at Indian Forest College

Padam Parkash Bhojvaid

In the leafy May of 1983, I stepped into a forest unlike any I had known before — not one rustling with sal and teak, but one echoing with laughter, groaning tin roofs, thumping hearts, and friendships that took root deeper than the ancient deodar. It was the Indian Forest College in Dehradun — our cradle of transformation — and we were the Class of '83: a hundred-strong tribe of Indian Forest Service probationers, joined in kinship by colleagues from Nepal, Sri Lanka, and the People's Democratic Republic of Laos. We were seedlings of different soils, planted in the rich, rain-soaked loam of the Doon Valley, destined to grow tall together.

Our home, if you could call it that, was the weathered, two-decades-old probationers' hostel. It stood like a stoic sentinel against the storms, its slanting tin roofs singing lullabies during the Doon monsoon, sheltering not just bodies, but budding dreams. The rooms, spartan yet soulful, held grand wooden beds that creaked like old jungle bridges, twin wooden almairahs smelling faintly of mothballs and memories, fraying club chairs, and study tables carved with the initials of past batches — a living museum of youth and yearning.

The ceiling fans were fat-bellied and arthritic, but to us they were like old guardians — their tired hums masking homesickness and soothing sleeplessness. The Dean once quipped to those expecting bungalows, "This is a forest, not a fort." And indeed, it was a forest of humanity, discipline and discovery.

Mornings began with a soft knock and a ritual as comforting as a mother's touch — a steaming cup of tea and two humble Parle-G biscuits, delivered faithfully by our block bearers. Then came the donning of sweat shirts, PT shoes, and sleepy determination. Ustad Ji's unrelenting voice cut through the dawn paired with the hawk-eyed watch of Mr. Kazmi, our sports officer. The red gravel track around campus bore witness to our aching limbs, reluctant jogs, and eventually — our quiet surrender to the rhythm of routine. Like the forest itself, we learned the music of repetition, of breath and will in harmony.

The mess hall — our temple of sustenance — welcomed us with breakfasts both nourishing and nostalgic. Between sleepy banter and stolen second helpings, bonds began to form. Then we scattered into classrooms — minds sharp as machetes, cutting through volumes of silviculture, soil science, and wildlife ecology. Tea breaks were oases of camaraderie; lunch breaks, rivers of conversation; and siestas under whining fans, the sweetest rebellion against the day's tyranny.

The afternoons were tactile, real — mud on hands, twigs in hair, bark under nails, and compasses in hand. Knowledge wasn't abstract here — it had texture, scent, resistance. We learned to read the forest like scripture, one rustling page at a time.

At this sacred juncture, it is only fitting to bow our heads in gratitude to our instructors — a remarkable blend of field-hardened foresters, visionary serving IFS officers, and erudite scientists from the hallowed halls of the Forest Research Institute. Their voices carried the weight of experience and the clarity of conviction. They didn't just teach us how to manage forests — they taught us how to feel them, how to listen when the leaves whispered, and how to walk

softly where roots run deep. Their wisdom didn't flow from podiums alone — it was shared under canopies, beside stumps, and over maps smeared with sweat and sincerity. We were not merely students in their eyes — we were future stewards of a legacy they had upheld with honour.

But it was the evenings that unfurled like poetry. We shed our whites and ties like old bark, donning jerseys and youth. The FRI fields echoed with the joyous cacophony of cricket appeals, football thuds, and unfiltered laughter. Under the dappled light of jacarandas and laburnums, we became boys again — chasing balls, dreams, and glory.

And then, the tuck shop. Ah, that sanctuary of indulgence! As twilight tiptoed over the Shivaliks, Manohar — may his soul rest in peace — served redemption by the glass and plate: cold coffee that tasted of freedom, mango shakes sweeter than ambition, and Maggi noodles that healed everything from heartbreak to homesickness. That modest shop was our sacred grove and Manohar — our priest of comfort.

Later, after a cold shower and the occasional sacred ritual,not more than twice a week, of course — the night unfolded in slow grace. Conversations drifted from forest policy to first loves, from bird calls to bungalow dreams. The hostel hummed with the scent of naphthalene and nostalgia-in-the-making.

Weekends were wind in our hair. We cycled — our cadre cycles wheezing like old horses or on the noisy overloaded vikrams — down to Paltan Bazaar for Kumar's kulfi, piping hot gulab jamuns, and the latest Bollywood masala playing near Connaught place and Ghanta ghar. Those short escapades were our sugar-soaked rebellions — against regimentation, against routine, against growing up too fast.

There were characters that completed our world. Radhey Shyam, the hereditary barber, gave us identical crop cuts — what we laughingly called "D-grade thinning," stolen straight from forestry textbooks. Mamchand, the washer man, would collect and deliver laundry with the precision of a metronome. And then there was Anthony — our butler, always faintly perfumed with spirits, who floated between mess tables and billiards boards. He laid the tables like a general deploying troops — and taught us the fine art of snooker with the wisdom of a seasoned sage.

Together, we grew — not just in rank, but in soul. We learned that forests don't just grow upwards; they deepen, intertwine, shelter, and remember. Those years in the Indian Forest College were not just training — they were initiation into a life of service, stewardship, and silent understanding of nature's will. We entered as probationers. We emerged as foresters. But most importantly — we left as a family.

The Author is a former PCCF (HoFF) of Haryana State, M-70879 56657

From what we get, we can make a living; what we give, however, makes life.

- Arthur Ashe, tennis player in "Days of Grace", May 1994

Why is protecting, preserving and conserving wildlife needed?Part 3: Role Played by Zoological Parks (Zoological Parks as Conservation Agents)

Dr. R. Hemanth Kumar

Prologue:

The French naturalist Georges Cuvier, some 200 years ago, after examining fossil bones, concluded that "the existence of a world previous to ours, destroyed by some sort of catastrophe", and first floated the concept of extinction.

Scientists acknowledge that species consistently vanish at a background extinction rate of about one species per million annually, with new species sustainably replacing those lost. Occasionally, mass extinctions disrupt this balance, followed by slow recoveries as new species emerge from the remaining gene pool, eventually repopulating the Earth with a new array of flora and fauna. Over the last 4.5 billion years, five major extinction events have transformed the planet, each eradicating between 50% and 95% of life, including the dominant species of the time. We are currently experiencing the sixth mass extinction, often called the Holocene extinction or human-induced extinction. Extinction rates in the 20th century surged due to habitat destruction, overexploitation of resources, invasive alien species, climate change caused by humans, the emergence of new diseases, and more. Unfortunately, these trends persist into the 21st century, accelerating the loss of biodiversity.

In 1998 (on April 20th), seven out of ten biologists, who participated in a poll conducted by the American Museum of Natural History and Louis Harris and Associates, Inc., agreed that mass extinction poses a colossal threat to human existence.

Red Panda from Darjeeling Zoo, West Bengal, India

The gloomiest book on earth—IUCN's Red Data book is becoming gloomier and gloomier; with every passing year, more and more species are finding their place in the endangered and critically endangered lists. IUCN, while releasing its 2009 report, expressed its anguish by quoting that “Wildlife crisis worse than economic crisis”. The present extinction rates are prompting many to predict that half of all plant and animal species will become extinct by 2100—a grim prediction or reality?

Declining trends

- 12,000 Threatened Species: 2003 Red List
- 15,589 Threatened Species: 2004 Red List
- 16,119 Threatened Species-- 40% of Evaluated Species Are Threatened-- 2006 Red List
- 50% of mammal species in decline, up to 36% of mammals threatened with extinction; 40% of all studied species threatened: 2008 Red list
- 17,291 species out of the 47,677 assessed species are threatened with extinction: 2009 Red List.
- As of the latest updates, over 28,000 species are recognized as threatened with extinction,

which includes those categorized as Critically Endangered, Endangered, or Vulnerable.

- The increase in endangered species reflects the growing understanding of species risk status and the ongoing biodiversity crisis.

- Approximately 24% of mammalian species, 13% of bird species, 21% of reptilian species, 41% of amphibian species, and 15% of fish are threatened with extinction. There is a growing recognition of the threats invertebrates face, with many groups, including insects and molluscs, experiencing significant declines.

....What are we doing? Conservation Initiatives

To address biocide, governments have introduced various initiatives over time, such as strengthening legal systems, participating in conventions like the CBD (Convention on Biological Diversity), and fostering international cooperation. These efforts complement existing strategies, like managing wilderness areas with flagship or keystone species, as central to conservation efforts. However, many species in these wild areas are declining due to factors like invasive alien species and overgrazing harming grassland ecosystems, poaching leading to demographic instability, and increasing pollution of water bodies affecting wildlife populations. Additionally, human activities like eco-tourism, road construction, highways, and mining are further threatening these ecosystems.

We need not get disheartened by the sharp decline in the number of species. Maybe that.....

1. One day, the enforcement will become more scientific, with enforcers maintaining a database of poachers and smugglers, similar to the National Crime Control Bureau. This database will include photographs, modus operandi, and other details, and the information will be shared with relevant authorities.

WCCB and NTCA (National Tiger Conservation Authority) have started working in this direction, especially for gathering information on wildlife crimes. On the website of NTCA, (http://www.tigernet.nic.in) public spirited citizens can post their information about wildlife crimes, but lot more can be done in the direction of tactical, operational and strategic intelligence related to gathering of info on wildlife crime and on the issues like planning, collecting, evaluating, collating, analyzing and dissipating of intelligence, for which proper training is imparted to the field staff,

2. One day, we will have a network of wildlife forensic labs in India, helping the enforcers in tackling the court cases by identifying the material in question and by giving evidence in the courts. Applied wildlife genetics (with identified genetic markers for individual species) may become a potent weapon in the armoury of enforcers in the years to come. When such things happen, the instances of getting convictions against the poachers based on serological evidence will become quite common (as of now, we have very limited examples, like convictions against the poachers of Gir Lions based on the DNA fingerprinting method). More and more books on enforcement issues like "Wildlife Crime: An Enforcement Guide " (By Vivek Menon and Ashok Kumar) will come shortly,

3. One day, agencies like EIA (Environmental Investigation Agency) will also come up in India too, with more and more investigators working in the field of wildlife crimes,

4. One day, Software like MIKE (Monitoring of Illegal Killings of Elephants) will be developed for monitoring the killings of other animals too.

5. One day, the ambitious M-STrIPES (Monitoring system for Tigers), a pilot project of the Ministry of Environment and Forests that aimed at strengthening the anti-poaching drive and bringing transparency in patrolling systems, will be implemented in all of our wilderness areas (digital diary ?!!!),

The author is a former PCCF, Uttar Pradesh, M-9415786586

To be continued in next issue...

Toll of Five Tigers in the MM Hills (Shaken the Pride of Karnataka in Tiger Conservation)

B M T Rajeev

Tiger is a Royal animal and it is termed as the spirit of jungle. This striped animal with its golden fur on the top and pure white in the abdomen and down below with black stripes all over body camouflages it in all most all the backgrounds of its ecosystem to enable it to hide and stalk on its preys. It is Royal because is never hurt any animals in its vicinity unless it is hungry and stalks for hunt any animal of its choice to prey on. A formidable animal in strength and taken any animal that it chooses to hunt. When it hunts, it continues to eat it after keeping its hunt covered till it finishes with visits whenever feels hungry daily or once in 2-3 days by staying in the vicinity. It is a national animal since 1973 and it occupies the crown of the biological pyramid as a formidable animal to take on any animal to hunt on. Conservation of this animal is considered as conservation of the its ecosystem and hence the Project Tiger was launched in 1973 and 'Tiger Reserves' (TRs) started all over India. Tigers population which was 1981 asper the first ever census in 1971 have gradually risen to 6,382 as per the census in 2023 in India. The TRs which were 9 to start with have risen to 58 as on today.

Pic: A tigress with her lovely cubs in nature.

Tigers areattractive animals for sighting and photo shooting in the wild during wildlife tourism. The vista of a family of a tigress with cubs is mesmerizing and the tourists die hard to see them and enjoy during wildlife tourism. Videos of the tigresses familiesdepicting the joyous mother tigress feeding and caring her cubs and playing of the beautiful cubs with mother in nature are common in the video shops and whatsApp groups rejoicing the people and children and so they earn love for their protection and care by the government. In the midst of this type of public care & love on tigers happened the following incident?

A news was broke out on 26th June, 2025 about a family of 5 tigers' swollen bodies found by the field staff at Hoogyam in the forests of MalaiMahadeshwara Hills (MM Hills) Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS) in the KollegalTaluk of the Chamarajanagar district of Karnataka State in the border area close to Palar River between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu States with photos.

Pic: A deplorable scene of swollen bodies of a mother tigress and 4 cubs (3 female + 1 male) died due to poisoning of tiger's kill

It was a serious and a bad news which fore-shook the state and news spread likes a wild fire in the state and in the nation with shocking blames and criticisms in the mass media (News papers, radio/ TV news & talks against the credibility Forest Department (FD) in protecting the National animal-tiger. The death of 5 tigers is affecting the pride of Karnataka and its credibility in wildlife protection and management issues and the integrity of the organization and the state. The criticisms never happened to this level in the past against the FD-since the mass media is huge in this era of AI. The elite daily, the Deccan Herald pricked the bone marrow of the FD's credibility in its editorial on this incident and other issues of wild animals' conservation.

Karnataka is the 2nd state in hosting the national animal-tiger with 393 tigers out of 3,682 in India (2024 Census); and 1st state in housing the national heritage animal-elephants with a population of 6,395 out of around 30,000 in India (2023 census). Karnataka has a network of 5 National Parks (NPs), 30 WLSs, 15 Conservation Reserves and 1 Community Reserve totally 51 Protected Areas (PAs) covering about 20 percent of the forest area of 43,382 sq km which is about 5 % of geographical area of 191,791 sq km of the state; out of 51 PAs there are 5 'Tiger Reserves' (TR) under the 'Project Tiger'; Bandipur TR is one of the 9 TRs initiated in 1973 after the enactment of Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 (WLPA) in India.

The Forest Minister of Karnataka Sri Ishwara B Khandre, known for his quick actions concerning forests & wildlife, immediately ordered the Forest Department (FD) for an inquiry and report. Next day he visited the spot and the carcasses of an innocent family of a mother tigress and her 4 cubs and were consigned to flames after all legal formalities before the Forest Minister on 27 June, 2025.

In the course of finding out the causes for the death of the 5 tigers pending Post Mortem-scientific analysis report-guessing for causes started rounds with argument in the whatsApp-groups of the Retired Forest Officers.

Some retired wildlifers opined that the mass death of 5 tigers is possible only by poisoning of a tiger kill-which must have been consumed by the tigress and its 4 cubs; or baiting with a poisoned meat to the family of tigers for vengeance etc … not a case of diseases for all the 5 tigers to die instantly or not a case of poaching since the innocent cubs and their mother would not have been killed simultaneously and their bodies left over without clipping their nails, whiskers and hides for trophies in South India and whole body in case of North India for collection of bones for trade in NEA countries. Suggested action to be taken to find out the carcass of any of the tiger's hunting-kill in the nearby forest area, if it is cattle… a milching cow or a bull to trace its owner through trusted watchers from the locality to nab the culprits. Some had strong beliefs to rely on the post mortem (PM) report for the cause of death.

In the course of investigation-next day-3rd day of the incidence, the staff of the Anti-Poaching Camp (APCs) at Marahallitraced the carcass of a cow killed by the tigress which was consumed by by tigress and its cubs, suspected to be poisoned was the cause of death of the 5 tigers. And it was followed by the news that the owner of the cow, his son & an accomplice who poisoned the tiger's kill too were traced and arrested and the case is under investigation.

Interface:

The ground reality of the WLS organization is… Hoogyam is the Hqrs of the Range Forest Officer (RFO) and the DRFO and the FG. It is a big village with a Hospital, Schools & down below village establishment with a dam as a tourist attraction in the hilly area and it is a fit area for the establishment of the RFO's Hqrs under the sub-division of ACF at Hanur.

Forest around Hoogyam is a conducive ecosystem for the wild animals to flourish, and it is natural for a tigress to have its home range in the WLS in the vicinity of the enclosure village-Hoogyam and it was breeding 4 cubs. It is true that the cattle from the enclosure village enter the WLS for forage and the tigress has preyed on a cow, and consumed part of it with her 4 cubs…and gone for watering

Contd.. on Page No: 33

Pictures from 108th General Body Meeting

Chief Guest Dr.C.Suvarna, IFS PCCF (HoFF) addressing the GBM

Sri.P.K.Jha, IFS (R), President of the association and office bearers felicitating the Chief Guest

Some of the senior retired officers and their family members attending the GBM

Pictures from 108th GB Meeting- 2

Pictures from 108th GBM-3

Felicitations

Felicitation to Sri.Satyanarayana, SFS on attaining 75 years

Felicitation to Sri.Ramarao Choudhury, IFS (R) one of the hosts of lunch

Pictures from Family get-together of retired forest officers of North Coast AP

Pictures from the General Body Meeting of the retired Forest Gazetted Officers Of erstwhile Warangal Circle

Continuation from page No. 28

& rest …. The owner of the cow, a farmer, has searched for his lost cow and traced its kill by the tiger…and gone home and planned and poisoned his cows' carcass as an act of revenge against the tiger-knowing its habits… that the tiger will definitely revisit its kill for eating it. The tigress after a day or two with her cubs revisited its kill as per its natural instinct/habit and unknowingly consumed the poisoned kill and left for its abode to succumb to the poison and died with her 4 cubs in nature. It might have taken a day for hunt+3 days for its next visit and death + 4-5 days for the bodies to bloat and later dead bodies have been traced by the staff- totally 8 days, later on, the carcass of a killed cow has been traced…

(Tigers have low sense of smell and taste but, they have sharp eyes even with vision during night, they have sharp ear and sense for touch…the reason for the tigers to eat their kills till consumed even after perishing …hence tiger is called as a carrion.I have seen this habit of a tiger camping in the site of an elephant that died naturally and consuming its carcass in spite of it perishing causing rotten smell in the Bandipur TR in 1992 as the ACF & Research Officer in it. I tested its fecal matter and found the tiger camping there was consuming the perishing elephant carcass based on the presence of elephant's hairs in it.)

Failure in Responsibilities:

The WLS organization has a Range unit with the RFO, DRFO, FG Hqrs at Hoogyam and an APC in the beat at Marahalli, where the death of 5 tigers surfaced which have not been noticed till their body bloated- say after 4-5 days i.e. on 26 June, 2025 and the tiger kill (Cow) too was traced after next 2 days which might have been occurred 8-9 days earlier. It shows the complete failure of the machinery in its duty and responsibilities of MM Hills,WLS organization in Hoogyam Range of the Hanur Sub-Dvn.

Prescribed Duties APCs:

The APC watchers along with a FG on rotation- are fed with the cost of the govt to make them camp and do 24 hours vigil over their rounds, are bound to camp in the APC during nights with vigil against poaching or smuggling incidences; and they have to perambulate their jurisdiction over 2-3 beats daily, and make note of the big animals seen, tiger pug marks & movement of the tiger/ elephants… make entry in the Log book of the APC and inform the RFO daily in the evening about safety of their jurisdiction over wireless.

The DRFO/RFO to have rounds with them during their visits and make their entry and then the ACF & DCF to check the log book of the ACP and their vigil against untoward incidents and record if any observations or appreciations in the log book is the procedural rule to have better protection and management of wildlife in any PAs during their visits / patrolling/ inspections. The log books to be printed page serially numbered with dates to be filed in the Range for reference after its volume used.

Intrigue:

The death of 5 tigers was noticed after 4-5 days and the carcass of the tiger kill-a cow was traced after 8-9 days. The watchers of the said APC were said to be on strike protesting against no payment of wages from Dec,2024 i.e. for 5 months in front of the DCF, Office Kollegal during the occurrence of this incident (Paper news)…

a)The watchers in APCs are out sourced through contract system due to fear of their demand for observation on permanent establishment after 10

years of working as per the High Court ruling in Karnataka- hence, this practice in the FD Hoogyam is a remote village in the midst of the MM Hills with single route from Kollegal& return.

Here, the person to protest is the Contractor who hired the watchers in front of the DCF or CF for payment of his bills after making payments to the watchers …which makes sense as the watchers are outsourced and it is contractors look out. Here, the DCF & the RFO & the Contractor appears to answerable for this episode of watchers absence.

b) The watchers should not have remained without payment for 5 months-a worrisome issue. Generally the KFD manages to make payment up to the end of March financial year ending, the wages of men employed in APCs. Here if it was not paid in March, 2025, why is a question?. It is a fault of the Contractor in not getting the bill and also the fault of theDCF/ system in not making payment for the men on protection job. They might have been absent for 3-4 days at the time of the crisis. The DRFO & FG should have made it good with alternative arrangements- not done, is a failure in their duty.

c) The cattle killed in the PAs by leopard or tiger are not compensated in the Tiger Reserves, it may be so in the WLSs too if the CWW banned the cattle grazing in the WLS. This is the reason that might have been forced the owner of the cow killed by tiger in not approaching the RFO for compensation and took to take vengeance at the tiger which killed his cow & poisoned the kill of the tiger as there were no staff or watchers to see his suspicious act of tracing the kill of tiger & poisoning it inside a WLS ..a collapse of the WLS machinery in duty & responsibilities. Consequently the DCF, ACF & the RFO have been said to be suspended and the DRFO & FG too have to be punished in the interest of enforcing discipline in the wildlife management as a caution for others staff to be rised on taking responsibility as per riles.

d) The rule of not paying compensation to the cattle killed by the predators in the TRs/ WLSs is the rule book restrictions but, it should have exceptions for the enclosures like Hoogyam for a distance of a km inside the WLS from the D.line for payment of compensation to cattle killed by wild animals to have too way tolerance …similar to the farmers tolerance of our wild animals in their fields/habitations; we too have to have tolerance for a km within the TR/ WLS as stray incidences in case of enclosures for paying compensation for life lost in spite of the ban of the entry of cattle in to the TR/WLS as a mechanism for gaining the peoples' cooperation in wildlife management wherever there is no buffer forests between human habitation and the PAs-This might been the reason for the farmer to poison the tiger kill-which should not have been against the law as a human being against the innocent family of tigress with 4 cubs.

The wilderness ofHoogyam (Ground reality):

To recall an incidence of August, 1986, when the brigand Veerappan, an ill famed for elephants poaching for ivory, sandalwood smuggling and killing of informer-villagers and officers of forest & Police in Karnataka & TN States was escaped from the custody in BRT hills in 1986 and he was at large, a young IPS officer T. Harikrishna, SP of Mysore ventured to nab him on information that the brigand was around Hoogyam on 14th of August '86…after getting the information on visit of the SP to Hoogyam side, the brigand laid a trap-Obstruction across the road in a narrow cutting of road through forests at Meenyam and started waiting for the arrival of the SP & his team at a strategic point on the rocks…when SP stopped

his jeep at the obstruction and asked his men to clear the road, the criminal opened indiscriminate fires and Killed the SP & his team on the spot and escaped. The whole Mysore District (Before creation of Chamarajanagardist) mourned the killing of the spirited young SP by the brigand … the Police did not celebrate the I. day on 15th of August, 1986 (There is a memorial for him in Police Hqrs, Mysore) One of my relative was the Doctor in the PHC at Hoogyam…once, he told me that in a night well built men-a dozen with long mustaches with face covered forcibly entered his quarters in the midnight and asked him to give them medicine & injection for cold & fever by telling that they are the gang of Veerappan and threatening him to not to open his mouth to anybody abouttheir visit for his safety by throwing some money on his table…. He did so with fear of him & his family's safety.

There are stories about the ill famed brigand Veerappan and the officers killed by him and joint operation of STF by the Karnataka & Tamil Nadu States against him for years, seizure of huge haul of sandal wood- in the interstate border, kill of an IFS officer P Srinivas in Nov, 1991 and a Minister Nagappa in 2002, and kidnapping of Kannada matinee idol DrRajkumar from his house in July, 2000 & his release in Nov, 2000 for a huge bounty & later the brigand was killed by the TSF in Oct, 2004 in the encounter…which speaks the ruggedness of the forests of the MM Hills and the adjoining forests in the TN where the brigand and his men were hiding challenging Forest & Police Departments for 2 decades.

Conclusion:

The MM Hills is a hilly area, there is only one road through it and the rest are 3 approach roads to the enclosures. The Cauvery River forms the northern/ part of the eastern boundary and Polar River as southern & part of eastern boundary-interstate border and to south with forests contiguous to the Sathyamangala TR of the Tamil Nadu; and it is surrounded by dry open forest & civilization at western boundary.

The MM Hills- WLS over 906 sq km forests are most conducive habitats for the tigers and host of other animals and it is under proposal after approval by the NTCA to declare it as a Tiger Reserve (TR) and it is pending with the state government being stalled by political interference with the plea that TR rules are rigid against the public utility concern. It is housing about 35 tigers and a good population of elephants and other animals with organization strength of a Division-DCF, with 3 Sub-Dvns-ACFs, host of Ranges-RFOs, Rounds-DRFOs, Beats-FGS and APCs-Watchers to man the WLS. This WLS was in news for good deeds when MrYedukundala, IFS was the DCF and followed by MsDeep Contractor,IFS, DCF recently for work of gaining peoples support by doing eco-development works benefitting local people, but it is unfortunate, that it is ill famous now for wrong things-a blot on the pride of the FD in wildlife conservation..

The famous temple of MalaiMahadeshwara is situated atop/ centre of the MM Hills which is about 3,000 ft above MSL. The tiger is the vehicle of the presiding God-MalaiMahadeshwara. The God and his vehicle-tiger are most venerated in the states of Karnataka & Tamil Nadu and most in this region. Poisoning of tigers in this region of the MM Hills by farmers is most unfortunate and a ghastly act against the tige/wildlife law in the midst of the staffed WLS.–o-

Author is a writer, columnist, Bengaluru, cell : 9632781811

Birthday Greetings

We wish the following born on the dates mentioned

"A Very Happy Birthday"

S.No.	Name of the Member/ Retired officer	D.O.B.
Sarvasri		
1.	A.V. Joseph	05-08-1956
2.	P. Rajendranath	10-08-1953
3.	M. Mohan Rao	12-08-1952
4.	L.R. Sekhar	13-08-1953
5.	P.S. Srinivasa Murthy	14-08-1962
6.	K. Suryanarayana	15-08-1952
7.	V. Kishan	16-08-1950
8.	M. Pradyumna Reddy	23-08-1955
9.	Dr. N.V. Jayanth Babu	23-08-1953
10.	A. Sudhakar	24-08-1948
11.	D. Basavasankar Rao	25-08-1955
12.	P. Vishweshwaraiah	27-08-1951
13.	C. Muralidhar Rao	28-08-1941
14.	P. Ranga Raju	30-08-1952
15.	M. Narasimha Reddy	02-09-1954
16.	B. Srinivas	02-09-1962
17.	Dr. K. Tulsi Rao	03-09-1954

S.No.	Name of the Serving Officers	D.O.B.
Sarvasri		
01.	V. Ram Mohan	06-08-1967
02.	Ananth Shankar	07-08-1988
03.	Syed Maqsood Hussain	07-08-1967
04.	A. Narsimha Reddy	08-08-1983
05.	Smt. M. Revathi	09-08-1970
06.	T. Venu Babu	09-08-1969
07.	A. Rama Murthy	10-08-1969
08.	P.B. Narayana Kumar	13-08-1979
09.	Smt. I. Pushpa Sowjanya	13-08-1981
10.	S. Venkatesh	15-08-1977
11.	Smt. P. Sunitha	15-08-1980
12.	M. Venu Madhav Rao	16-08-1967
13.	D. Veena Vani	16-08-1981
14.	Ch. Sivaiah	20-08-1967
15.	S. Rajasekhar	20-08-1970
16.	I. Kasi Viswanatha Raju	20-08-1967
17.	Sivala Ram Babu	21-08-1980
18.	Smt. P.N. Adilakshmi	23-08-1970
19.	Smt. E. Harika	24-08-1984
20.	S.Srikanthanatha Reddy	25-08-1974
21.	Smt. Sunita Bhagwat	26-08-1970
22.	P. Anil Kumar	30-08-1965
23.	K. Ashok Kumar	31-08-1976
24.	N. Siva Kumar Sangala	31-08-1975
25.	M. Ravi Prasad	04-09-1966

- Secretary

Any Omissions and Commissions in the Names / Dates may kindly be informed to the Editor over WhatsApp or Email.

A saga of Inter-State linking Tiger habitat restoration

M.Ram Mohan

Plantations are raised as part of forest development activity by Forest Department. Degraded forests are selected for the purpose. Of late, the encroached forest lands are being retrieved and planted. The objective of raising plantations, in general, is for the purpose of Timber, pulpwood, etc.or re-greening the area and recovering the lost forests. However, the instance of plantation raising in Itikalpadin Makidi Section in Sirpur Range of Kaghaznagar Forest Division inKumramBheemAsifabad Dist.of Telanganaoffers a different story.

Itikalpad is a village that came into being inside the Garlapet Forest Block of Sirpur Range about four decades agoand it has about 200 families. A small habitation is said to have been established by the labour engaged for bamboo cutting for Sirpur Paper Mills. Started in 1980s with 5-10 huts, hundreds ofhectares of bamboo forests or bamboo mixed forestswereclearedgradually,for human settlement and cultivationof land by 1990s,by the migrants and their relatives from various surrounding villages. During this period,the Naxal movement was rampant. Some evacuees of Ada Reservoir nearAsifabad,though relocated and rehabilitated at Jyothinagar in Sirpurand in other villages,also migrated to Itikalpadand cleared forests.

The soils of Itikalpadare well drained and yield from the crops is bountiful.A family earns income ranging from four to ten lakh rupees per annum from the crops raised, which are mostly commercial.The village and its cultivated lands fall precisely in the transit route of wildlife, especially of Tiger, hence treated as Tiger corridor falling between Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve of adjacent Maharashtra state and Kawal Tiger Reserve of Telangana and other wildlife areas.

As part of forest land retrieval drive and to facilitateunhindered movement of Big Cats,Itikalpad,which is considered to be very critical for wildlife,waschosen for retrieval and planting. Since, the tiger populationhas increased in Tadoba-owing to the best wildlife management practices of Maharashtra Forest Department-Tigersareventuring into the Telangana Forests, as they are immediate and in contiguity. The Garlapet Block is deemed to be the entry point and the first stepping stone for the Tigers to enter into Telangana. This is indeed a great opportunity to repopulate the forests of Telangana, especially the Kawal Tiger Reserve, various other sanctuaries and Tiger bearing areas,with Tigers and restore the degraded forests.

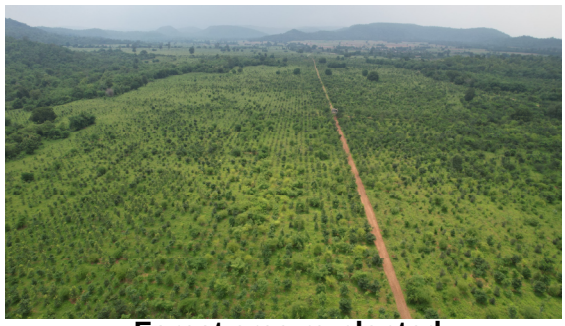
Encroached forest area

The forest officersconcerned, especially Mr.V.MohanRao, the local Forest Section Officer who is instrumental in retrieving the lands from non-tribal encroachers, has an objective in his mind beyond mere re-greening the area. He rather wanted to do something remarkable in his servicefor the cause of forests and wildlife. This has resulted in tremendous transformation of the landscape of the area, from encroachment to habitat restoration for the big cat, the Tiger. He raised a series of plantations spanning in an area of about 350 ha., despite facing many an

ordealincluding life threat. He got good support from the Forest Range Officer, Mr.PurnaChandar and the other higher officialsand the role of forest watchers in this regard is indispensable, he says. After planting, the Wildlife, herbivores, carnivores, especially Tigers, have reappeared and begun using the area as transit route. Hitherto, movement of (7) Tigers has been recorded by way of Camera Trapping which testifies the importance of the place as wildlife/tiger corridor.

Mr.MohanRaostarted retrieving the encroached land which has been under cultivation for over four decades. Initially, he began his efforts in the year 2020-21 by retrieving about 60 ha. of forest land by convincing the encroachers and gradually he succeeded in retrieving 400 ha.over aperiod of four years.Meanwhile, he faced strong resistance from the encroachers and was warned of dire consequences and was even threatened for life.The encroachers left no stone unturnedin this regard. Plantation was severely damaged by the encroachers by uprooting the plants and re-ploughing the area at the beginning. However, the undaunted and determined forester could convince the people again and retrieved the lands by conducting a series of meetings with the villagers.Plantations have been raised in such retrieved lands for the last four years.

Prior to retrieval, he conducted a survey which contained the details of movable and immovable properties, etc.,if any,of the families of the encroachers which helped understand and to make othersunderstand the actual social and economic status of encroachers. He also called on the local politicians of all hues and public representatives personally and explained them the importance of forests and wildlifeand requested them not to support the encroachers andgarnered their support in the process of forest land retrieval and planting for the sake of public cause.Bringing of plants, sometimes in lakhs, from far off places and transporting to planting site by crossing swollen stream during monsoon seasonalso became daunting tasks.He exudes confidence that the remainingencroached area of about 600 ha. would be taken back in due course of time, provided he is extended required support.



Forest area re-planted

The endeavour of the foresterresulted in successful raising of plantations andrestoringwildlife habitat. His efforts in convincing the encroachers for leaving the land are corroborated with the fact thatsome of the encroachers are requesting that they would vacate the remaining land also,provided that they get housing facility in nearby Town where they can get wage employment oran acre of land for each family at another placefor livelihood.Mr.MohanRao has been laudedby the top brass of the Forest Departmentfor his work.TheHead of the Forest Force, and other senior officers were all praise forhis unwavering effortsin retrieval of forest land, raisingof successful plantations(with 85-90% survival rate) that resulted in re-entry of wildlife. They got convinced after seeing for themselvesthe Tiger trail/pug marks in the plantation area during the field visits and in the staff meeting that followed. The efforts of the Forester and the like elsewhere need to be recognised in a befitting manner so that the officers of his ilkfeel motivated and proliferate. This willaugur well for the forests and wildlife!A visit to the Itikalpadplantations is worthyand it can surely bea great learning experience for the budding foresters.

Author is the Forest Divisional Officer, Jannaram Division,Kawal Tiger Reserve.

(Mob.no. 9849333055)

Reintroduction of Cheetah in India: A boon or a bane ?

V.V.Hariprasad

The Asiatic cheetah *(Acinonyxjubatusvenaticus)* once ranged from north western India to the Gangetic plain in the east, extending to the Deccan Plateau in the south. In the Middle Ages, Mughal rulers supposedly used cheetahs for coursing blackbucks, chinkaras and antelopes. The species had a gradual history of habitat loss. In Punjab in Northern India, before the thorn forests were cleared for agriculture and human settlement, they were intermixed with open grasslands grazed by large herds of blackbuck and these co-existed with their main natural predator, the Asiatic cheetah. The blackbuck is also no longer extant in the region. Trapping of sub-adult cheetahs that have learned hunting skills from their mothers in the wild, for assisting in royal hunts is said to be the major cause of the species' rapid decline. Trophy hunting during the British Raj further impacted the already dwindling population of cheetahs.Asiatic cheetahs rarely breed in captivity as there is only one record of a litter ever born to captive animals.

By the beginning of the 20th century, wild cheetah sightings were rare in India, so much so that between 1918 and 1945, Indian princes imported cheetahs from Africa for coursing. The last confirmed three cheetahs were shot by Maharajah of Surguja RamanujPratap Singh Deo in 1948. The last known sighting was that of a female in 1951 in Koriya district in north western Chhattisgarh. With the death of the last known population and no further sightings, the species was declared locally extinct in 1952. The Asiatic subspecies is now found only in Iran and is declared as critically endangered.

Cheetahs went extinct in India primarily due to overhunting, habitat loss, and the diminishing of their prey base. The species was officially declared extinct in 1952. Factors contributing to the cheetah's extinction in India were as follows.

- **Hunting:**

Cheetahs were hunted by Indian royalty and nobility for sport, and the British Raj also offered rewards for killing them, which contributed to their decline.

- **Habitat Loss:**

The clearing of forests for settlements and plantations, as well as the conversion of land to agriculture, reduced the cheetah's habitat.

- **Diminishing Prey Base:**

The reduction in the number of large herbivores, such as gazelles and deer, which cheetahs preyed upon, further weakened their population

Project formulation

In September 2009, a cheetah reintroduction

workshop was organized by the Government of India with scientists and experts from Wildlife

Institute of India and Cheetah Conservation Fund among others.Stephen J. O'Brien of the Laboratory of Genomic Diversity of National Cancer Institute of the United States, said that according to the latest genetic studies, the Asiatic cheetah was, in fact, genetically identical to the African cheetah with which it had separated only 5,000 years ago and this was not enough time for a subspecies level differentiation

The experts argued for the introduction of the Southeast African cheetah as the Asiatic cheetah survives only in Iran, its population numbers being less than 100 individuals, and the Iranian government's repeated reluctance to supply said cheetahs for Indian efforts.The meeting identified Namibia, South Africa, Botswana, Kenya, Tanzania, and the UAE as countries from where the cheetah could be imported to India. Another working group, which was formed for exploring sourcing and translocation of the cheetah suggested that five to ten animals annually have to be brought to India over a period of five to ten years to create a viable population.

Discussions on cheetah introduction began after the mid-1950s. Proposals were made to the governments of Iran in the 1970s, but unsuccessfully. Offers were made by the government of Kenya beginning in the 1980s .In late 2009, as a part of Project Cheetah, the Ministry of Environment and Forests approved a detailed survey of seven potential reintroduction sites and three holding sites for captive breeding across four states Rajasthan, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, and Chhattisgarh. . On 17 September 2022, five female and three male southeast African cheetahs, between the ages of four and six, were transported by air from Namibia and released in a quarantined enclosure within Kuno National Park in the state of Madhya Pradesh. The relocation was supervised by Laurie Marker, of the Namibia-based Cheetah Conservation Fund and YadvendradevJhala of the Wildlife Institute of India. The cheetahs, fitted with radio collars, were moved to a larger enclosure in November. A further 12 cheetahs arrived from South Africa in February 2023 and began to be released into the park in March 2023. That month a cheetah gave birth to four cubs, the first recorded live cheetah birth in India in over 70years..

In May 2023, South African wildlife expert Vincent van der Merwe clarified that recent cheetah deaths does not mean that the Project Cheetah is failing, as similar mortality rates have been reported in African reintroduction and 50 percent mortality rate is expected in the first year. In July 2023, Namibia-based Cheetah Conservation Fund wrote a letter to the Supreme Court of India, suggesting that the cheetah deaths could have been prevented with better monitoring and adequate veterinary care. It was based on the postmortem reports which indicated that cheetahs had died of various causes including starvation and infection due to wounds made by the tracking radio collar. By January 2024, three more deaths were recorded pushing the count of dead animals to ten since the start of the project. As of September 2024, the remaining 12 animals were moved to enclosures due to the

apparent mortality

Legal troubles and clearance

In May 2012, the Supreme Court of India put the project of importing cheetahs from Africa and reintroducing them in India on hold after a petition was filed against the same. In the petition, it was argued that Kuno, the proposed location for the re-introduction was prepared for reintroduction of native lions from Gir National Park and introducing cheetahs will be used as a pretext to delay the lion re-introduction project. It was also argued that the reintroduction of African cheetah has not been placed before the Standing Committee of India's National Board for Wildlife and that the scientific studies show the African cheetahs to be genetically different from Asian Cheetahs which is against the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) guidelines on translocation of wildlife species.

On 28 January 2020, the Supreme Court allowed the central government to proceed with the introduction of Southern African cheetahs to a suitable habitat in India as part of a trial, in response to an application filed by the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) seeking permission to introduce Southern African cheetahs from Namibia. The Supreme Court set up a three-member committee to guide the NTCA and asked the committee to submit a progress report every four months. Subsequently, a scientific assessment of all potential reintroduction sites was conducted to understand the habitat conditions, prey species availability, protection status and other ecological criteria for shortlisting initial introduction site with a detailed scientific action plan published in January 2022. In August 2022, the Union minister of Environment stated that African cheetahs would be reintroduced from Namibia to Kuno Wildlife Sanctuary in September and that the Indian Government was also attempting to translocate another 12 cheetahs from South Africa.

Sustainability and impact

The scientific reaction to the translocation has been mixed. Veterinary pharmacologist Adrian Tordiffe viewed India as providing a "protected space" for the fragmented and threatened cheetah population.Zoologist K. Ullas Karanth was critical of the effort, considering it to be a "public relations exercise." He further commented that the "realities" such as human overpopulation, and the presence of larger feline predators and packs of feral dogs, could cause potentially "high mortalities," and require a continual import of African cheetahs.

Kuno National Park is a relatively new national park, having declared as such in 2018. It was founded previously as a wildlife sanctuary to implement the Asiatic Lion Reintroduction Project, which aimed to establish a second Asiatic lion population in India and protect the isolated lions of the Gir National Park in Gujarat from potential mass mortality events such as an outbreak of an epizootics. Although the state government of Gujarat was ordered by the Supreme Court in April 2013 to transfer a small population of lions to Kuno within six months, the order was not ultimately implemented. It was estimated that Kuno National Park had adequate prey population to support about 20 cheetahs. With an increase in the predator population due to the introduction of cheetahs, prey population has been impacted and periodic studies of prey population are being conducted to take required corrective action.

Scientists from Namibia have indicated concern on the spatial ecology. Cheetahs in Africa typically have individual territories of 100 km2 and it will be difficult to sustain 20 cheetahs at Kuno National Park with a core zone of 748 km2 and a buffer zone of 487 km2. Increasing cheetah population

leads to the animals venturing out of the core zones of the park into adjoining agricultural lands and non-forested areas, bringing them into conflict with humans. On 2 April 2023, a male cheetah escaped from the boundaries of the park before being captured in a village 20 km away from the park. In the same month, the Supreme Court of India ordered the central government to look for an alternative site to augment the existing facility as the park did not have an adequate amount of space for the growing number of felines. According to Ravi Chellam, the introduced African cheetahs had been projected to be a key species of a new phase of ecological restoration in India, comprising scrub forests, savannahs and grasslands. By September 17, 2024, the second anniversary of the introduction—at first of eight adults from Namibia and thereafter 12 from South Africa; subsequent deaths of eight adults; births of 17 cubs; and deaths of five—all surviving 12 adult cheetahs and 12 cubs were limited to protective enclosures.

Key Milestones and Ongoing Efforts:

- **Translocation and Release:**

- Eight cheetahs were initially released into KNP in September 2022, and 12 more were added in February 2023.

- **Breeding Success:**

- Cheetahs have successfully bred in India, with 17 cubs born, though not all have survived.

- **New Habitats:**

- Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary in Rajasthan has been identified as a potential new habitat, and two cheetahs were relocated there in April 2025.

- **Monitoring and Management:**

- A Cheetah Project Steering Committee was established to monitor the project and provide advice.

- **Expansion of Habitat:**

- Plans are underway to expand the cheetah's habitat to include Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary and potentially other areas.

- **Challenges and Setbacks:**

- Mortality:

- Several cheetahs have died, including adult cheetahs and cubs, due to various factors like septicemia.

- **Adaptation Challenges:**

- Some cheetahs have struggled to adapt to the new climate and environment in India.

- **Future Plans:**

- **Continued Translocation:**

- More cheetahs are planned to be translocated to India, including from Botswana.

- **Community Involvement:**

- There are plans to involve local communities in the cheetah reintroduction project.

- Overall, the cheetah reintroduction project is a complex and ongoing process with both successes and challenges. While the project has shown promise in terms of breeding and establishing cheetahs in new habitats, it faces ongoing challenges related to mortality and adaptation

- The reintroduction of cheetahs to India, through initiatives like Project Cheetah, is generally considered a boon for the country's wildlife and ecosystem. While challenges and setbacks exist, the project offers significant conservation benefits, including contributing to biodiversity, enhancing grassland conservation, and potentially boosting ecotourism.

BOON:Species Restoration : Reintroducing cheetahs, a species extinct in India, restores biodiversity and contributes to a more balanced ecosystem.

- **Grassland Conservation:**

Cheetahs are a flagship species for grasslands and their conservation enhances the value of these ecosystems.

- **Ecotourism:**

The cheetah's charismatic presence can draw tourists and contribute to conservation efforts in areas that may have been overlooked.

- **Potential for Climate Change Mitigation:**

Ecosystem restoration activities associated with cheetah conservation can enhance carbon sequestration, contributing to global climate change mitigation efforts.

- **Threatened Prey Base:**

Cheetahs, being apex predators, help regulate prey populations, including potentially threatened species in grasslands and open forest ecosystems.

Bane (Potential Challenges):

- **High Risk of Mortality:**

Several cheetah deaths have occurred since the reintroduction project, raising concerns about the animals' adaptability to the new environment and potential missteps in management.

- **Disease and Genetic Risks:**

Introducing a new species, even from within the same genus, carries the risk of disease transmission and potential genetic bottlenecks.

- **Conflict with Human Interests:**

While cheetahs are not typically a threat to humans or livestock, the project may involve challenges in managing potential conflicts if the cheetahs venture outside protected areas.

- **Scientific Soundness:**

Some experts question the scientific validity of reintroducing African cheetahs into Indian habitats, citing the lack of data on the Asiatic cheetah's extinction and the suitability of the Indian environment for African cheetahs.

CONCLUSION

The reintroduction of cheetahs in India presents a complex picture. While the project offers significant benefits for conservation and biodiversity, challenges related to mortality, adaptability, and potential conflicts must be addressed to ensure the long-term success of the initiative.

(The author is a retired Deputy conservator of Forests and a practicing Advocate. He teaches cyber laws in the central university Hyderabad .He may be accessed at vvhp53@gmail.com and 7893673767)

If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die? And if you wrong us, shall we not revenge?

- Shakespeare

Minutes of 108th General Body Meeting, Association of Retired Forest Officers Telangana and Andhra Pradesh held on 29/06/2025 at 6th Floor, Conference Hall, Aranya Bhavan,Hyderabad.

The General Body meeting was presided over by Sri P.K.Jha, IFS, PCCF(HoFF) (Retd.), President of the Association.

- **Welcome Address.**

Sri B.M Swami Dass, Secretary of the Association welcomed the members to the meeting. More particularly, the senior most members, Sri. S.K. Das, IFS., Sri. K. S. Rao, IFS., Sri. BSS Reddy., IFS Retd., Sri. Sammi Reddy, IFS., Sri. K. Buchiram Reddy, IFS., (Retd) were welcomed to the General Body meeting of the Association and he also welcomed the ladies, family members and guests who joined the occasion.

Action taken report of Secretary:

- The Secretary submitted action taken report on the decisions taken in the 107thGeneral Body Meeting held on 02.03.2025 and the Executive Committee meeting held on 04.05.2025. It was decided to strengthen the Association by inviting Retired Forest Officers who have not yet joined the association. The same is being implemented. It was also decided toIncreasing subscription and advertisement charges ofVanaPremi,Policy to invite photographs for VP and awarding the best and Renewal of VP website maintenance.

- The Members with their families visited Botanical Garden in March 2025 during last GB meetingheld on 2.3.2025 and experienced the unique high-technology Virtual Reality Wildlife Safari. The Association thanked the then Principal Secretary to Chief Minister, Govt. of Telangana Sri Chandrasekhar Reddy, IFS and VC & MD, TSFDC for according permission for the visit to the Botanical Garden and for arranging the facilities to the Members. Association also thanked TGFDC officers and staff for their cooperation and assistance to the Members.

Chief Guest:

- A new idea was given by the President of the association to call on the new PCCF (HoFF) as soon as he/she takes charge and invite him/her to the ensuing GB meeting. Accordingly, association office bearers called on the new PCCF (HoFF) and invited her to the GB meeting as Chief Guest.

- Chief guest Dr. (Smt.)C.Suvarna., IFS, Prl. Chief Conservator of Forests (HoFF), Telangana addressed members in the General Body meeting and shared her thoughts on policies, challenges, implementation of works and development activities to be taken in the forest department as Prl. Chief Conservator of Forests (HoFF). Members present interacted with the chief guest and discussed their views and past experiences.

- Association felicitated the chief guest Dr. (Smt.)C.Suvarna., IFS, Prl. Chief Conservator of Forests (HoFF), Telangana with a shawl and a bouquet.

Felicitation:

- Association felicitated to Sri.Satyanarayana SFS (Retd.) on completion of seventy five years.

Editor Vanapremi:

- Dr.KotaTirupataiah.,IFS PCCF Retired, Editor

Vanapremi&EC member,presented the following items for approval of the GBM:

- Increasing subscription rates of VP. The Editor mentioned that the present rates were fixed a long time back and in view of the increased costs of all input materials, it became necessary to consider increasing the price of Vanapremi as follows:

a. Enhancement of cost price of a single copy of Vanapremi from Rs.50/- to Rs.75/-.

b. Enhancement of Annual Subscription of Vanapremi from Rs.500/- to Rs.750/-.

c. Enhancement of Life Membership of Vanapremi from Rs.5000/- to Rs.7500/-.

- Enhancement of Advertisement rates in Vanapremi.

Sl.no	Particulars	COLOUR (Rs)	
		Existing	Proposed
	(For one year - 12 issues)		
1	Cover Page Backside Full page	30000	40000
2	Inside Full page – Annual	20000	30000
3	Half page: Annual.	NA	20000
4	Quarter page : Annual	NA	15000
	For one Issue - 01 issues – Single		
5	full page : Single issue - one time	NA	5000
6	Half page : Single issue - one time	NA	2500
7	Quarter page - single issue - one time	NA	1250

Proposals for Black & White advertisement.

Slno.	Particulars	Amount (Rs)
1	Single Page	2000
2	Half Page	1000
3	Quarter page	500

- Policy to invite photographs for VP and awarding the best.
- Renewal of VP website maintenance

GB discussed the proposal and approved them as proposed above.

Presentation of Association accountsand resolution for opening of new account:

- Sri M.J Akbar.,IFS (Retd.)Treasurer,presented Accounts of the Association for the financial year 2024-25 before the General Body, and it was approved after discussion.

- General Body passed a resolution for opening a new Association Account in Union Bank of India,

PattabhiBhavan branch, Saifabad, adjacent to AranyaBhavan, for easy banking operation.

- The General Body also advised to closeother three (3) accounts (one in IOB Acc.no ending with 602 at Vijaynagar Colony and two accounts at BOB Acc.no ending with 3125 & 1453 at Nallakunta branch), in phased manner, basing on the dates of maturity of the fixed deposits in these accounts and transfer proceeds into new bank account to be opened in UBI, PattabhiBhavan Branch.

Discussion on elections of the association.

Regarding tenure of the present Management Committee (MC), the President provided a detailed account of the legal provisions governing election of the MC, amendments to the byelaws, and change of name of the Association under the Telangana Societies Registration Act, 2001.

He explained that, as per the Act, the Association is required to:

- Intimate the District Registrar within 14 days of conducting elections,
- Submit list of MC members annually,
- Provide an affidavit and no-objection letter from the previous MC,
- Submit the minutes of General Body meetings.

Since these statutory requirements were not complied with in the past, all Management Committees elected after the expiry of the first MC's term in 1992 — including the one elected in March 2022 were not legally recognized and their status continued as ad hoc EC committees and same was informed to the District Registrar.

However, the MC elected in June 2023 was duly reported to the District Registrar, along with all necessary documentation, in accordance with the legal requirements.

The President further informed members that:

- The term of the present Management Committee will end in June 2026, as per the new byelaws approved by the District Registrar,
- The change of name, change of address, and new byelaws of the Association were officially approved by the District Registrar in 2023, after fulfilling all statutory formalities.

Sri Hari Prasad, SFS (Retd.) raised certain procedural lapses in conduct of EC during the meeting.

The General Body after detailed deliberations, decided to abide by new byelaws and hold election to new MC in June 2026 after completion of three years term of present MC.

- Vote of thanks was proposed by Sri A. Shankaran , SFS (Retd.),Joint Secretary
- TheLunch was hosted today by Sri.Shyam Prasad., IFS (Retd), Sri D, Nagabushanam.,IFS (Retd), and Sri, Rama Rao Chowdary., IFS (Retd).
- Sri. GaliYadaiah IFS (Retd PCCF Gujarat cadre.) &Smt Kamala Rao IFS (Retd PCCF Kerala cadre.)came forward to host lunch duringthe next General Body Meeting in the month of September 2025.

B.M.Swami Dass, Secretary, Retired forest officers' association of TG&AP

NORTH COASTAL A.P. RETIRED FOREST OFFICERS' GET TOGETHER AT VISAKHAPATNAM

V. SANTHASEELA BABU

There are many retired forest officers who have settled in and around Visakhapatnam. We could never meet all of them together exclusively except at some small group meeting at marriages and similar occasions. Myself and Mr. K.GovindaraoRetd DFOrecently discussed about this and we thought to organize a get together meet of all the retired forest officers who are stationed in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh.As a first step, I have collected the contact numbers of all those retired forest officers who are residing in the area. I have totally identified 34 members residing in and around Visakhapatnam. Then I formed a WhatsApp group with all of them and informed about my intention to organize a get together function of all the retired forest officers along with families. The response was excellent.

I have fixed the date of our meet as 13th July being Sunday. There was a suggestion to organize the event on contributory basis so that it will not be aburden on anybody.Out of 34 members, 17have consented to attend the meet and out of them 11 members opted to attend with families. All have sent their contributions.

On 13th July, all of us assembled in 'Hall Padmavathy' in Hotel Gadiraju Palace.Ten members attended with their spouses and 6 members attended alone. The participants were served with a welcome drink on arrival. Lighting of the lamp was done by the lady participants to mark the inauguration of the programme. I welcomed the gathering and informed them as to why I proposed this type of meeting and requested everybody to extend their cooperation in conducting the meetings like this in future also. In his speech,Sri. P.A.V. Udaya Bhaskar IFS (Retd) hailed this move of conducting family get togethers periodically and asked the members to decide about the frequency of such meets. He dealt at length his experiences in the department while in service and also with some of the officers who attended this meet. He commended the efforts in getting all the retired forest officers under one roof with their families.

Sri. B. TrinadhaRao IFS (Retd) also spoke on the occasion and appreciated that so many retired officers have taken time and attended the meet and some of them with their families and wanted this to continue in future also.

Sri. A. Bharat Kumar, IFS (Retd) also appreciated the idea of meeting with families and spend some good time. He desired that regional meets of south and central Andhra Pradesh state also be conducted likewise.He wanted that those officers who could not attend for this event also to be persuaded to attend these meetings hereafter. Sri. G. Lakshmanwho attended with family, incidentally retired on 30th June 2025 and he became the youngest of the gathering. He was welcomed to the fold of retired officers and was felicitated by Sri. A. Bharath Kumar.

Myself and my wife Mrs. Bhagya Lakshmi were also felicitated by the officers on the initiation of Sri. A. Bharatkumar as I was the eldest member of the gathering being at the age of 77 years and that we have taken the lead to arrange this meet. Further, Sri. P. Ramamohan Rao, IFS (Retd), Sri. K. Lohithasyudu, IFS (Retd) Sri. B. Sriramamurty, Sri. K. Govinda Rao, Sri. P. Tatarao, Sri. G. Lakshman, Sri. K. Neelakantam, Sri. A. Narasimhamurty, Sri. G. Paul Prabhakara Rao, Sri. B. Janaki Rao, Sri. Parvatheesam Naidu, Sri. Sivaprasad have addressed the gathering. From ladies' side Mrs. Bharatha Lakshmi TrinadhaRao,Mrs.JyothyBharatkumar,Mrs.

Aparna Ramamohana Rao, Mrs. Vijaya Lakshmi Lohithasyudu, Mrs. Bhagya Lakshmi Santhaseela Babu,Mrs. Prameela Govinda Rao, Mrs. Sandhya Rani Janaki Rao, Mrs. Usha Rani Neelakantam, Mrs.SujathaSriramamurty, Mrs. Lakshmi Lakshman have spoken on the occasion and all of them lauded the efforts of bringing all the retired forest officers of north coastal area under one roof and hoped to have many more such get togethers periodically in future also.

Then I and my wife Mrs. Bhagya Lakshmi conducted the following games:

1. Memory Game: In this game about 45 items that are commonly used by everyone were kept on a table. The participants were asked to go round the items for about 5 minutes. After that the items were concealed under a cloth. The participants were provided with note books and pens and were asked to remember and write down the items seen by them within another 5 minutes. Whoever writes more number of items they will be awarded prizes. The books were collected back and valuated. 1st Prize was won by Mrs. JyothiBharatkumar (25 items), the second prize was won by Mr. B. TrinadhaRao(23 items) and the third prize by Mr. K. Lohithasyudu (20 items).

2. Passing on the Doll: This game is similar to that of a Musical Chair game. In musical chairwhile the music is on, participants go round the chairs and when the music stops, they have to occupy the nearest chair. Whoevercould not get a chair are declared as out of the game. Here in this game, keeping inview that the participants are all above 60 years of age, they were made to sit in the chairs arranged in a circle. They are given a doll which they have to circulate among themselves while the music is on. When the music stops abruptly, the participant in whose hands the doll is available is declared as out of the game. The game continues till the last 3 persons remain in the game. Out of them 3rd, 2nd and 1st places are decided as they go out of the game. This was conducted separately for ladies and gents.From the ladies' side, 1stprize was awarded to Mrs. Bharatha Lakshmi TrinadhaRao, and 2nd to Mrs. Sandhya Rani Janaki Rao and the 3rd prize to Mrs. Vijaya Lakshmi Lohithasyudu. Under gents wing the 1st prize was won byMr. K. Lohithasyudu, 2nd prize by Parvatheesam Naidu and the third prize by Mr. A. Narasimha Murti.

3. Ball and the Basket:In this game, a basket is kept at a distance of 2 meters and each participant was given 5 plastic balls. They were asked to put the balls in to the basket from where they were standing. Whoever put more number of balls get the prizes basing on the number of ballssuccessfully put by them. On ladies' side, Mrs. PrameelaGovinda Rao, Mrs. SujathaSriramamurty and Mrs. Lakshmi Lakshman have won 1st, 2nd and 3rd prizes respectively. From gents' side Mr. K. Govinda Rao won the 1st prize, Mr. B. Janakirao the 2nd and Mr. P. Ramamohana Rao the third prize.

Then we dispersed for lunch in the same premises. All the while we enjoyed chit-chatting with each other and recollecting old memories. In the afternoon 2 rounds of Housie (Thambola) game was played which was organized by my son Mr. Sree Kiran Babu and my daughter-in-law Mrs. Sonia Kiran.By the time we completed playing the games, snacks and tea was ready.After that it was discussed and decided to have such family get togethers in every quarter. The next meet was proposed to be organized during October 2025 for which Sri. B. TrinadhaRao was requested to take necessary steps.

Subsequently we dispersed to our homes with sweet memories enjoyed by us since morning by bidding goodbye to each otherand with a hope to meet during coming October.

(The author is a retired D.F.O from the undivided state of A.P. settled at Visakhapatnam. He can be reached on mobile No; 8019722292 and mail ID vssbabu@gmail.com).

Wildlife Disease Detection, Investigation, and Monitoring: A Critical Component of Wildlife Health Surveillance and Integrated Wildlife Monitoring

B. Vijaya Kumar

Wildlife health surveillance is a crucial aspect of conservation biology, aiming to detect, investigate, and monitor diseases in wildlife populations. This approach is essential for maintaining healthy ecosystems, preventing disease transmission to humans and domestic animals, and ensuring the long-term survival of wildlife species.

What is Wildlife Monitoring?

Wildlife monitoring refers to the systematic collection, analysis, and interpretation of data on wildlife populations, habitats, and ecosystems. This process helps identify trends, patterns, and anomalies, enabling conservationists and wildlife managers to make informed decisions.

Why Monitor Wildlife?

Monitoring wildlife is essential for:

1. Conservation: Understanding population dynamics, habitat use, and disease ecology to inform conservation efforts.

2. Public Health: Detecting and preventing zoonotic diseases that can be transmitted from wildlife to humans.

3. Animal Health: Identifying and managing diseases in wildlife populations to prevent suffering and population decline.

4. Ecosystem Health: Monitoring ecosystem health and resilience to ensure the long-term sustainability of ecosystems.

What to Monitor?

Wildlife monitoring programs should focus on:

1. Population dynamics: Abundance, distribution, and demographic trends.

2. Disease ecology: Presence, prevalence, and impact of diseases on wildlife populations.

3. Habitat quality: Condition and trend of habitats, including vegetation, water quality, and climate.

4. Human-wildlife interactions: Conflict, disease transmission, and other interactions between humans and wildlife.

How to Monitor?

Effective wildlife monitoring involves:

1. Field observations: Collecting data on wildlife populations, habitats, and ecosystems through field surveys and observations.

2. Camera traps: Using camera traps to monitor wildlife populations and detect diseases.

3. Genetic analysis: Analyzing genetic samples to identify species, individuals, and pathogens.

4. Remote sensing: Using satellite and aerial imagery to monitor habitat quality and ecosystem health.

5. Citizen science: Engaging the public in wildlife monitoring efforts through citizen science initiatives.

Methodology

A comprehensive wildlife monitoring program should:

1. Select indicator host species: Identify species that are sensitive to disease or environmental

changes.

2. Identify pathogens to investigate: Determine which pathogens to monitor based on risk, impact, and conservation priority.

3. Implement passive and active surveillance: Combine passive surveillance (reporting of disease events) with active surveillance (targeted monitoring and sampling).

4. Analyze data and predict trends: Use statistical models and machine learning techniques to analyze data and predict disease trends and outbreaks.

5. Environmental DNA

From Passive to Active Surveillance

Wildlife disease surveillance has evolved from passive to active surveillance due to:

1. Multiple host-pathogen systems: Diseases can affect multiple host species, requiring a more comprehensive approach.

2. Disease threat and risk exposure: The risk of disease transmission and outbreak depends on various factors, including host-pathogen interactions, environmental conditions, and human activities.

3. Duration and timing: Disease outbreaks can occur suddenly, requiring rapid detection and response.

Identifying Drivers for Epidemics and Predicting Trends

To predict disease trends and outbreaks, it's essential to:

1. Understand disease ecology: Study the interactions between hosts, pathogens, and environments.

2. Identify risk factors: Determine the factors that contribute to disease transmission and outbreaks.

3. Develop predictive models: Use statistical and machine learning models to predict disease trends and outbreaks.

By adopting a proactive and integrated approach to wildlife disease detection, investigation, and monitoring, we can better understand the complex dynamics of wildlife health and develop effective strategies for conservation and disease management.

Wildlife Disease Detection, Surveillance, and Monitoring

Wildlife disease detection, surveillance, and monitoring are critical components of conservation biology and wildlife management. These efforts aim to identify and track diseases in wildlife populations, understand disease dynamics, and inform conservation and management decisions.

Importance of Wildlife Disease Detection and Surveillance

1. Conservation: Wildlife diseases can impact population dynamics, behavior, and ecosystem health, making disease detection and surveillance essential for conservation efforts.

2. Public Health: Some wildlife diseases can be transmitted to humans, making surveillance crucial for protecting public health.

3. Animal Health: Wildlife diseases can have significant impacts on animal health and welfare.

Methods for Wildlife Disease Detection and Surveillance

1. Passive Surveillance: Reporting of disease events by wildlife professionals, hunters, or the public.

2. Active Surveillance: Targeted monitoring and sampling of wildlife populations to detect diseases.

3. Laboratory Testing: Analysis of samples to detect pathogens or disease-causing agents.

4. Field Observations: Observations of wildlife behavior, morbidity, and mortality.

Technologies for Wildlife Disease Detection and Surveillance

1. Environmental DNA (eDNA): Analysis of DNA shed into the environment to detect pathogens or disease-causing agents.

2. Remote Sensing: Use of satellite or aerial imagery to monitor wildlife populations and detect disease outbreaks.

3. Camera Traps: Use of camera traps to monitor wildlife populations and detect disease signs.

4. Machine Learning: Use of machine learning algorithms to analyze data and predict disease outbreaks.

Challenges and Limitations

1. Disease Complexity: Wildlife diseases can be complex and multifaceted, making detection and surveillance challenging.

2. Limited Resources: Limited resources, including funding and personnel, can hinder disease surveillance efforts.

3. Data Interpretation: Interpreting data from disease surveillance efforts can be challenging, requiring expertise in disease ecology and epidemiology.

Future Directions

1. Integration of Technologies: Integrating multiple technologies, such as eDNA and remote sensing, to enhance disease surveillance efforts.

2. Collaboration and Data Sharing: Collaboration and data sharing among researchers, conservationists, and wildlife managers will facilitate more effective disease surveillance.

3. Predictive Modeling: Developing predictive models to forecast disease outbreaks and inform conservation and management decisions.

By advancing wildlife disease detection, surveillance, and monitoring efforts, we can better understand and manage wildlife diseases, ultimately contributing to the conservation of wildlife populations and ecosystems.

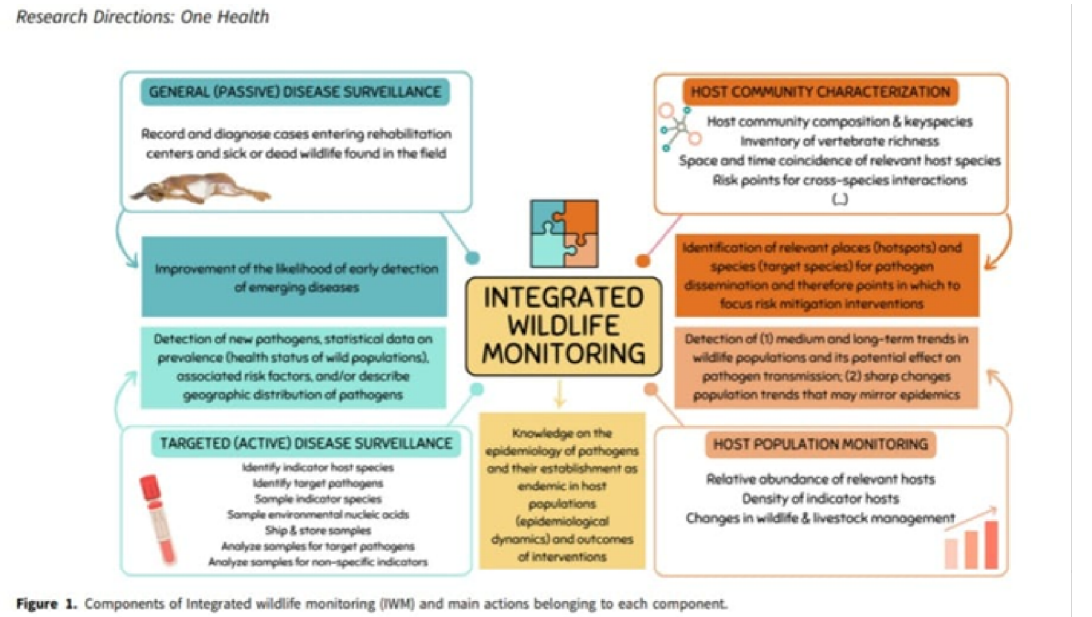


Figure 1. Components of Integrated wildlife monitoring (IWM) and main actions belonging to each component.

Silent survivors: Crocodile conservation in Telangana's heartland

N.SHIVA KUMAR

This April, as India quietly celebrated five decades of dedicated crocodile conservation, it's a fitting moment to reflect on what it truly takes to save the last living dinosaurs of our land. These ancient reptiles, so misunderstood, yet so critical to our river ecosystems, have weathered the test of time. But in today's rapidly changing landscape, they rely more than ever on our understanding, compassion, and resolve.

My journey with crocodiles began not in the pages of biology textbook but in the serene wilds of the Manjira Wildlife Sanctuary, some 70 km from Hyderabad. It was the early 1980s, and I was on a birdwatching trip with the erstwhile Birdwatching Society of Andhra Pradesh [BSAP]. We journeyed through rolling scrublands and under the shade of ancient roadside trees, accompanied by forest officials who introduced us to the delicate harmony of this sanctuary, a haven not just for birds, but also for crocodiles.

Yes, crocodiles, Specifically the Mugger crocodile, a freshwater species that had once teetered on the brink of extinction in Telangana. The sanctuary, spread along the Manjira River, a tributary of the Godavari, became a designated refuge for these reptiles. In the late 1970s, thanks to the foresight of conservationists and government officials, the area was declared a wildlife sanctuary, laying the groundwork for an ambitious programme to revive Mugger populations.

Breeding programme At the heart of this conservation effort was a carefully orchestrated breeding and rearing programme. Mugger nests, carefully collected from the wild, were incubated under simulated conditions at the Nehru Zoological Park in Hyderabad. As a young lad, just out of college in the 1980s, I was fortunate to witness this clutch of eggs hatch into tiny crocodiles, thanks to the crocodile experts. Hatchlings were raised in protected environments until they reached about 1.2 meters in length, considered large enough to survive predation pressures. These juveniles were then released into secure aquatic habitats like Manjira and Ethipothala Falls located on the Chandravanka River, which is a tributary of the Krishna River.

During the mid-1980s, under the watchful eye of experts such as Dr. B.C. Choudhury and Dr. V. Vijay Kumar from the Central Crocodile Breeding and Management Training Institute, alongside A.P. Forest Department officer K. Vara Prasad, released Muggers were closely monitored for up to four years. Dr. Vijay even earned his Ph.D. on Mugger crocodile ecology based on this groundbreaking

study on the breeding and brooding of crocodiles.

However, despite local estimates suggesting a population of 300–400 Muggers, no formal scientific survey has confirmed these numbers. Now, retired Professor Choudhury advocates for a comprehensive assessment using spotlight counts and other modern techniques, not just to understand the population better, but also to avoid potential human-crocodile conflicts and to determine the sanctuary's true carrying capacity.

Conservation beyond numbers. There is also an urgent call to rethink conservation beyond just numbers. Community-based eco-tourism, centeredaround crocodiles and bird watching, could offer both economic incentives and grassroots support. Trained local youth could become guardians of the sanctuary while benefiting from tourism, making conservation a shared goal rather than an isolated mandate.

Why do crocodiles matter so much? Because, they are survivors in the truest sense. In India, crocodiles have long held a dual identity, both sacred and feared. Mythology worships the crocodile, or makara, as the Mount of Varuna, the rain god, and the emblem of Kamadeva, the god of love. Ancient forts had crocodile-filled moats for defence like the Golconda Fort or the Bidar Fort. Yet the same creature has been vilified, fishermen once hunted them for sport or in fear of fish harvesting competition.

By the 1970s, overhunting, pollution, and habitat destruction had pushed all three Indian crocodilian species, the Mugger, the Saltwater Crocodile, and the Gharial, to the edge of extinction. A nationwide conservation project, launched in 1975 with UN support, aimed to reverse this trajectory. Thousands of Gharials were bred and released into sanctuaries. The Gharial, with its long snout and gentle demeanour, remained the most endangered, despite being harmless to humans.

In recent years, as national attention veers toward charismatic species like Tigers and Elephants, crocodiles have once again slipped into the shadows. Human-crocodile conflicts, especially in rural areas, have led to renewed hostility. The narrative needs urgent course correction. Crocodiles are not villains—they are vital links in the ecological chain. They clean river systems by feeding on the weak and the dead. Their nesting activities aerate riverbanks. They are indicators of healthy aquatic and ecological ecosystems.

As erstwhile Andhra Pradesh, now Telangana reflects on five decades of crocodile conservation, Manjira stands as both a success story and a reminder of the road ahead. What began with a handful of hatchlings and a dream has blossomed into a living legacy. But for that legacy to endure, we must reinvest, reinvent, and revive to relay in science, in community, and above all, in empathy.

Let us not forget the Crocodiles, India's most ancient aquatic sentinel. In protecting them, we protect something far greater than a species. We safeguard the soul of our rivers and the memory of Earth's earliest chapters.

The Author is a noted journalist and a famous wildlife enthusiast. The article was previously published in 'Siasat Daily'

Crocodiles no Threat to Manjira : Dam Safety Experts Ignorant

BaluPulipaka

The recent contentions by the State Dam Safety Organisation (SDSO) that crocodiles in the Manjira reservoir posed a danger to the dam, and that they were also polluting the drinking water supply source to Hyderabad, have been refuted by one of the world's foremost experts on crocodiles.

Prof. B.C. Choudhury

According to Prof. B.C. Choudhury, member of the Species Survival Commission of IUCN's crocodile specialist group, the claims including the one that they are so strong that even a well-armed group of people cannot control a crocodile, were mere hyperbole based on unverified and unscientific hearsay.

Prof. Choudhury, the scientist in-charge of the crocodile breeding centre in Hyderabad's Nehru Zoological Park, was instrumental in revival of the freshwater mugger crocodile species in undivided Andhra Pradesh. He also served as a scientist at the Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun. "Let our expert engineer colleagues who are worried, be explained that crocodiles, and other aquatic creatures, are a part of nature and have a role in maintaining the ecology of the aquatic systems and there really is nothing to worry about crocodiles in Manjira," Prof. Choudhury said.

After God created the world, he made Man and Woman. Then, to keep the whole thing from collapsing, he invented "Humour"

- Guillermo Mordillo, Argentinian cartoonist and animation artist, Jan 1982

Green Quiz – JuLY 2025

Quiz Master: Dr. K. Tirupataiah

Green Quiz August 2025

Quiz Master: Dr.K.Tirupataiah, IFS (R)

1. What is the shifting water body stretching 96 kms long and 1-3 km wide between the western border of India and the Eastern border of Pakistan called?

2. Recently ICAR released 'genome-edited' varieties Kamala and Pusa. What is the difference between it and genetically modified crops?

3. Which Tiger reserve has a long history of providing live baits to its Tigers incapacitated to hunt? This practice led to a situation where even their off-springs don't know how to hunt.

4. This Brazilian economist turned photographer did black & white photos of 'humanity and nature'. Workers struggling to put-off burning oil fields in Kuwait were one of his iconic. Name him

5. This bird, which does not build its own nest, gives distinctive, repetitive calls and is long associated with the arrival of the South West monsoon. Name the bird.

6. Bharat Forecasting System launched, this year, a method that is 'four times' effective than the present one. The change is in the size and shape of the grids. What is the size of the new grid?

7. What is the name of the approach that focuses on 'furthering the implementation of the global program of action for protection of the Marine Environment' from land-based activities?

8. The sought after 'first flush of Darjeeling tea' has a muscated and fruity aroma and amber colour. Though it forms 20% of production, it earns 40% revenue. Name the first flush tea?

9. Deepa Bhatia made a documentary based on journalist P. Sainath's coverage on farmers' suicides in Maharashtra. What was the name of the documentary?

10. In 2007, some 3000 of these were left in vacuum of space for about 10 days and all survived. Name these tiny organisms (0.5-1.3 mm) that derive genome from foreign DNA enabling them a great survival chance.

For Students

1. What is the name given to the"stitched ship" that was constructed based on a painting in Ajanta caves and launched in feb 2025, to retrace the ancient sea route East?

2. What is the common name given to the styles like Moribana, Bunjin, Rimpaetc?

3. What chemical is used to flavor, puffy and salty white popcorn that damages lungs?

4. Who founded the ancient Nalanda monastery/ Learning center?

5. Tierra del Fuego (The end of the World) is an archipelago. Which countries share this archipelago?

Answers on page no : 57

LEGAL NOTES

K. Buchiram Reddy

Mr. RavirajaRai M Vs. The State rep by Range Forest Officer, Puttur

(Confiscation of property, presumption that property belongs to Govt.)

Mr. RavirajaRai, owner of Mahindra Pick up vehicle bearing Registration No. KA-19A3964, filed W.P. No. 2579 of 2014 against the order dated 16.04.2010 of the D.C.F.andAuthorised Officer, Mangalore in O.R. No. 70 of 2006 of Puttur Range and judgment dated 27.09.2013 by the Third Additional Sessions Judge, Mangalore in Crl. A. No. 52of 2010. It was a writ of Certiorari with prayer to quash the orders of the Authorised Officer confiscating the property involved in a forest offence and the judgment of the Additional Sessions Judge dismissing the appeal against the order of confiscation passed by the Authorised Officer. The writ petition was heard by The Honourable Justice ShriSurajGovndaraj of the Karnataka High Court and the judgment was delivered dismissing the writ petition on 28.04.2025.

Forest Officers on 29.03.2007seized the vehicle at EshwaramangalaNathaniemdur (v) as it was found carrying 5 logs of Kiralbogi (HopeaParviflora otherwise called Iron wood or black wood) without permit. One Mahazar was conducted at the time of seizure and another Mahazar was conducted at the scene of felling at the instance of the accused.

The vehicle was released after taking Bank Guarantee for Rs.8,000/-

On 23.08.2007, a show-cause-notice was issued for the confiscation of the vehicle. The owner of the vehicle gave a reply to the show-cause-notice on 23.10.2007. An enquiry was held by the Authorised Officer and 4 witnesses were examined and 14 documents were exhibited.The petitioner cross examined the witnesses but did not produce any evidence.

The counsel for the petitioner submitted that there are no grounds for confiscation of the vehicle. The petitioner had no knowledge of felling the trees. It was only a case of using the vehicle for transport of the wood. Another fact that was revealed during the argument of the case was that the trees cut were in the land of one GopalBhaira, who had been granted the land. If the trees were existing at the time of the grant, the trees belong to the Government. When the ACF who conducted the investigation of the case compared the logs with the stumps, they matched. He was firmly of the opinion that the trees felled stood in the reserved forest.

The court carefully went through all the relevant provisions of the Karnataka Forest Act.

Sec. 71 A of KFA envisages that confiscation property can be ordered by the Authorised Officer only if the timber or other forest produce seized belongs to the State Government. Taking advantage of the provision, the counsel for the petitioner argued that it is not proved that the logs of blackwood are the property of the State Government. It was submitted further that the treeswhich felled were standing in the land of GopalBhaira and that he was the owner of the land and the trees.

Initiating confiscation proceedings without adjudicating the question of ownership is bad

in law. On the question raised by the Counsel for the Petitioner regarding the ownership of the logs, the Government Pleader promptly answered andmet the point raised. It was submitted that in any proceeding taken under the Forest Act, if a question arises as to whether forest produce is the property of the Government, such forest produce shall be presumed to be the property of the Government, until the contrary is proved.

On enquiry with the Revenue department it is disclosed that GopalBhaira and his wife Sundariencroched upon the Government land and the encroachment was regularized by granting ownership rightunder Sec.94 of the Karnataka Land Revenue Act but the ownership of the trees on the land is retained with the Government.

It is urged by the counsel for the petitioner that there is contradictory statement about the origin of the timber whether it is from a private land or Government land. It is requested to give the benefit of doubt to the petitioner.But the petitioner has not questioned the provision that the property shall belong to the Government if a doubt arises on the ownership.

When the forest officers with a view to check the vehicle wanted the vehicle to stop, the owner of the vehicle who was driving, without stopping, tried to speed away and during the chase the vehicle met with an accident. There was no permit for transport of the timber. The timber together with the vehcle was seized.

After perusing the record of investigation, order of Authorised Officer and the judgment of the appellate court, and after hearing the arguments of either party, the High Court found the following points for consideration:

1. Whether there is presumption that the forest produce belonged to Government and if so, whether the said presumption has been rebutted;

2. Whether the timber is property of Government in terms of the land grant;

3. Whether there are any grounds for interfering with the impugned order;

4. What order?'

The Honourable High Court answered the point in the following manner:

1. The presumption that the forest produce belongs to the Government is not rebutted.

2. Land granted to GopalBhaira and his wife Sundari under Sec. 94 of the Karnataka land Revenue Act, the Government retaind its ownership of trees.

3. The District Court considered all the aspects in proper perspective and found no grounds to interfere with the judgment.

4. Petition is dismissed.

Source: Internet K.B.R. Reddy

The author is Dy.C.F (Rtd). He is on Phone 966 609 7788; and E-mail ID ; keesrabuchiram@gmail.com

Answers: 1.Sir Creek,2.In genome-edited crops there is no foreign gene,3. Ranthambore Tiger Reserve,Rajasthan,4.Sebastiao Salgado;5.Pied Cuckoo,6.Six KM octahedral in place of square grids, 7.S2S or Source to Sea; 8.The Champagne of teas; 9. Nero's Guests, 10. Tardigrades

For School Students: 1.INSV Kaundinya, name of legendary Indian sailor, 2.Ikebana, 3. E.Diacetyl; 4. Shakraditya in 5 CE, 5. Chile & Argentina

Obituary for Indian wildlife conservationist "Radheshyam Bishnoi"

Rhett Ayers Butler

Radheshyam Bishnoi, protector of India's most vulnerable animals, died on May 24, 2025, aged just 28. Radheshyam Bishnoi was born with a calling to save wildlife. From a young age, he was driven by a deep sense of responsibility to protect the fragile ecosystems around him, shaped by the strong environmental values of the Bishnoi community.

Hailing from Dholiya village in Rajasthan's arid Thar Desert, Bishnoi grew up immersed in a tradition that regarded nature and wildlife as sacred. His community's commitment to conservation — rooted in centuries-old practices — was a guiding force in his life. The principles of the Bishnoi faith, which emphasize the protection of all living beings, were instilled in him early on, compelling him to engage with nature's most vulnerable creatures.

By his teens, Bishnoi had become a tireless wildlife rescuer. He began by helping injured animals in the desert, learning the delicate art of handling wildlife, especially the Great Indian Bustard (GIB), or Godawan, one of India's most endangered species. But it wasn't enough to simply rescue injured creatures; he became determined to prevent harm before it occurred. His early conservation efforts laid the groundwork for a lifetime of impactful work. Bishnoi trained as a veterinary assistant at Jodhpur's Rescue Centre, equipping himself with the skills necessary to address wildlife's more pressing threats.

The Great Indian Bustard, once common across the grasslands of India, was of particular concern. With fewer than 150 remaining in the wild, the bird's survival was precarious. Bishnoi's efforts to protect its habitat — patrolling the desert, preventing poaching and advocating for the installation of underground power lines to prevent fatal collisions — became his defining work. His leadership of the Godawan Community Conservation project in Rajasthan, where local volunteers worked alongside authorities to protect the bird, earned him both local and national recognition.

However, Bishnoi's conservation legacy extended far beyond the GIB. His commitment to preserving wildlife in Rajasthan's desert ecosystem was broad and far-reaching. He constructed water reservoirs to combat dehydration, rescued Himalayan Griffon vultures, and fought poaching — from inconspicuous herbivorous spiny-tailed lizards to the fleet-footed Chinkara gazelles. His tireless work inspired many, particularly within his community, where his actions demonstrated the power of local stewardship in conservation.

At the age of 28, Bishnoi's life was tragically cut short. On May 24, 2025, he was killed in a road accident while en route to prevent a poaching attempt in the Thar Desert. The vehicle he was traveling in collided with a truck, claiming the lives of Bishnoi and three others, all of whom were dedicated to wildlife conservation. The accident took place during a routine patrol, underscoring the relentless nature of his work. His loss was deeply felt, especially among those who knew him as a champion of conservation and a man whose dedication never faltered.

Bishnoi's untimely death is a devastating blow to the conservation community in Rajasthan and beyond. He was, in every sense, a product of his community's values: someone who believed that conservation was not just a career, but a duty to future generations. In a time when the natural world faces unprecedented threats, his life and work serve as a powerful reminder that meaningful change is possible — and that it starts with one person's unwavering commitment.

Source: Internet KBR Reddy

Rhett Ayers Butler is the Founder and CEO of Mongabay, a non-profit conservation and environmental science platform that deliver news and inspiration from Nature's frontline via a global network of local reporters.

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Whiskered tern **Photo credit Sri. Praveen Rao, IFS(R)**

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