



Asiatic wild dogs

Pench Tiger Reserve, Madhya Pradesh. Simultaneous researches on featured species and different ecological aspects have started reflecting a very high level of scientific information in a period of initial three years. There is an urgent need to replicate above coordinated research programmes in other prominent PAs. More emphasis has been given on research related to wildlife-human conflicts, *ex-situ* conservation, ecotourism & interpretation and environmental impact assessment in the last ten years.

Considerable progress and significant contributions in wildlife research in a short span of 20 years are evident. WII's research projects have tried to cover different aspects of biology and ecology of many endangered species in the country. However, there are still large gaps considering country's vast diversity of ecosystems and species. There is a need to further strengthen the new initiatives *viz.* impact of climate change, landscape ecology and dynamics, community ecology, nutritional ecology, wildlife forensics, conservation genetics, wildlife health, human-wildlife conflict, socio-economic studies relevant to wildlife conservation, PA management and ecodevelopment planning. The field of islands, coastal and marine ecosystems needs exploration in view of their value as a biodiversity treasure. In order to strengthen field conservation, experimental studies on

management of grassland, forest management, use of fire as a management tool etc. need encouragement and support through greater involvement of PA officials. There is a need for representation of scientific community in policy and decision making bodies at all levels, periodic wildlife research seminars and career opportunities for wildlife researchers and other HRD issues.

More multi-disciplinary, coordinated and long-term research in all the prominent PAs need to be conducted. Selected PAs in the country were able to attract national and international researchers even 2 to 3 decades ago and since then the tempo for research activities in these PAs have been maintained. These PAs are serving as 'Learning Centres'. There is a need to recognize these PAs and replicate several such models. Wildlife research is difficult, expensive, time consuming and filled with risk. It calls for adequate administrative support, encouragement at all levels and greater budgetary support. There is an urgent need to use modern technological tools for promoting field conservation, to build field capacity for monitoring and research through participatory research, training and technology transfer, to promote active research networks with institutions/individuals globally and to assist the MoEF and States in formulating research and monitoring protocols and policies. **Contact: sankark@wii.gov.in**

A rhino on the run!

- Naim Akhtar

I was returning from Tezpur on November 20, 2004 with Dr. Dargey Tsering, when I received information that a rhino has been spotted in the township of Sootia town, Assam and it was moving in Diplonga range, Assam. This range is adjoining Monai/Giladhari in Papum-mara forests of Arunachal Pradesh. This was a case of rhino straying out of Kaziranga NP. These incidents gain a lot of attention in the media, local people and the forest departments often face such exigencies. We were curious and searched in the nearby tea gardens in the township of Sootia, to know if the animal had moved in that area. Then we approached the forest department at Itakhola and gathered information on the location of the rhino and volunteered assistance in trapping and tranquilizing the animal. The forest department officers were not able to give us the precise location but informed us that it was adult male with beautiful horn and their field staff are following the animal.

Based on reports we came to know that this rhino had entered Monai/Giladhari in Papum-mara forest of Arunachal Pradesh on December 18, 2004. During this period the rhino was driven away by villagers in order to protect themselves and their crops. The efforts that were made to chase the animal back into Kaziranga NP were not successful. The Range Forest Officer of Seijosa range, Pakke Tiger Reserve, Arunachal Pradesh was alerted and a mobile squad was moved to track the animal and provide adequate security to the animal.

On January 12, 2005, villagers from Goloso near Pakke TR reported of having sighted a strange looking animal. The Beat Officer of Dichu, Pakke TR, Mr. P.K. Pal rushed to the site and saw rhino dung and reported the presence of rhino in the area. There was trail of blood on the places where the rhino had moved, suggesting that the animal had severe traumatic injuries. We quickly realized that it was the same rhino that strayed out of Kaziranga NP 53 days back and that it was in distress. On January 16, 2005 at around 7:00 a.m., *i.e.* 57 days from when it strayed out of Kaziranga National Park, the rhino was reported dead deep inside Papum Reserve Forest.

It had succumbed to the 14 bullet injuries. Post mortem revealed two deep seated and 12 superficial bullet injuries on the animal. Two brass bullet pellets along with three lead pellets were recovered. The injuries caused by the brass bullets were probably from shots that were fired at it more than 15 days back. The injuries caused by the lead bullets, were about a week old. The body weight of this rhino was 2,100 kg and the horn weighing 4.5 kg was removed from it. The horn was kept under the custody of Commanding Officer of Seijosa for 3 days. Later, it was sent to Itanagar state Museum.

Rhino is referred to as "gaur" locally in Seijosa and other parts of Arunachal



Indian Rhino *Rhinoceros unicornis*

Pradesh. News of the dead gaur spread like wild fire and hundreds of people rushed to the site to catch a glimpse of dead animal. Native people in the region have great liking for rhino meat, as much

as they like its horn. Most of the tribals of Arunachal Pradesh are fond of wild meat. Knowing that body of large rhino is going to be buried in a deep pit of mud, they started demanding meat of this animal; in fact it was sufficient to provide meat to entire village. In spite of all efforts to save the meat of this animal from villagers by the forest department, some of them got to it before burying. Why did the animal leave Kaziranga? We may never have answers to such questions. But it is a fact that it survived barely two months after exiting Kaziranga NP, Assam and traversing through human dominated landscape. We can be rest assured that if at all the Indian one horned rhino has to survive, it will be because of National Parks such as Kaziranga. **Contact: naim@wii.gov.in**

Welcome Guests

- ◆ A group of 7 M. Sc. students (Forestry) from H.N.B. Garhwal University, Srinagar on January 5, 2006.
- ◆ A Class of 35 participants undergoing Special Advanced Forest Management Course for IFS Officers of 1992, 1994 & 1998 year of allotment at IGNFA on January 13, 2006.
- ◆ A group of 26 Forest Guards from Himanchal Pradesh Forest Department Sundergarh on February 7, 2006.
- ◆ IFS Officers of 1990 & 1991 year of allotment undergoing 3rd special Advanced Forest Management Training Course on February 13, 2006.
- ◆ A group of forestry trainees from Kashmir Forest Training Institute, Jammu on February 13, 2006.
- ◆ A group of 35 Forest Officials of the Department of Forests, Haryana on February 15, 2006.
- ◆ 20 students of M. Sc., Govt. P.G. College, Gopeshwar, Chamoli, on February 22, 2006.
- ◆ A group of 50 students with 5 faculties from Khun Khun Ji Girl Degree College, Lucknow visited WII on February 22, 2006.
- ◆ A group of 25 Journalists from Kottayam and Pathanamthitta Districts in Kerala visited WII on March 1, 2006.
- ◆ A class of 22 students from Department of Applied Zoology, Kuvempu University, Karnataka on March 14, 2006.
- ◆ A group of 50 students of B.Sc. Forestry (6th and 8th Semester) from Allahabad Agricultural Institute (Deemed University), Allahabad visited WII on March 24, 2006.

Talks Delivered

- ◆ Dr. Iain R. Taylor, Scientist from Australia delivered a guest lecture in WII on the topic "What determines the density of shore birds on temporary wetlands in Australia?" on January 10, 2006.
- ◆ Dr. Shyama Pagad from IUCN/SSC's Invasive Species Specialist Group delivered a lecture on "Management of Invasive Species in Natural Ecosystems" in WII on February 1, 2006.
- ◆ Dr. Luigi Boitani delivered a talk on "Large Carnivore Conservation in Europe" in the Institute on February 23, 2006.



Dr. Chris Carbone visited WII and delivered a talk on "Scaling of Predator Prey Relationships in Mammalian Carnivores" on March 1, 2006.