WWF for a living planet

Asian Rhino AND Elephant Action Strategy AREAS

AREAS Update Issue 3, September 2004

Highlights

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About AREAS

With the launch of the Asian Rhino and Elephant Action Strategy (AREAS) Programme, WWF strengthened its support for anti-poaching, monitoring and habitat protection for four global important species: the Javan Rhino, the Greater Asian One-Horned Rhino, the Sumatran Rhino and the Asian (Indian) Elephant. AREAS combines cutting edge conservation biology with trade monitoring, community development, socio-economic analysis, public awareness campaigns, dialogue with traditional medicine practitioners, capacity building and policy advocacy. WWF envisions rebuilding and conserving rhino populations in Asia and ensuring the peaceful co-existence of people and wildlife. AREAS reaches beyond national parks and reserves, into surrounding areas, addressing land-use practices. The cornerstone of AREAS is landscape conservation, aimed at connecting and safeguarding networks of protected areas.

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Making a difference

There have been significant gains in the human elephant-conflict, but there is still a lot of ground to cover.

CHRISTY WILLIAMS

As I wrote this short overview on Human-Elephant conflict (HEC), it struck me that we have come a long way since AREAS was launched in 1999.

At that time, we knew of possible mitigation methods like electric fencing, trenches or watchtowers to guard against elephants forced to come into human habitations due to shrinking habitats and increasing human populations, but most AREAS field teams had little real first hand experience in dealing with HEC. Now, the time we put into learning and analysing the HEC situation is beginning to help us get a grip on the problem. Conflicts cannot be mitigated with generic solutions and each HEC dominated landscape requires specific tailor made mitigation strategies.

In the Nilgiris-Eastern Ghats, where human settlements can be easily delineated, solar powered electric fences work very effectively. There has been a decline of about 89% in the incidences of damage reported by villagers in three settlements in the Greater Moyar Valley Corridor over a two-year period after the fence was put up, compared to data from two years prior to the fence becoming operational.

In Riau, Sumatra, a pilot elephant based anti-depredation squad project, involving four captive elephants and eight mahouts, seems to have convinced the management authorities and WWF's own staff that captive elephants can be used effectively in mitigating conflict in some situations. The challenge is now to find a way to make this economically viable and sustainable in the long run.

Scaling up from a site-based conservation projects to a landscape based approach has made the job of conflictmitigation more challenging and invigorating.

The North Bank Landscape is undertaking what is perhaps the largest conflict mitigation strategy ever conceptualised. This autumn, as the crops ripen and the elephants come out of the Himalayan foothills to raid agricultural land, WWF funded Koonkies-trained elephants that were once used as mounts to capture wild elephants by lassoing- their mahouts and forest guards will form a 60 km long daisy chain to prevent wild elephants from breaking through to the crops.

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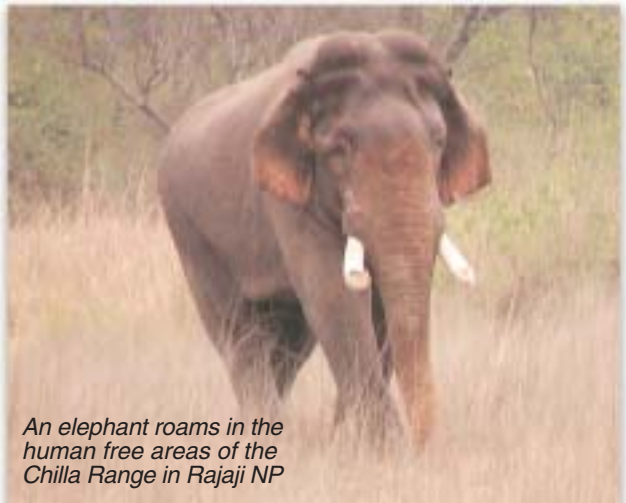
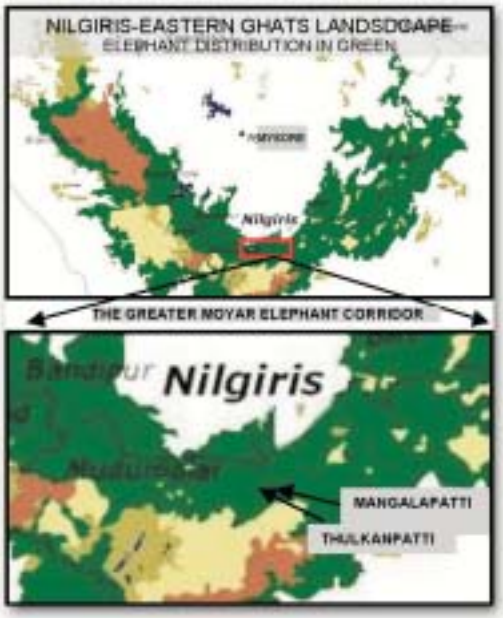


An elephant roams in the human free areas of the Chilla Range in Rajaji NP

AREAS India Nilgiris AND Eastern Ghats Project

Anti-Poaching

Tuskers Saved
Anti-poaching Action in the Nilgiris
March 2004



The foremost elephant country in the subcontinent is the Nilgiris Eastern Ghats Landscape in southern India. This area has the single largest population of Asiatic elephants *(Elephas maximus)* and holds the key to its long-term survival.

is in the Nilgiris Eastern Ghats Landscape of WWF's AREAS Programme. Like the WWF focal intervention area, the elephants of Greater Moyar Elephant Corridor are preyed upon by poachers.

WWF- India and the Forest Department decided to work together to save these elephants. WWF - India AREAS Programme has helped set up a number of successful anti-poaching camps and infrastructure in this corridor. One of them, the Mangalapatti anti-poaching camp that was recently equipped with solar powered communication units, recently saw anti-poaching action.

Forester K Ramachandran was leading an anti-poaching squad of five men in the forests of Thulakanpatti during a regular patrol, when they flushed out a gang of armed poachers. Using his newly acquired unit, he informed Range-officer Charlie who set off to aid Ramachandran immediately with police reinforcements in a jeep provided by WWF-India.

As the sun set, chances of the poachers escaping were high, so Ramachandran issued a challenge. The poachers responded with a volley of muzzle shots, setting off a retaliatory fire from the squad. Outclassed by enhanced firepower from the squad, the poachers split into two groups and fled under the cover of darkness.

The anti-poaching team at forest patrol.

Although the poachers got away, the message others like them received was loud and clear: Thulakanpatti is unsafe for their kind. Ramachandran was grateful for the new communication tools that will enable him to do a better job in protecting the safety of migrating elephants in the Moyar. Mr Ulaganathan, DFO of Nilgiris Forest Division, says, "The forest personnel here and WWF-India have changed it all."

Tariq Aziz, Coordinator - AREAS India

AREAS Sabah, Malaysia June 2004

Management and HEC Mitigation

Captured Elephants Returned To the Wild

A radio collared elephant

The elephants that were captured as a conflict mitigation measure by the Sabah Wildlife Department are being returned to the wild. Two sites were selected for the release of elephant, based on WWF Malaysia's recommendation. The first site was Gunung Rara, close to the northern part of Ulu Sg *(highlighted green circle in map)*. The second site was the Kuamut Forest Reserve near the main Kuamut *(highlighted purple circle in map).*

Both sites were chosen on the basis of conditions like access, slope and terrain condition, availability of forest, water (river) and good vegetation, density of elephants' sign or presence in the forest, current logging activities in the vicinity and linkage to where the pair were captured last year.

The elephants will be radio collared with a GPS cum VHS transmitter and will be tracked regularly to determine the success of this translocation.

The monitoring activities carried out by SWD and WWF include:

- Data Collection through GPS on location. The data will be managed in a GIS database and movement will be recorded every two days.
- SWD and AREAS team plan to track the elephants the first 1-3 weeks after their release to ensure they are in good condition.
- AREAS plan to establish 13-15 elephant monitoring sites in the central forest by locating a recording system at those places. Information on elephant presence through direct sighting will be recorded. Information on radio collared elephants will also be tracked.
- WWF, SWD and Sabah Foundation will learn valuable lessons when more elephants are radio collar and tracked. Their ranging and ecology will help identify and protect critical core habitats and connecting corridor areas.

Raymond J. Alred and John Payne

AREAS Update Assam,India

Management

North Bank Landscape, A Biodiversity Hotspot

How burning a 'hotspot' is the North Bank Landscape (NBL)? Among the 'hottest' in the world says a recent survey conducted here on the above ground floral diversity. The results of the survey placed NBL among richest Biodiversity Hotspots.

A multi-agency team carrying out a survey in NBL

The survey assessed the 'above ground biodiversity' in the NBL over an area of 1,500 sq kms through 14 sample plots in the states of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh from a base located at Bhalokpung on the eastern edge of the picturesque Nameri National Park.

The survey looked at the number of species, Plant Functional Type richness (PFT) and Plant Functional Complexity (PFC). In simple terms, the PFT relates to size and shape of leaves, roots, and the plant itself. The PFC calculates complexity between these different PFTs. All three (Species, PFT and PFC) are standard measures of biodiversity richness.

A comparison of plant species numbers, PFT richness and PFC values across sites in 20 other countries shows the NBL clearly deserves its status as a global biodiversity hotspot.

Comparative Richness In Plant Species And Plant Functional Types In Humid Lowland Tropical And Subtropical Forests At Five Top Locations From 21 Countries

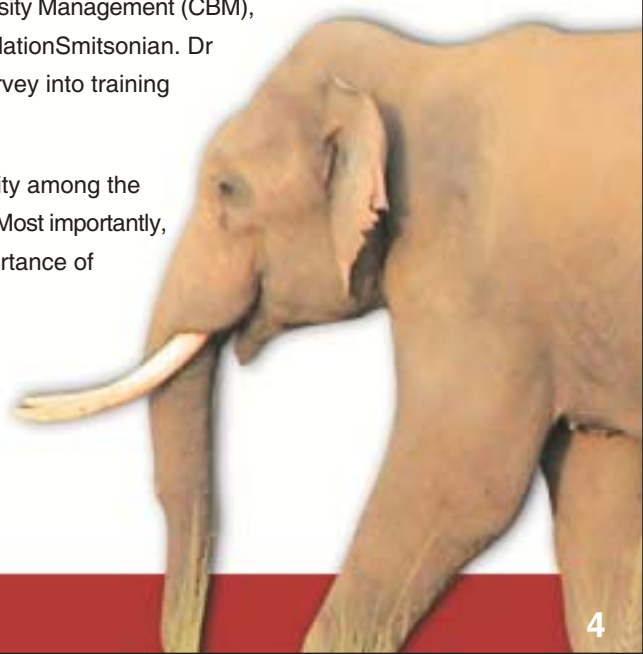
No.	Country	Location	Forest type	Species richness	PFT richness	PFC value
1	Indonesia	Tesso Nilo, Riau Province, (Sumatra)	Complex primary forest, logged 1997	217	73	842
2	Indonesia (Sumatra)	Pancuran Gading, Jambi Province	Lowland forest with 'jungle' Rubber (*Hevea brasiliensis*)	112	47	532
3	India Tipi – Pakke	Arunachal Pradesh Sanctuary.	Complex lowland forest selectively logged	107	74	763
4	Indonesia (Borneo)	Gunung Banalang, Long Puak, Pujungan, East Kalimantan	Disturbed complex forest along ridge	104	44	462
5	Cameroon	Awae Village	Late secondary forest. Previously logged	103	43	412

This biodiversity hotspot no longer lacks quantifiable data.

Although the region is designated as a biodiversity hotspot, previously it lacked quantifiable data for comparison with other biodiversity rich areas. To fill this gap, the AREAS Programme conducted a survey on floral diversity of NBL. The initiative was implemented by WWF - India (NBL Team) in technical collaboration with the Center For Biodiversity Management (CBM), Australia, and was funded by the McArthur FoundationSmitsonian. Dr Andy Gillison of CBM designed the two-week survey into training and data collection modules.

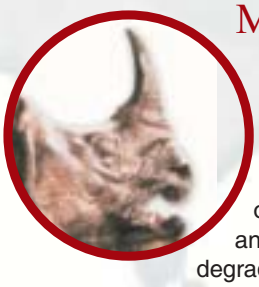
Two purposes were served: it helped build capacity among the personnel involved and elevated NBL into limelight. Most importantly, the survey findings abundantly establish the importance of NBL in a global context.

Amit Sarma and Tariq Aziz



AREAS in Terai Arc Landscape, Nepal

Management, Habitat Restoration and Anti-Poaching



Successes and challenges

Conservation of the rhinoceros and elephants in Nepal is part of the larger Terai Arc Landscape (TAL) Program implemented by His Majesty's Government of Nepal with technical and financial support from WWF. Its objective is to link 11 transborder protected areas of Nepal and India through biological corridors and provide larger habitat for the long-term survival of endangered wild Asian elephants, rhinoceros and tigers. Some of the threats that elephants and rhinos face in TAL - Nepal are habitat fragmentation due to 'struggle for land', habitat degradation, poaching, human-wildlife conflict leading to retaliatory killing and, in the case of rhinos, a single large population vulnerable to unpredictable events like natural calamities and diseases.

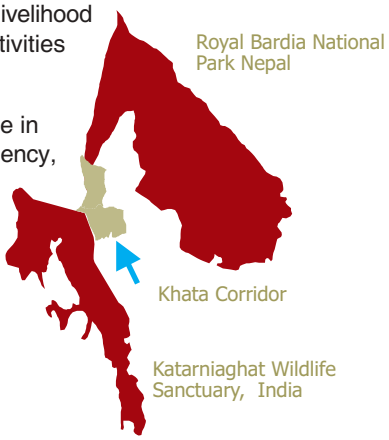
Over the past couple of years, the AREAS Programme has been involved in habitat management, antipoaching operations, wildlife monitoring, CITES implementation, rhino translocation and activities to support the mitigation of human-wildlife conflict.

A motorboat recently presented to the Royal Chitwan National Park through the AREAS Programme (WWF UK) has enhanced patrolling in the major rivers that flow through the park. A successful outcome was the arrest of a notorious rhino poacher in November 2003 who has allegedly killed 17 rhinos.

"There hasn't been a single poaching incident since we got the motorboat."

Asst. Warden, Royal Chitwan National Park, Nepal

the AREAS Programme in TAL is the active utilization of the Khata Corridor by elephants and rhinos. Khata is a three km transboundary area between Nepal's Royal Bardia National Park and India's Katarniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary, which and is a fine example of successful forest restoration and livelihood enhancement supported by AREAS. Human wildlife conflict mitigation activities have benefited around 300 households here.



One of the main challenges of implementing any conservation programme in Nepal is the prevailing security situation brought about by the Maoist insurgency, which has indirectly allowed poachers, timber smugglers and encroachers to operate with more freedom. Despite the unfavourable political situation in the country, the TAL Program continues to deliver planned activities and targets in conservation and sustainable livelihoods, made possible largely due to the rapport that the program has built with community based organisations.

Sarala Khaling
Coordinator-Program Development, Research and Monitoring

Anti-poaching motorboat in action

AREAS Update, Cambodia

Anti-poaching and Management

1.Workshop for provincial armed forces

The provincial armed forces of the police, military and military police participated in a presentation/workshop sponsored by the Cambodia Species team in Mondulkiri province last December to encourage the conservation of wildlife and habitat. They learned about the economic benefits of wildlife conservation from two Species-Ecoregional joint international study tours and all the participants signed a pledge to support the conservation efforts.

Working together with partners for effective wildlife conservation.

2.Training on Law Enforcement Methods

All 20 Phnom Prich Wildlife Sanctuary (PPWS) rangers received their first two-week training in law enforcement methods last November. WildAid conducted the training at the national PA training centre in Bokor National Park.

were immediate and positive results in January and February. According to reports, live animals including 44 kg of turtles, one sambar and two pangolins were confiscated from collectors and released back into the wild. The offenders were made to sign contracts that they would not collect threatened wildlife species in the future or face arrest. Similarly, luxury-class wood amounting to 1 cubic meter was confiscated and burned. Illegal fishing equipment was taken from four offenders, who also signed the warning contracts.

3.Srepok Wilderness Area Project (SWAP)

The new Srepok Wilderness Area project (SWAP) received a boost from the Cambodia Species team. The Srepok Wilderness Area was chosen as a target site for development of high-end wildlife tourism because of the relatively pristine condition of its open forest habitat and the occurrence of several key species. SWAP, after more than a year of planning, started activities in January with the arrival of Advisor Martin von Kaschke from South Africa. The Cambodia Species Team contributed with practical advice, training and supervision from monitoring coordinator Ou Ratanak and technical advisor Andy Maxwell, particularly to establish monitoring transects and camera traps.

AREAS Lao PDR

HEC Mitigation

The Lao PDR National Programme for "Integrating Elephant Management and Rural Livelihood Improvement"

March 2004

From the people: Villagers share their experiences with FAO, WCS, WWF and government officials.

AREAS has been involved in an innovative collaborative approach to elephant conservation in Lao PDR over the past year-and-a-half. In the spring of 2002, a mission on Human-Elephant Conflict (HEC) Resolution conducted by the Government of Laos, the United National Development (UNDP) and FAO with participation from WCS and AREAS, identified the need for a programmatic approach to elephant conservation and resolution of land use conflicts in the country. From this recommendation, collaborative partnerships were forged and a National Program for Integrating Elephant Management and Rural Livelihood Improvement was developed, headed up by the UNDP and the FAO with technical support from AREAS, IUCN and WCS. This collaborative, programmatic approach at the national level aims at ensuring that agreed priority activities to maximise elephant conservation are addressed in a timely, cost-effective and coordinated manner. The program itself is innovative in the number of partners that are involved in its development and implementation.

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Making a difference...

This is an area where on average 15 people are killed ever year and our measure of success will be the reduction in the loss of human life and property, which in turn will lessen anger and prevent elephants being killed in retaliation. This activity also keeps alive a tradition and an art form that goes back many hundreds, if not thousands of years and provides much needed employment to domestic elephants. In the melee of all this activity, we haven't forgotten that HEC is just a symptom of a larger problem-habitat loss. More and more of our landscape level work now deals with matters like illegal logging, encroachments or government land use policies. Even though the problems are many and sometimes appear insurmountable, I strongly believe that our team and our main partners in the field are our biggest assets. I would like to express my appreciation for their untiring efforts.

The last six months have also been a time of great joy for me personally as two important conservation initiatives came to fruit. In Rajaji NP in the Terai Arc Landscape, 20,000 Ha of forests were completely freed from human disturbance with the relocation of the last cattle grazers. Another 60,000 Ha will hopefully follow in the next few years. The officers and staff of the Uttaranchal Forest Department have to be congratulated for this achievement.

This is the same park where I followed elephants for my PhD and never in my wildest dreams did I imagine undisturbed habitats for elephants and tigers would become a reality. This summer, I had the opportunity to revisit the area. The habitat is so resilient: very few traces of human activity remain from seven months ago. Another notable recent conservation achievement was the declaration of the Tesso Nilo Phase I NP (33,000 Ha).

Elephants and tigers that were under constant assault have at least two significant victories in their right to survive in the wild.

Success stories like these are very encouraging but it should not gloss over significant problems that exist in our efforts to preserve large charismatic and difficult to conserve flagship species like elephants and rhinos. A prime example would be the Terai Arc. Although we have been successful in bringing back these pachyderms to encouraging numbers, the current political instability threatens to take us back two decades.

In closing, if we were asked whether we were making a difference, my answer would be a definite "yes".

Keep your feedback coming and thank you for taking the time to read this.