

Lifelines LifeForce

Issue No.3
2000/2001



This, our third edition of LifeLines, is a compliment to you, our donors and supporters without whom our work would not be possible. The LifeForce team has now entered it's fifth year in India and this issue reports the considerable progress achieved.

LifeForce is the only British (or even Western) wildlife charity team resident in Madhya Pradesh the 'Tiger State', if not all of India. This means that we can deliver your donations directly to the jungle in the sure knowledge that they will have maximum impact, with no dilution by 'administration'.

The results of the Christmas '99 tiger census in Satpura National Park (which we were able to observe and assist with) show an increase in tiger numbers giving a current total of somewhere in the region of 40 individuals. Even allowing for

inaccuracies this is encouraging news and an increase is borne out by our own observations.

New Views

July last year saw the appointment of a new Park Director, Mr R.P.Singh. The previous Director had been an honest hard-working individual and it was with some trepidation that we awaited his successor. Our fears have proved to be completely unfounded and the new Director has brought an energy and dedication to the post that we had not thought possible. We were asked to accompany him on many of his early 'fact finding' forays into the National Park, often using our own vehicle to conserve Forest Department resources.

Although aware of the focus on 'saving the tiger' he is of the view (which is shared by us) that unless conservation takes into account all aspects of the social and economic situation, including village people and their welfare, there is little chance of any long-term success.

Accordingly the Director set out to provide alternative sources of income and self-sufficiency for village people living within and around Satpura National Park and its sister sanctuaries of Bori and Pachmarhi.

This initiative has already made progress locally and one of the Director's dedicated Range Officers, R.K.Nagam, has achieved wonders on the northern boundaries of the Park in his work with local villages in the Kamti Range. In areas that Forest Department personnel

previously entered in fear of personal harm, R.K.Nagam has introduced a programme of loans, through local committees, for the provision of irrigation equipment, bio-gas plants (gas from cow-dung), crop seeds, sewing machines and water pumps. The provision of the basic necessities of life has transformed Forest Department / Villager relations. We have witnessed villagers recovering their cattle from the National Park, across the Tawa Reservoir, where previously they would have driven them to graze. Villagers have willingly entered the Park to extinguish fires before they spread, which in the past they may have been responsible for setting, due to antagonism with officialdom. Their tendency to raid the forest for easy supplies of 'forest products' e.g. Teak, tobacco leaves or to poach animals, has disappeared now they have alternative incomes.



SAURJIT

In February this year we visited one of these villages with representatives of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Born Free Foundation. Nobody was expecting our visit and neither party had bouquets or prepared speeches. As would be expected in any remote Indian village, the women and children retired to their huts with quiet curiosity while the men gathered to receive us. They stood upright with a twinkle in their eyes, wearing smiles, dhotis and a few other strands of material hung over bodies of very little more than leather-like skin and bone.

Near the end of our discussions we repeated that benefits would continue to come provided not only that the forest was left undisturbed but also that they did not harm the tiger nor collaborate with nomadic poachers. All present answered in the affirmative and in unison: "We have no quarrel with the tiger Sahib. Now that we do not graze our animals in the forest he does not kill them. We respect him as part of our religion."

The examples in the above two paragraphs may not seem much from our Western perspective but they manifest principles on which the future of the tiger and ourselves depend: respect for other living things and co-operation with Nature and each other. In the context of India this is how the tiger and its environment, if we all succeed, will be preserved. The same principles apply in the larger context of our world as a whole and hence these simple examples hold within them the seeds of life for all of us but only if we nurture them. We need to apply these principles right now. Each of us can do something today for a healthy tomorrow.

The above programme is a testimony to what can be achieved with the right will, the right people and the right funding. If we are able to reproduce this example in all the villages surrounding the Park, the tiger and the forest will be protected by a

cordon of satisfied individuals and communities living in harmony with the forest and its inhabitants. Reproduced throughout India, this could provide a lasting solution to tiger conservation and adjust the role of the Forest Department to primarily one of management rather than protection.

This may sound naive (there will always be outside pressures and exceptions) but we are sufficiently convinced of the success of the Kamti Range example to reinforce those efforts already started and to extend them whenever and wherever possible. We can only do this with your help.

R.P.Singh has also secured several undertakings from villages within the National Park who wish to relocate to areas outside. This is a major step forward as it would relieve the forest of human and cattle pressures, which are largely responsible for habitat degradation. If the forest can recover, so can a prey base and hence, subsequently, the tiger.

Now we look at what you've already achieved this year with your donations.



Driving Force

Due to the Forest Department's vehicle shortage our own vehicle has frequently been loaned to them for fire patrol and other Park duties. We had an urgent request from R.P.Singh for the provision of a third vehicle (in addition to the two previously donated by LifeForce) for perimeter patrolling on the north-eastern sanctuary boundaries, where timber theft was at its worst. It is in situations like this that our presence allows for rapid



response. LifeForce immediately supplied the Forest Department with a brand new Mahindra Jeep and within one week it had been used for apprehension of timber thieves; preventing them felling more trees, seizing their haul of illegally felled teak and confiscating their equipment. Immediate action, immediate results. Due to your donations Teak trees and other species are now, as you read this, still alive, still standing majestically tall and sheltering innumerable plants, insects, birds, reptiles and mammals.

Trees support the life force of the whole ecosystem. LifeForce protects the trees. You support LifeForce.

Home is where the heart is

Absenteeism by Forest Guards had become a significant problem. Guards (often the best ones) posted to remote and sensitive areas, separated from their families for up to six months at a time, frequently went absent from their posts in order to visit, or tend to sick, family members. This situation is produced by a lack of adequate accommodation in appropriate locations. As a result Park

protection was seriously weakened, Department knowledge of staff whereabouts was minimal and the general situation lowered staff morale still further.

In collaboration with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, LifeForce has been able to raise sufficient funds for the provision of accommodation for ten Forest Guards and their families, in two locations adjacent to Park boundaries.

Programmed for construction in October following this year's monsoon, this will bring an immediate improvement to morale, access to and companionship for families. In addition, the Forest Department knows the locations of its staff on leave, authorised or otherwise. All

this improves the efficiency and effectiveness of the Forest Department.

We extend our sincere thanks to U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, in particular Mr. Fred Bagley, for approval of our project proposals following his field visit to us in India. We have high hopes for our future collaboration.



Life for LifeForce

We were also pleased to welcome the Born Free Foundation who visited to view our work as part of a broader inspection tour. We were able to escort its representative, Tricia Holford, around Satpura National Park, Bori and Pachmarhi Sanctuaries, showing her the problems and opportunities that exist here.

Whilst Tricia was with us at Madhai - a location on the northern boundary of the park - R.P.Singh told us that he had to speak to his Chief Conservator. This meant a drive of 20 kms to the nearest telephone which, because of the terrain, is a three hour return journey and three hours out of his working day in the Park. Tricia calmly passed her satellite phone (loaned for the trip) to a startled Park Director who dealt with the matter in minutes and continued his day uninterrupted. An example of how remote and inaccessible the Parks and their staff are and how simply we can sometimes revolutionise their ability to function.

During Tricia's visit it became apparent that LifeForce and Born Free Foundation share similar philosophies and we hope to collaborate increasingly in the future. As many of you will be aware, we needed to

find some money to survive personally and were seeking £10000 for five people to survive for one year, including airfares. Born Free Foundation have very kindly offered £5 000 - the first advance is with us and has saved us from extinction! BFF are also fund raising for some of our projects. Our most sincere thanks to them.

In addition, a very generous donation of £3000 from Paul and Heidi Richards will allow us to return to India later this year



and Mark and Cathy Tindall of the Equine Behaviour Centre have also come to support LifeForce with various equipment, ideas, actions and enthusiasm! Ms.C.L.K.Gibbons, Annie Henry, John Barnes, Graham Freeman, Alan Carter and Park School in Bournemouth have all made outstanding contributions to our work this year and enabled us to achieve so much (including medical supplies, re-roofing of a school building and a variety of

equipment for the same school). Once again our thanks are due to all of them and sincerely given.

Every type of support has a material value which allows us to continue but conveys something more which encourages us to continue - somehow the money brings with it your belief and intentions. It has been such a relief to know that our work will continue and let you and us nurture the seeds we have sown. This analogy was applied to us with a slightly different emphasis by Golu, an Indian friend who visited us while we were having the school buildings re-built. He told us the story of a young man seeing an old man digging a hole and asking him what he was doing. "Digging a hole to plant a tree," the old man said. The young man asks what kind of tree and is told a mango tree. He tells the old man "You'll never live to eat its fruit!". The old man replies; "I do not plant it so that I may eat of its fruit but that it may bear fruit." Here is this great and wide world bringing forth fruit from the actions of a few individuals - one of whom is reading this!

Now we look at some seeds we don't want to plant!

Wonders from Weeds!

Lantana is one of the scourges of open forest areas. Wherever timber has been felled or villages restricted to slash-and-burn agriculture or domestic cattle have over-grazed areas, there lantana is sure to appear. Introduced many years ago from Mexico as a hedging plant, it now runs rampant throughout the area. The removal of the plant can only be achieved by a three-year programme of uprooting, there being no available organic systemic killer while fire and cutting merely provide a temporary setback to its growth. Successive three-year uprooting programmes have only been funded for two years (!) with the inevitable result that the plant proliferates, spreading by bird, berry, seed and root. Until recently it could serve no useful purpose. Unable to

implement an effective solution to this menace, which strangles the natural regeneration of many indigenous forest plants, R.P.Singh requested the assistance of LifeForce. LifeForce was able to fund the training of two craftsmen at the Wildlife Institute of India in the production of furniture and other products from lantana wood. The plant has similar properties to cane and can be worked in a variety of ways. Regular cropping of the plant will now provide work, income and a chance for the natural regeneration of forest cover. The two trainees will now go on to train tribal villagers in similar crafts to provide them with income and security.



It's amazing what you can make from weeds!

Protection of a different kind

LifeForce has been active in forging stronger relationships with a local group, NAMKS, members of which walk many hundreds of kilometres per year over harsh terrain to bring primary health education to Tribal people, in particular pregnant and lactating women. We have also started discussions with CARE (the Canadian charity) and other medically orientated groups with a view to extending our activities locally.

We have undertaken evaluation visits into the jungle with NAMKS to see and better



The new roof allows children to study under the monsoon - not in it!

understand their healthcare programmes with Tribal villagers (including advice on birth control) and plan to work more closely with them in future.



NAMKS & LifeForce bring health for all with education and supplies

So what about the tiger?

It is sometimes hard for those outside India to appreciate that the majority of work dedicated towards saving the tiger has very little to do with direct contact with the animal - in fact, in many cases, the less the better. We aim to decrease the amount of harmful disturbance to the tiger and its habitat in order that it can survive and generate a healthy population.

The most obvious solution is to mount guard over its territory but our experience has shown this to be currently the least effective method. The Forest Department is drastically understaffed, under-funded and under-motivated. We are gradually addressing these problems but even if we were able to completely solve it, the pressures on the forest would not go away. Far better therefore, to try to remove, or minimise, these pressures. The more we can do to help local people live without damaging the forest, to provide them with reasons to protect it, alternative sources of income, self-respect and security, the more likely it is that the forest and the tiger will survive.

We believe that with our help and positive action from the Forest Department, Satpura could become a model for regeneration of the tiger and its habitat. Please keep supporting it: Every pound you donate has six times more purchasing power in India than it does in England!

Project Tiger

Satpura National Park has been proposed as a Project Tiger Reserve and this only awaits ratification at State level before Central Government recognition takes place. As a tiger reserve, the park will enjoy greater funding and higher profile attention which should be of great benefit in terms of enhanced protection. This recognition highlights the importance of Satpura and its adjacent sanctuaries within the largest contiguous forest belt left in India. Notification of much of Bori Sanctuary with National Park status, within Satpura National Park, is also expected.

The Future

We continue to be encouraged by the results of our activities. Whilst LifeForce has undoubtedly made real progress, we are ever conscious of taking three steps forward whilst others push us two steps back. The picture overall looks bleak and the pressures on both the tiger and its habitat are increasing. There are often overwhelming political and commercial pressures for timber extraction, mining, fishing and other money-making abuses. Madhya Pradesh State government has fired all 'daily-wage' workers employed for the last ten years or so. These workers were often the only substitute for Forest Guards (who are subject to a recruitment freeze to avoid employing pensionable staff) and have been responsible for much of the protection work in and around the forest. As it stands today, guard-posts are unmanned, official fire-watching is non-existent and the forest is more vulnerable than ever. In the space of one week at least eight ex-daily-wage workers committed suicide. There is now a group of embittered individuals, ideally situated to turn from gamekeepers into poachers. The beleaguered Forest Department struggles, at ground level, against the bureaucracy above it and we are determined to do all that we can to alleviate this burden.

LifeForce will also continue its attempts to prevent and/or cure problems such as those mentioned above. However, to inform you as fully as we can we must set our efforts in context: We have found that many people think of environmental problems as just another problem. Yet all other human activities ultimately depend on a healthy environment - it equates to no less than healthy air, water and food. It must therefore rank as first priority.



Even if people realise the gravity of the situation, another attitude frequently adopted is "I know there is a problem but thank goodness some people or groups are doing something about it ...". We and other people or groups who are doing something about it are tiny compared to the forces opposed.



LifeForce monitors the forest...

We (all conservation groups) are losing the fight. Collectively, we may win a few battles but we (and this 'we' now includes you) are in danger of losing the war. Awareness and response to both the environmental crisis and ethical issues are growing gradually and we still hope that positive, constructive and healthy changes will all be in time. Every effort counts, however small, and you can make worthwhile and constructive contributions to all of these situations by following suggestions under the next two sub-headings. LifeLines tells you what you are already doing for LifeForce and also makes suggestions as to what you can do for our collective life force.

The bigger LifeForce

Unregulated commercial activities cause enormous ecological damage and are, of course, not restricted to India. In order to get maximum profit in minimum time these activities are frequently polluting, careless and wasteful. Yet many of us want the goods and/or services produced by these companies so what should we do? We can still enjoy these products provided we ensure that the companies make clean, careful and conservative use of natural resources which belong to us all. You might wonder how you can influence such things. Well, you might not know that very often the funding for ecologically disastrous schemes and support for, or investment in, morally questionable regimes with appalling human rights records, comes from Western banks and investment houses. Where do they get the money from? Us! So this is one way you can influence events.

Unless you ensure otherwise, your money can be used to fund some of the most harmful and dangerous activities possible. Most investors, echoing the companies, select according to one criterion: the investment that will yield maximum profit - regardless of any other consideration. However, as of April 2000 Ethical investments were showing performances as good as, if not better than, conventional investments. More importantly for the future or, perhaps, in order that we should have a future, is to demonstrate that we hold other criteria as dear or more dearly than profit. We print contact numbers for more information and answers for your questions:

Association of Unit Trusts and Investment Funds.

020 8207 1361 (Free guide available)

Ethical Investment Research Service.

0845 606 0324 (Free guide available)

Friends of the Earth.

020 7490 1555 (Information pack available)

Remember to ask all the questions you need to ensure your money will be used according to your ethical standards since there are a range of criteria under which investments are classified as ethical.

To summarise: there is little point in you helping us to save 500 trees if funding is found for schemes to fell 50 000.

These schemes are often in direct breach of national legislation yet somehow find approval once money is forthcoming.

Even if you do not have money to invest you might still need a bank. Here are some contact details for banks and a building society that will use your money ethically and therefore to your, and every other living thing's, best benefit.

The Co-operative Bank p.l.c.,
Head Office, P.O.Box 101, 1 Balloon Street, Manchester, M60 4EP

Tel: 0345 212212 (Personal Accounts)
0345 213213 (Business Accounts)
or www.co-operativebank.co.uk

The Co-op Bank has branches in many High Streets but has an agreement with the Post Office which offers Co-op

Pachmarhi Plateau



customers many banking services. All other modern facilities (e.g. telephone and internet banking) are also available.

Triodos Bank

Brunel House, 11 The Promenade,
Clifton, Bristol BS8 3NN
Freephone 0500 008 720
or www.triodos.co.uk

Triodos Bank also operates according to ethical criteria and finances a variety of socially and environmentally positive activities such as organic farming and micro-credit schemes.

Shared Interest Building Society

25 Collingwood Street,
Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 1JE
Tel: 0191 233 9100
or www.shared-interest.com

From their latest newsletter: *"Opening an account with Shared Interest is about being part of a movement for change; a change to the present unjust system of world trade and finance, and a change in the lives of those who are not being given a fair chance. Whether you invest the maximum £20 000 or the minimum £100 you take a stand against injustice and help to change the world."*

20% of business investment in the U.S.A. is now ethically based. At the same time we think it sad that 80% of investors are either ignorant of how their money is used or happy to make profit from other people being oppressed or even tortured, forests and animals being destroyed and the remaining natural environment being polluted and degraded.

As from 3rd July 2000, British government legislation is such that the trustees of your occupational pension scheme must respond to your enquiries as to their investment policy and their position on these issues.

In March the British government's Company Law Review recognised that directors should be aware of social responsibility issues and recognised the value of a company reporting on its activities in cases where they are environmentally damaging or morally questionable. However, the legislation has allowed this reporting to remain VOLUNTARY(!!) on the part of the company's directors!

While you and we struggle to protect the last remaining and vital ecosystems this sort of worse than useless legislation can more than negate all conservation groups' efforts.

If you wish your government to serve you, your children and your tigers better, make your voice heard by making your comments about The Company Law Review to your M.P. or on the internet at www.dti.gov.uk/cld/contact.html

One of the direct commercial pressures on the tiger is the Chinese tiger bone medicine trade. As you know, we work at reducing or eliminating poaching, where the journey from jungle to shop begins. The Metropolitan Police works at the retail end of this journey and have achieved much success with their 'Operation Charm'. It is a tribute to their dedicated staff that when the E.I.A. tried

to purchase tiger bone medicine during an undercover operation in the Chinatown of London's Soho, they could not find any. If either the poaching or retail (or both) ends of the chain can be sufficiently reduced the long chain of middlemen will collapse. Incredibly, despite its success, LifeForce is in receipt of information which indicates the future of the Met. Police's Wildlife Crime unit is in question! To help ensure



...and the village

the important work they do continues, PLEASE write to Sir John Stevens, Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, New Scotland Yard, London SW1H 0BG, commenting on how successful Operation Charm has been and urging him to ensure its survival.

'Greed shows quicker on the environment than on a man's face'

(Ancient Chinese (?) proverb)

'I am only one, but I'm still one. I cannot do everything - but I can do something and because I cannot do everything I shall not refuse to do the something that I can do.' (Anon)

'We cannot say that the goal is close but we can say that the next step is immediate' (M. Palmer-Hall)





© SUGENTIS

If you know any friends that would be interested in our work, please ask them to visit our new website at www.lifeforceindia.com or get in touch. We will be happy to send them the latest issue of LifeForce Link - a summary sheet (enclosed herewith) inviting readers to find out more by becoming members of LifeForce.

- There's always a need for funds for 'emergency' purchases, such as the vehicle purchase and sponsorship of the 'lantana craftsmen'.
- We aim to make grants for individual projects, such as construction of an artificial lake at Pattan, to provide a village with a supply of drinking water and gravity-fed crop irrigation.

PLEASE REMEMBER...

- **we can do nothing without you!**
- **we have changed our address!**
- **to support one (or more!) of our projects.**
- **to visit us in India!**
- **to send (at least) £10 to become a member of LifeForce and thereby remain on our mailing list.**
- **To write to the commissioner of the Met. Police.**
- **To use ethical banks exclusively.**
- **To invest ethically.**
- **SAVING THE TIGER IS AN IMPORTANT STEP TOWARDS SAVING OURSELVES.**

A little goes a long way

Producing this newsletter reduces our valuable resources and the financial returns from the previous one only just exceeded cost of production. This issue has been printed courtesy of LSL and we are very grateful to them for their assistance. If you enjoy reading about what you are achieving and would like to become a member of LifeForce for one year, then sending a minimum donation of £10 would help us enormously. Perhaps you might consider completing a standing order crediting the LifeForce account on a regular basis? There is a form inserted in this issue of LifeLines. Our work has to continue and your contributions are our life lines to ensure we keep going and keep in touch - via LifeLines! We are sure you will appreciate our desire to keep administrative costs to a minimum in order to ensure that more reaches the jungle. In future, we can only afford to send LifeLines to members of LifeForce. Thank you. LifeLines brings news of what your donation has achieved over 5000 miles away.

Current LifeForce targets:

- Funding the 'cordon' of villages around the Park, to provide sources of income and self-sufficiency for villagers adjacent to the most sensitive areas. This requires, on average, approximately £35000 per village.
- Village relocation - providing a future for villagers and a future for the Park. Approximately £1500 per family. Maximum number of families in any one village: 50. Number of villages inside the National Park: 8. Number of villages in the surrounding sanctuary and reserve areas: 60
- We wish to support the NAMKS healthcare team with a vehicle, medical supplies and possibly field workers and expand our own medical aid programme (e.g. refurbish a hospital building, continue medical camps - £7000 minimum)

LifeLines is produced for 'Members of LifeForce'. Our separate publication, LifeForce Link is available free of charge for anyone who may be interested in our work. It includes a number of new fundraising ideas that you can take part in. These range from holding a Charity dinner party to selling raffle tickets. Please help us in any way you can. Remember, you are our life line and your interest and support is our life force.