

## **LIFEFORCE REPORT 2011**

### **INTRODUCTION**

As may be expected in the current economic situation, funds have been very difficult to find. Global economic problems are set to continue for years, and it is important to remember that the forces producing the dangerous economic climate are exactly the same as those producing the dangerous environmental climate, and numerous other environmental problems (please see the last subsection 'The Larger LifeForce'). The only way that LifeForce can currently maintain active conservation work in the field is by giving modest financial support to our partner, the Satpuda Foundation – and their achievements make for some heartening reading.

### **CONSERVATION WORK COMPLETED**

#### **Village Re-Locations**

Six villages have been moved out of Melghat Tiger Reserve (MTR). Satpuda Foundation (SF) has helped the State government of Maharashtra successfully relocate six villages during the period from October 2010 to March 2012. For the 350 families of 3 villages - Amona, Nagartas and Bharukheda - the move has brought Rs 10 lakh (1 million rupees) per adult, free land for a house, and better access to markets, education, health facilities, the court, the police and tahsil (village) headquarters.

They can now regularly use buses that previously reached them only rarely. Mahadeo Tote said “I suffered a sloth bear attack a few months ago. It took me six hours to reach the hospital; now, anyone can reach a hospital in less than 30 minutes.”

Three other villages - Churni, Vairat and Dhargad - have also been relocated from the sanctuary area of Melghat Tiger Reserve.



from

to (chital under tree)

After the final relocation of Dhargad village from MTR in April 2012, chital have been regularly seen in fields previously used for agriculture (chital sightings are rare in Melghat). Many more villages in MTR have petitioned the Forest Department to rehabilitate them too.

## **Highway Widening Stopped**

Dangers to wildlife have been posed by a proposed widening of National Highway 6 (NH6) which threatened to cut the 'tiger corridor' between Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve and the proposed Nagzira-Navegaon Tiger Reserve. The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) had already violated the Forest Conservation Act (FCA) 1980 while doing expansion work for the NH6 in January 2009. Finally, the permission for widening the highway from two-lanes to four-lanes has been denied. Now the NHAI and the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests are preparing a fresh proposal with mitigative measures in some patches of NH6 between Deori and Sakoli.

## **New Reserves and Sanctuaries**

Readers may recall that 'Reserve' status prohibits any and all human activity while 'Sanctuary' status allows human activity but prohibits the cutting of trees or plants or the killing of animals. Maharashtra State government may soon officially protect the 'tiger corridor' from Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve to the Nagzira-Navegaon proposed Tiger Reserve by declaring a new tiger sanctuary called Umred-Karandla (189.29 sq km) in Nagpur district. Not only this, the State board approved the proposal of a Nagzira (151.335 sq km) sanctuary and a Navegaon (122.75 sq km) sanctuary to strengthen the proposed Nagzira-Navegaon Tiger Reserve in Gondia district. Similarly, a new Bor sanctuary (60.69 sq km) at Wardha has also been approved, doubling the area of Bor and strengthening the 'tiger corridor' between Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve to Pench Tiger Reserve.

Regular readers will also remember that Pench Tiger Reserve is one of those still (just!) connected by 'forest corridors' to other Tiger Reserves throughout Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra, and that they form the focus of all LifeForce activities in India. These areas are critical for the long term future of tigers and hence, events here have a significance beyond the immediate geographical area. After 17 years continuous lobbying by the Satpuda Foundation, the Maharashtra State government has notified (i.e. officially recognised) the Mansinghdeo Wildlife Sanctuary. Mansinghdeo, spread over 183 sq km, will add real value to Pench Tiger Reserve - with which it shares boundaries. Pench is the smallest reserve of India with an area of just 256 sq km. Mansinghdeo will help ensure the survival of tigers in Pench.

## **Tigers Return to Jalgaon**

Tigers disappeared from the State of Gujarat in the 1980s. In the Yawal Wildlife Sanctuary (YWS) in Jalgaon, Gujarat, 3 tigers were recorded in 1993, 4 in 1997 and 1 in 2001. The last official record of tigers in Jalgaon division was in 2005 when three tigers were recorded. The tiger habitat continuity link is considered to be from Kanha-Pench-Melghat-Satpuda and, westward of Melghat, Yawal.

In September 2011, a Range Forest Officer of YWS reported monitoring a tigress with a cub for the preceding three months, and claimed the presence of a male tiger too. The tigers have made the densely forested Purna backwaters their home.

Satpuda Foundation has also urged the State government to provide necessary wildlife management inputs to this area and also to restore degraded forest toward the west of Melghat.

## **Bawanthadi Irrigation Project to Implement Mitigation Measures**

In 2004 SF started a campaign to stop this irrigation project in the 'tiger corridor' between Pench and Nagzira sanctuary. However, the campaign failed to stop the project and associated destruction. The dam site is near Kudwa village in Katangi in Balaghat of Madhya Pradesh (MP) and Sitekasa village of Tumsar in Bhandara district (Maharashtra). The Bawanthadi project will help irrigate 18,615 hectares of land in Balaghat district and 17,537 hectares in Bhandara district.

Over 828.469 hectares of additional forest land in Maharashtra and 473.310 hectares of forest land in MP is being allocated to the Bawanthadi project. The Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) in 2008-09 had, in principle, granted environment clearance under the Forest Conservation Act (FCA) 1980.

The irrigation work constructed many deep canals which cross the migration routes of various species of wildlife.



### **Deep irrigation canals cause problems for animal migration**

No mitigation measures were taken while constructing the previous Gosikhurd irrigation project, which passes through Navegaon National Park, and the result has been numerous wild life deaths.

Under pressure, the MoEF has finally issued a letter to the State government asking it to fulfill 18 conditions, one of which is that the irrigation work must represent no threat to wildlife in its area of operation. It should also, at its own cost, help the State Forest Department to promote wildlife conservation.

In early April 2011, in a bid to identify mitigative measures to prevent damage to wildlife during and after the construction of the Bawanthadi irrigation project, a team of two forest officials toured the area and have held subsequent meetings with irrigation officials.

## TIGER CENSUS NUMBERS

According to the 2010 tiger census results (released in 2011) the estimated population of the big cat in India stands at 1,706, up from 1,411 in 2007 (it is worrying to remember that a census total of 1827 tigers in all of India triggered the original Project Tiger in 1972/3). The previous Minister of Environment and Forests, Jairam Ramesh, released the census report. Though tiger numbers seem to have increased according to the tiger census, the Satpuda Foundation has urged caution, and saw no reasons for celebration.

SF explained that it not surprising to have recorded higher numbers, since the last time the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) conducted the nationwide study, was its first time, and it faced many constraints, such as few camera traps, and few supporting and skilled staff. As a result, the populations in many tiger reserves like Melghat and Tadoba-Andhari (TATR) were underestimated.

This time, they overcame such constraints and were also, with assistance from a few other organisations, able to expand their study into areas such as the Sundarbans (which has one of the highest tiger populations of all PAs.)

While appreciating the estimation work done by WII, SF has advised that, to really take the tiger population up from minimal threshold numbers, much more hard work is necessary. SF and LifeForce believe it important to point out that there is no substantial change to State policies, priorities and attitudes to address the issues causing the tiger crisis; no substantial progress (nationwide) in village resettlement, or funding allocations, or effective measures relating to poaching, staffing issues, or management. So we all need to keep working hard, and pressurising Governments to meet their fundamental responsibilities. In summary:

1. The new figures do not represent an overall "jump" in tiger numbers, but are rather a correction to the last census when several large tiger landscapes were either inadequately assessed or missed completely.
2. The loss of 20,000 sq. kms. of tiger habitat is the more important factor and is more critical to the future of *Panthera tigris* than any periodic ups and downs in tiger numbers. Many habitats that, it was hoped, tigers would move into via corridors (which we are still struggling to protect) are being wiped out as you read this.
3. Nevertheless, on a positive note, many source populations have been well protected and for this due credit must go to the field staff for the rise in tiger numbers. However, overall, the future of even these populations is more threatened than ever before because;
  - a) lands surrounding natural tiger habitat are being rapidly converted to agriculture, mines, dams, roads and other uses that render the habitat unsuitable for tigers and b)
  - there is less money to protect tigers against the wildlife trade after the Planning Commission cut NTCA (National Tiger Conservation Authority) budgets, while increasing budgets for coal mining in tiger habitats (!!!) This will have the effect of wiping out even more tiger habitats, which will push tiger numbers down permanently.



## **THE LARGER LIFE FORCE**

The paper on which this report is written is (and has been for years) from sustainable and managed plantations, whilst the ink is so environmentally-friendly it could be consumed without ill effect (on this point, we hope we will not be compelled to eat our own words!)

It is heartening to think of some progress toward a collective consciousness of the environment, and that details printed on products describing the sources of those products, are now common. Perhaps like the reader, LF personnel were, 20-30 years ago, advocating the use of re-cycled products, the non-use of plastic bags etc. and had to endure the ridicule and/or misunderstanding of the majority. Well, eventually, the message does get through and we can only hope that nature will give us sufficient time to understand and act on all the messages she has been sending us for decades.

With regard to one of the most important 'messages' conceivable, the reader will know that all governments have repeatedly failed to agree any significant action regarding CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, let alone actually achieve any significant reductions from within their own nations. Nor have they organised related programmes to help the situation e.g. de-forestation is a major factor in climate change but continues apace. Their response to the crisis is completely inadequate and, considering the extent and gravity of the consequences, will richly deserve all that results (unfortunately, we are all involved). It now looks probable that the average rise in global temperatures could be as high as 5 degrees. The resulting problems will extend far beyond extreme weather conditions (which, in themselves can be devastating) and are predicted to include rising sea levels and inundation of freshwater agricultural land with saline water, with drastic consequences for food production and fresh water supplies. The environmental scientist James Lovelock has predicted a 90% cull of the human population globally this century as a consequence of climate change. As the old saying has it, life is not a rehearsal, but we continue

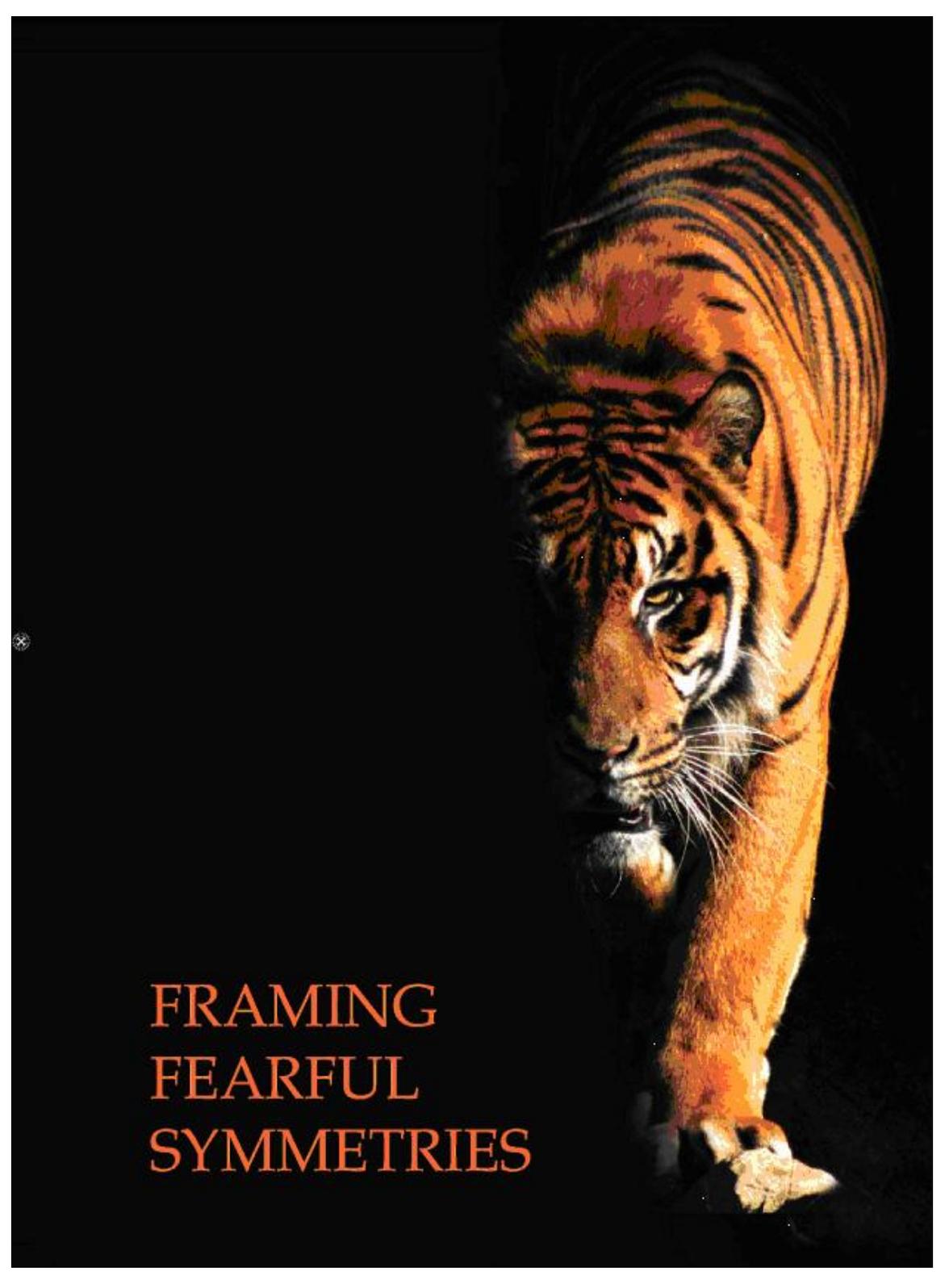
on our current suicidal course with few seemingly concerned and even fewer trying to do something about it. If there were more concerned individuals, generating further concern among those others who are still unaware of, or indifferent to the situation, there would be more hope.

The media tell us that there is doubt among the public as to whether climate change or global warming is 'real' – although the attention being paid to the public's opinion on such scientific issues would seem to be without precedent. For the sake of a more important point, we will ignore reports that emerged after Kyoto concerning manufacturers purposely hiring scientists to dispute evidence of global warming in order to delay or demolish any resulting carbon dioxide emission legislation that might reduce profits or competitive advantage. We will agree that humans cannot know for certain the whole truth about climate change or global warming. This leaves us with two options; to continue as we are, or adjust our life-styles to take into account a weight of evidence that suggests we are orchestrating our own destruction. Mmmm, which should we choose? Even in the absence of certain proof the only intelligent course of action is to err on the side of caution for all and everything we hold dear. That the public need to be convinced of the threat before governments can take action is itself another smoke screen to obscure the real situation – that too many corporations do not want governments to take action.

If global warming was the only environmental problem perhaps there would be more grounds for debate but when we think of definitely man-made damage such as deforestation, species extinctions, loss of topsoil, pollution...then global warming seems to fit the catalogue very well and gains credence as another symptom of our malaise.

Purely rational approaches; picking over the evidence, examining conflicting data (that reveals how much we don't know)...whilst ordering another cup of coffee...all too often speak of complacency and misplaced confidence. Such approaches are themselves as indicative of wrong relations with nature as the problems being considered. They smack of arrogance; that man's toy-town mechanical analysis of sophistication so far beyond him has any ultimate validity. Realisation of our limitations and our current situation would breed some humility and appreciation in the face of nature, and these attitudes automatically lead to behaviour that respects and conserves nature. It would help if we spent more time admiring nature, and less time admiring ourselves. Some are too clever, detached and comfortable to know if climate change is real. It's changing because we're firmly fixated on self, greed and/or apathy i.e. climate is changing because we are not.

If unconvinced of global warming as seen from these perspectives, let us employ some common sense – if billions of tonnes of carbon (previously 'locked away' for millions of years underground) are released into the atmosphere over a couple of hundred years, would it not be more surprising for it to have no effect?



FRAMING  
FEARFUL  
SYMMETRIES

Full of useful advice on all of these problems, including some on climate change, is the LF book (printed on paper from sustainable sources) 'Framing Fearful Symmetries' – the availability of which was announced in the last report. It explains the links between economic and environmental problems and explores the significance of the tiger; physically in terms of ecology and also in terms of spirituality, psychology and philosophy. 'Framing Fearful Symmetries' makes a truly worthwhile gift at £30.00 (+£10.00 P&P). Some retailers have told LF that they would price it at £60 due to its quality and size. Whilst, in this economic climate, £30.00 may still seem a significant sum, think of how easily this amount is spent in a supermarket and what little we often have to show for it a day or two later. This book will last until doomsday and, if readers act on its contents, will even push the date of doomsday backward! It contains many interrelated topics, including scientific information on tigers not previously published, literature, poetry, mythology, philosophy, psychology, religion and quotes of Jung, Schweitzer, Einstein, Chiefs Seattle and Standing Bear and numerous others. It also includes many recommended worthwhile actions available to the reader which could contribute to averting environmental disaster. If you cannot buy one for yourself or for a friend/family member, **PLEASE** try to pass the word to someone who can, and ask them to email [lifeforcelink@hotmail.com](mailto:lifeforcelink@hotmail.com)

When the book is displayed in a bookshop, where it might be browsed by people unaware of LifeForce, it holds an introductory insert. The insert reads as follows:

Would you like to gain a better understanding of the energies within you?

Would you like to gain further insights into the psychological, philosophical and spiritual aspects of your life?

Nature in general - and tigers in particular - can teach us, not only about healthy forests and healthy life for all species (including our own), but also about those aspects of our personal lives mentioned above.

How? All answers are to be found behind the tiger on the cover of this book.

But hurry, because tigers, and all that they represent, are rapidly disappearing from the world and our lives.

This book considers the tiger crisis in particular and the environmental crisis in general and suggests reasons and solutions for both that are still available to us as individuals. It also considers the meaning of our individual lives in the context of nature and, in doing so, includes many and varied perspectives such as those of literature, poetry, religion, philosophy, science...and dear old common sense - so often neglected in today's hi-tech world.

The majority of the book is for the general, non-specialist reader (biological or technical information on tigers is confined to chapter II).