

IndiaWilds®

Newsletter

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Cover Page Photograph:

Elephant by Sabyasachi Patra

Trishanku: Indian Elephant nowhere to go

When will we be ashamed of our actions? This question comes to us again and again when we see the sad photo of an elephant lumped over a 10 feet tall fence made of discarded railway iron sleepers.

Reports suggest that initially to discourage elephants from crop raiding a fence was made of railway iron sleepers. However, elephants being intelligent animals, the 4 feet high sleepers were easy for them to cross over. The forest department to physically stop the elephants from moving into the fields increased the height of the fence to 10 feet.

When a shouting stone throwing mob of villagers chased elephants to the jungle, one of them panicked and tried to jump this 10 feet tall fence made of discarded railway iron sleepers. Unfortunately, the fence was too tall for the elephant and half of its body got stuck on the iron fence. The elephant was left hanging. It would have suffered because of its massive body weight crushing its heart and lungs over the iron barrier and would have died a painful death. The din created by the mob would have drowned the cry of agony of the elephant.



Elephant dies on Forest department fence

Apart from the immense cruelty that this incident conveys, a lot of cynical people feel that this is bound to happen as the elephants were crop raiding and are a nuisance. A majestic creature revered as vehicle of Gajalaxmi and also as Lord Ganesha has fallen from its high pedestal to be branded as nuisance, crop raider etc. It is now a National Heritage animal only in paper as it is fighting a grim battle for survival.

It is sad that the people responsible for this incident and the authorities don't face any consequences for this death. They simply shrug off the problem



under the garb of Man-Elephant Conflict.

The authorities don't care about the core issue behind this death.

Elephants are designed to be far ranging in their habits as they need a huge amount of food as well as a varied diet. A small area will immediately become barren if they devour all the grasses, bushes, leaves, tree barks and other vegetation. So they have to move and feed.

We humans have appropriated most of the land. Hardly 4% of India's landmass is under the Protected Area network. And only a small part of our notified Protected Areas are part of the elephant habitat. Forests have been hemmed in from all sides by human habitations. So this causes huge problems from the elephants.

The traditional migratory routes of elephants have been blocked due to human habitations, canals, roads, railway lines etc. This is also causing them to lose their traditional memory of migratory paths. With the passing away of old leaders the new generation who had never traversed those paths now face increasingly tough times as they don't know what to do in different seasons. Since people grow crops in the traditional elephant habitat, it becomes easy for elephants to come to the cultivated fields and consume crops. Elephants also get lot of nutrition from crops so it comes as a bonus as well.

Earlier, our people were more religious and used to believe that any misfortune of crop loss due to weather gods or pests or wildlife is due to their own fate. Firing at and killing an elephant was an act of sacrilege. Today, the old reverence is gone. Gods today are mostly a medium to make money, despite the outwardly sign of reverence.

Farmers are also under tremendous pressure due to the faulty APMC act and most of the money is made by middlemen and farmers get a pittance. Often farmers don't even recover their investment. So the farmers can't even tolerate any loss of crops. So farmers taking their ire on elephants feeding on the crops and the resulting conflict should be more carefully thought out by the forest department.

The forest department helps create trenches which elephants can't cross. However, over a period of time the trenches get filled up. Elephants are also intelligent animals and they kick mud to fill up the trenches. They are known to even throw logs at solar fencing to break the current. So the forest department had come out with the stupid idea of physically restraining the elephants from crop raiding by installing 10 feet high railway iron rails.

When you try to physically restrain the elephants from crop raiding it leads to conflict. The

elephants have no where to go as their traditional migratory paths are cut off in number of cases.

The forests have also lost the biodiversity due to the presence of invasive species like Lantana camara, Parthenium etc. These invasive species outcompete the native vegetation. So it becomes difficult and strenuous task for the elephants to get their food.



Elephants struggle to find grass in the midst of lantana and parthenium infestation

Anthropogenic pressures like cattle grazing also has an effect in reducing the availability of forage. People enter into the forests to lop off branches. In an ideal habitat different species bloom and fruit in different times of the year. So elephants have diverse species of vegetation to feed on. With loss of biodiversity, elephants have to obviously look for food and find crops as nutritious and necessary for their survival.

If we want our elephants to survive we have to allow them to feed on crops. The forest department should tell the people not to fire crackers, throw stones, chilli bombs etc on elephants. After the elephants consume crops in the fields, the forest department can survey the damage and pay the fair compensation to people.

Anyway, farmers don't get much money by selling their crops to middlemen due to political parties turning a blind eye to the problems of APMC act. Farmers are not allowed to participate in lot of markets. There are monopolies in local market (mandi) where the farmers are allowed to sell.

There is also cartelisation in the mandi, which results in the price discovery mechanism being gamed to give a very low price to the farmers. In many cases farmers are known to not even make any money. So the elephants consuming crops should be seen as godsend. The farmers would be spared from the challenge of transporting the crops to the mandi, incurring cost in

the process and not get the right amount. When forest department gives immediate and fair compensation amount to the farmers, they will be happy and not retaliate. Elephants have a long memory. When they see that people are not retaliating,



they will also not indulge in counter attacking people. The human-elephant conflict will be resolved.

We are at a time when we are actively discussing loan-waivers for farmers. We acknowledge that our food security is dependent on our farmers. And our food security is also dependent on the ecological well being of our forests, rivers and mountains and other lands. So the Governments of various states should see this as an opportunity to end conflict and lead to peaceful coexistence.

The forest department should immediately create a mobile app which collates the actual images of the cropland where elephants have consumed crops. Photographs can be directly uploaded to the app and it can be collated and analysed and immediately compensation disbursed. This data can also be made available for forecasting of crops for the Agriculture ministry as well.

The Government is bearing massive losses from scams done by corporates. A recent case in the point is ILFS. Before the ILFS scam jeweller Nirav Modi fled abroad with some 22000 crores scam. According to Reserve Bank of India (RBI) data, between April 2014 and April 2018 India's 21 public sector banks wrote

An angry elephant charges at people in conflict zone

off Rs. 3,16,500 crores or 3165 billion rupees. Such massive losses are shaking up the banking system and soon the banks need to be recapitalised. There are way too many frequent scams by corporates that have singed the banks and ultimately public money is spent in recapitalising and loan write offs. In such a situation, Government of India as well as State Governments spending money on a just cause like providing compensation for crop loss to reduce people chasing and killing elephants shouldn't be a big problem. If India cares for its Natural Heritage Animal, then it has to take these steps to save the elephant.

India is a country which has the technical knowhow to even send a spacecraft to Mars at a cost less than what is needed to make a blockbuster Hollywood movie. All it needs is will power. Whether our Government ministers and officials have it or not is a million dollar question.

Industrial hub or Biodiversity trove? – What is your choice!

By Amar Kumar Nayak

Asansol – Durgapur industrial region is popular for its contribution to the Indian economy through its coal and industrial production. But apart from this economical importance the area is also famous for its cultural and ecological value. Churulia, situated in Asansol is the birthplace of the rebel poet Kazi Nazrul Islam.

The entire area is based over the river basin of Ajay and Damodar River, thus there is a geographical influence on its economical and cultural growth.

The area is situated in the newly created district Paschim Bardhaman, sharing its border with Bankura, Birbhum and Purba Bardhaman districts. Security of job and demand of man power are the two main attractions for many people coming from different districts, sometimes states.



Durgapur Barrage



Durgapur Steel Thermal Power Station Andal

Many heavy and small industries are situated in this industrial region along with some famous colleges and one university. These are the social perspectives of the region. Beside this the region is attractive to many wildlife enthusiasts and photographers for its rich biodiversity and different natural photographic destinations.

The Asansol and Durgapur subdivisions are the nest to 212 and 239 species of birds respectively.

Some among them are very rare like Western-crowned Warbler, Forest Wagtail, Blue-capped rock thrush etc.



Lesser Adjutant Stork

Plants like Indian banyan, Sal, Palash, Sacred Fig tree, Tamarind, Mango, Jack fruit, Asian palm and Eucalyptus are the home for so many winged beauties. During my 6 years study I have recorded 157 species of birds, 62 species of Dragonflies, 55 species of butterflies, 14 types of frogs and many others.



Forest Area of Andai, Bardhaman

Butterflies and other insects are attracted by different types of herbs and shrubs like Eupatorium, Cassia, Lantana and Parthenium. The wide range of geographical diversity is triggered by the varied flora and fauna along the river banks of Ajay and Damodar flowing across this region.

The entire region can be divided into ten parts – Asansol riverside area, Asansol town area, Asansol outskirts, Coal mine area of Raniganj, river side area of ajay and nearby villages, Andal town area, Andal forest areas (Tilabani range, Ukhra, Jhanjhra up to Madarbani range), Durgapur township, Durgapur forest area (town outskirts, Pardohi forest area up to Garh forest) and the most important - Durgapur barrage area.



Raniganj coal mines area

The entire area houses varieties of birds, some of which are migratory. Among 157 species of birds 45 are migratory (winter migrant, summer migrant, passage migrant and vagrant). Some important raptors (birds of prey) are Western Marsh Harrier, Pied Harrier, Peregrine falcon, Red-necked falcon, Short-eared Owl, Osprey etc. Initially the Best place for finding a Short-eared owl was the paddy field adjacent to the Andal adjacent aerodrome.



Andal Aerodrome

Unfortunately each and every grassland habitat has been damaged due to their project of the newly constructed Kazi Nazrul Islam Airport and the different housing complexes. Overgrown population, emission of excessive toxic effluents from industries and increased temperature are the other edaphic factors. The habitat destruction, less food grains are also some important cause of destruction of this 'biodiversity trove'. Soil and water pollution due to industrial hazards and heavy metals like lead, zinc, copper, manganese etc also contribute largely to this destruction. The environment of the concerned region is changing suddenly

and as a result living organisms are facing problem. People like us are trying to explore this diversity and create awareness about the industrial region, the pollution and population hazards. We are still trying our best to keep the ray of hope alive and to inform people about the importance of birds, snakes, frogs and insects in our life. The key to our existence is the biological chain, of which we - the human beings, and the flora and fauna are equally important components. So, it is obvious that any damage caused to this chain will be irrevocable and the price paid will be our very existence.

About the author: Writes in different magazines in regional language for creating and growing awareness among common people about basic values of conservation. Presently working at a Government aided School of West Bengal. Working as a conservation worker from 2011 and his field of interests are – Odonates, Birds & Reptiles.

Conservation News -

NTCA seeks action against officials for Satkosia Tiger death coverup

The death of tiger, nicknamed Mahavir, in Satkosia on 14th November has now been confirmed to be due to snare. The National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) has confirmed that there were attempts made by the Satkosia tiger reserve authorities to conceal the fact.

The NTCA Inspector General Shri Amit Mallick had visited Satkosia to probe the death of Mahavir who was relocated from Kanha in Madhya Pradesh to repopulate Satkosia. The NTCA report says “Prima facie analysis and nature of injury sustained, tracking team observations and independent interactions with field staff reveal that the death is due to injury sustained from a snare trap and a clear case of poaching. Evidently, the concerned field authorities are attempting to conceal facts in respect of the death of T1 which is due to snaring”.



Tiger Mahavir dies due to snare in Satkosia Tiger Reserve with neck wound

Now that the Odisha PCCF wildlife has received the report it is to be seen what action is being taken.

The Satkosia tiger relocation project was the first tiger relocation effort where tigers are moved from different states. It needed support of two state Governments. Unfortunately this first of a kind tiger relocation scheme is jeopardized due to the officials not taking enough precautions as well as lack of monitoring. The people of the area have become hostile as they have not been taken into confidence and also because there are lobbies who don't want a tiger in the forest so that poaching and wood cutting can continue unabated.

Conservation News -

The tigress T2 which was moved from bandhavgarh is now captured and kept inside the enclosure. It is believed that the tigress after being kept for more than 40 days in the enclosure lost her sharpness and ability to kill wild herbivores and resorted to cattle lifting. She has been accused of killing two people as well. The NTCA report has come down heavily on this aspect as well. The NTCA report says “The tigress has been put through tremendous stress and needs to be conditioned or ‘rewilded’ before it is fit for release into the wild. The rehabilitation enclosure holding T2 needs adequate wilderness enrichment and modification”.

The NTCA report suggests “Capacity building of staff, community engagement, relocation of villages, prey augmentation and distribution assessment, veterinary care and capacity, real time monitoring and elephant squad need to be seriously functional in the desired manner, before we can attempt to restart the tiger augmentation process, presently kept in abeyance”.

These days it is very rare to get the support of the Chief Minister for conservation efforts. However, Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik had personally written letters to different states for tiger relocation and Madhya Pradesh had agreed. So it is really unfortunate the way Odisha forest department authorities have mishandled the situation. It has brought all round shame on Odisha as well as the competence of its officers. It is not known if the Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik is even aware about the tiger death and the incompetence of these officers. We hope his secretariat informs him. Conservationists and general public should also protest on this gross incompetence, negligence and criminal coverup of the poaching incident.

India’s snow tigers

The uniqueness of India’s huge landmass and its wildlife never fails to amaze us. Earlier Amur tigers were known to live in snow. However, for the first time it has been scientifically proved that India too has regions where tigers live in snow.

A three year study by a Wildlife Institute of India (WII) team has found tigers in snow clad mountains in Dibang valley in Arunachal Pradesh at an altitude of 3630 meters. WII scientists GV Gopi and Aisho Sharma Adhikarimayum carried out this study across 336 square kilometers of Dibang Wildlife Sanctuary. 108 camera traps were deployed and presence of 11 tigers including 2 cubs were established through the camera trap images.

The study was conducted in the river valleys. So it is also expected that tigers would be present even at the higher reaches. The Idu Mishmi tribe are known to accord huge respects to the tigers. That respect along with the remote region has helped tigers survive despite official ignorance about the presence of tigers in the region. The study findings should help further scientific studies as well as converting the area into tiger reserve and higher degree of protection.

Conservation News -



NGT directs Govt. to declare Kedarnath ESZ by Jan end

The National Green Tribunal has directed MoEF&CC to declare the Kedarnath Wildlife Sanctuary as Ecosensitive Zone (ESZ) before January 31 2019. Doaba Paryavaran Samiti, an NGO, had filed a petition in 2015 to stop helicopter services and declare ESZ for Kedarnath Wildlife sanctuary.

Helicopter services have been in operation after permission was granted in May 10, 2006. The Uttarakhand Government had engaged Wildlife Institute of India (WII) to conduct a study on the impact of helicopter service on wildlife. WII study has suggested that helicopters fly at an altitude of 600m except ofcourse during landing and takeoff.

The world is now waking up to the impact of anthropophony on wildlife. Loud noise due to helicopters cause lot of stress on the wildlife. It changes their behaviour, vocalization, stops them from using certain areas and also can cause miscarriage.

Unrestrained tourism to holy places like Kedarnath and other wilderness areas causes a massive impact on the wildlife, degrades the place as well as results in pollution. The Government should create suitable restrictions because if a fraction of our country's 1.3 billion population decides to land up on a place then the place will be devastated for ever. The Government is known to play around and make a mockery of the ESZ by reducing it to as small as 100meters in some cases. Hope better sense prevails while notifying the ESZ for Kedarnath Wildlife Sanctuary. Save the Himalaya: -

https://youtu.be/aDIGMh_rA54

Conservation News -

Killer Wheels: Three Lions mowed down by Goods train

A pride of six lions have been reduced to half as three of those were mowed down by a Goods train going from Botad to Pipavav. The incident occurred near Borala village in Amreli village.

India's wildlife is under constant threat from linear projects like roads, railways, canals. And one of the biggest culprit is the Indian Railways. Countless large predators and mega herbivores have been wiped away by the killer railways. Now it is the turn of lions and half of a pride of six lions were wiped out in one single train. Two male lions and one female, part of a pride of six, died. The train involved in the accident was a goods train travelling to Pipavav from Botad. This tragic deaths occurred at 12.45 am on 18th of December.

What makes matters worse is that India's lions are now restricted to Gujarat. The Government of Gujarat despite the Hon'ble Supreme Court's decision (<http://www.indiawilds.com/diary/indiawilds-newsletter-vol-5-issue-iv/>) to relocated lions to Kuno-Palpur in Madhya Pradesh to create a second home has refused to obey in the name of Gujrat asmita saying lions are pride of Gujarat and can't be given to other states. The underlying fact is Gujarat doesn't want other states to earn tourism revenue from lions. Typical business decision camouflaged as pride of a state. Well that is how politics is these days in India!

Meanwhile lions keep on dying. According to statistics of Gujarat Government 104 lions had died in 2016 and 80 lions died in 2017. Recently 23 lions were found dead in Gir. 11 of them died between September 12 and 19th in Dalkhaniya range of Gir. Initially the forest department said that they died due to infighting. However, later more sick lions were noticed and the forest department then shifted 12 sick lions to rescue centre where they died. ICMR (Indian Council of Medical Research) scientists from National Institute of Virology Pune has found that there was active transmission of Canine Distemper (CDV) virus in at least 21 lions. Time and again it has been pointed out that 1000 lions had died en masse in Serengeti in 1994 due to an outbreak of canine distemper virus. Since lions in India are confined to only one place, outbreak of such a deadly virus can exterminate our lions and the Asiatic lion species can become extinct. Unfortunately, the Gujarat Government has not listened to sage advice.

The Gujarat Government under Shri Narendra Modi had refused to relocate lions. So it was clear that with him as Prime Minister, the lion relocation will not happen. So five years have passed since the Supreme Court judgment but lion relocation has not happened. Now the lions are under serious threat of extinction and no one else but Mr. Modi should take the blame.

Outcome of COP24 Positive says India

The 24th Session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 24) was held in Katowice, Poland on 02nd -15th December 2018. The conference was a significant one as it focused on

Conservation News -

three key issues including finalization of guidelines/ modalities/ rules for the implementation of Paris Agreement, the conclusion of 2018 Facilitative Talanoa Dialogue and the stock take of Pre-2020 actions implementation and ambition.

India demonstrated the spirit of commitment and leadership during the COP-24 by reiterating its promise to implement the Paris Agreement in its spirit and to act collectively to address climate change. India engaged positively and constructively in all the negotiations while protecting India's key interests including recognition of different starting points of developed and developing countries; flexibilities for developing countries and consideration of principles including equity and Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities (CBDR-RC).

The guidance on Nationally Determined Contributions preserves the nationally determined nature of NDCs and provides for Parties to submit different types of contributions including adaptation. The overall guidance reflects the principles of the Paris Agreement and recognizes the leadership that developed countries have to display for achieving the objectives of the Paris Agreement.

The guidance on adaptation recognizes the adaptation needs of developing countries and is built on the overarching principle of CBDR-RC. The differentiation has been operationalized by incorporating provisions on providing support for adaptation activities of developing country parties.

India has been in favor of a robust transparency regime, and the finalized Enhanced Transparency Framework builds upon the existing guidelines while providing flexibilities for developing countries.

The guidance on finance provisions operationalizes the obligation of developed countries in providing means of implementation to developing countries and recognizes the need for climate finance to be new and additional and climate specific. Parties have also agreed to initiate the work on setting up the new collective finance goals post-2020 from the floor of USD 100 billion.

The overarching framework for technology recognizes the need for enhanced support towards operationalization of the framework and comprehensively covers all stages of technology development and transfer.

The modalities for Global Stocktake take into consideration the core principles of equity and includes assessment of collective progress on all the pillars of climate action.

India also engaged in a meaningful way in the 2018 Facilitative Talanoa Dialogue and stock take exercise on Pre-2020 implementation and ambition. The Talanoa Dialogue was an inclusive and participatory process, which led to exchanging best practices between all stakeholders. The pre-2020 stock take exercise also led to a meaningful dialogue with developed countries being urged to step up their actions to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions and to address gaps in the provision of technology, finance and capacity-building support. The outcome on dialogue also recalls the commitment of developed country Parties to a goal of mobilizing jointly USD 100 billion per year by 2020. It also notes with concern the current, ur-

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gent and emerging needs related to extreme weather events and slow onset events in developing countries that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change.

India considers the outcome of COP 24 a positive one which addresses concerns of all Parties and sets us on the path towards successful implementation of the Paris Agreement.

Cabinet approves MoC between India and Japan in the field of Environmental Co-operation

The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has given ex-post facto approval to the Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) between India and Japan. The MoC was signed on 29th October 2018 during the visit of Hon'ble Prime Minister of India to Japan.

The Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) will enable establishment and promotion of closer and long-term cooperation between India and Japan in the field of environment protection and management of natural resources on the basis of equity, reciprocity and mutual benefits, taking into account the applicable laws and legal provisions in each country. Further, the MoC entails exchange of information and technology between the two countries.

Environmental degradation falls on the socially and economically disadvantaged, more heavily than better-off sections of the society. Any effort at thwarting environmental degradation would lead to environmental equity in the sense of availability of sound environmental resources to all sections of the society. The MoC is expected to bring in the latest technologies and best practices suited for bringing about better environment protection, better conservation, better management of climate change and bio-diversity conservation.

Equipment Discussions -

Angelbird launches massive 1TB AV Pro CF CFast card

Anyone who shoots in the latest cinema cameras like Canon C300 Mark II, Canon C200 or in cameras like Canon 1DXII, Blackmagic Pocket 4K, Ursa Mini etc understands the pain that CFast 2.0 cards have become. To shoot highresolution 4K files one needs the CFast 2.0 cards which are not only costly but also get filled up fast. A 128 Gb CFast 2.0 card gets filled in about 20 mins if you are filming with the Canon 1DXII. You get similar or slightly more write times in other cameras. Fortunately, Angelbird has now launched a massive 1TB AV Pro CF CFast 2.0 card. So now you don't need to stop shooting midway to change your card.

The new 1 TB Angelbird AV Pro CF CFast card costs **\$899.90 US dollars** and is available now.



The anglebird 1TB CFast card reads at speeds upto 550 MB/s (sequential read speed). The sustained read speed is upto 530 MB/s. The Sequential write speed is upto 450 MB/s and sustained write speed is 430 MB/s. These figures are based on internal testing. So the figures may vary based on different cameras. Actual performance in the field needs to be seen.

The reliability specs according to anglebird the MTBF ie Mean time between failures is 2,400,000 hours or 2.4 million hours

There are built in EDC and ECC functions. Data retention figures is stated to be 10 years at 25°.

The specified operating range for the cards are between 0° to 70°C. It can be stored from -40° to +85°C. The shock resistance is 50G and vibrating resistance is 3.1G.

Equipment Discussions -

They are offering 3 year limited warranty. And it is subjected to the condition that the product needs to be registered on the Angelbird Personal Service Portal within 30 days after purchase. If not registered within this period, the market-specific legal guarantee period comes into force.



Officially these cards are recommended to be used with Atomos, Canon, Phantom camera, Blackmagic Design, Hasselblad and others. If these angelbirds cards prove to be robust enough then it would be a big help to shooters.

Natural History -

COUNTRY NOTEBOOK: A Hunter turned scavenger : M.Krishnan - 28 October 1968

The Sunday Statesman (shared by Shri. Saktipada Panigrahi)

ADJUTANT STORK

“ The Greater Adjutant does occur in the Kaziranga Sanctuary; in fact a pair had nested in a tall red silk-cotton tree near Kaziranga village in 1967-68, but it is a rare bird here. The common stork of the sanctuary is the Lesser Adjutant slightly smaller in size without the fleshy pouch at the throat, and with sparse down on its crown, wholly bald in its larger cousin.



I found it wherever I went, on the edges of bheels, or on the swampy or even on dry open land, hunting insects, frogs, fish and even small reptiles and mammals. It was usually solitary. At times I saw an Adjutant parading its beat, and another a hundred yards away, and a third and even a fourth still further off, in clearings inside the jungle it was usually truly solitary.

It was also in the treetops, singly or a few together in a tree. It did not seem to be gregarious in its roosting here, and on several occasions I saw Adjutants roosting by themselves in some tall tree. But when it soared it was always in a party sometimes as many as two dozen getting together to sail in effortless graceful circles on high. All storks are good fliers and given to soaring and an Adjutant on the wing of a very different bird from its grotesquely ugly and large self on land.

Storks stretch their necks straight out in flight, even when soaring -- in fact this is the token of the flight silhouette by which the tribe can be distinguished, even from a great distance, from the Herons and the Egrets. The Adjutant however, folds back its neck in a tight "S" like a Heron when in the air, so that its neck is invisible in flight and only the long bill jutting out in front and the legs trailing behind serve to distinguish it from a vulture when it is soaring in company on high at such times of course, it can never be mistaken for a heron, for herons are not given to soaring. But often it circles so high that the bill and legs can hardly be seen.

Although it does not seem to congregate at garbage heaps as its greater cousin does, this Adjutant too is given to scavenging, when the opportunity offers. When something dies and vultures gather to feast the Adjutants too are there, to take their share but never in a crowd like vultures -- only one or two, or at best a few along with the regular carrion feeders.

The Adjutant's broadsword bill is not suited to rending flesh, and so it waits till a vulture near it has detached a piece of flesh from the carcass, and then robs it. Feeding vultures are highly rapacious, and gobble up what they are able to tear apart in a great hurry so that any bird robbing them has to be very alert to get any thing at all, but the Adjutant is a fast mover when it has to be.

I watched an Adjutant at a bheel in Bokani for over an hour using the small but efficient telescope that the normal lens of my 35 mm camera becomes when a special eye-piece is screwed on to it. It stood slumped and inert at the water's edge as all hunting waterside birds stand and in repose its neck was partially or even wholly retracted; when it sighted prey, the bill did not dart out at the end of the shot-out neck in a lightning thrust as the bill of herons and darters do but the neck was slowly extended till the great down-pointed bill was above its victim and then with a smooth movement the prey was neatly picked up between the mandibles~for all its seeming resemblance to a broadsword, the bill of the bird is really a giant pair of pincers. I could not always see what prey it had caught, as most of the time the bird rudely turned its back on me, but only once or twice when apparently it had caught a frog, did it jerk, drop and grab the prey to kill it, a fish it caught was held crosswise in the bill at first, then neatly turned lengthwise without being dropped, and finally swallowed, very much in the manner of Black necked Stork.

In February when I was in the sanctuary, the Adjutants were not breeding. But I saw a few nests presumably the previous year's. The bird is said to nest gregariously, but several nests I saw were by themselves, high up red silk-cotton trees."

- M. Krishnan

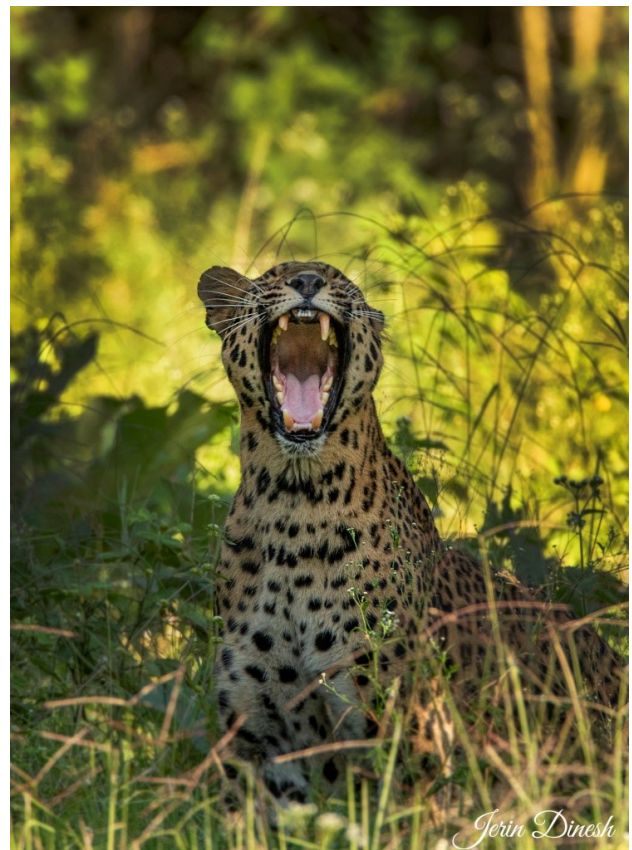
This was published on 28 Oct 1968.

Wildlife Photography -

Tigress in Kabini by Shyamala Kumar



Leopard in Mudumalai by Jerin Dinesh



Wildlife Photography -

Elephants in Munnar by V S Sankar



Osprey with catch by Sandipan Ghosh



Wildlife Photography -

Malabar-Thrush in Eravikulam by Mrudul Godbole



Skimmers from Satkosia by Sabyasachi Patra



Wildlife Photography -

Spiti river in Himachal by Jitendra Katre



Crocodile in river Vashishthi by Deepak Mistry



Wildlife Photography -

Robberfly with bee catch by Prajwal Ullal



Jewel Bug by Anil Kumar Verma





This is the **120th Issue** of IndiaWilds.

The photo of an elephant mud bathing adorns the cover. This wild elephant is in its own home and enjoying its routine mud bathing without anyone disturbing its peace. However, the habitat of elephants are shrinking at an alarming rate. Their corridors are cut off and their seasonal movements are cutoff due to the hand of man. These elephants can communicate with each other using infrasonic waves which can travel long distances. When an elephant is in distress due to road or train accident or chased and killed by people, other elephants can also know it. Being sentient creatures they mourn their dead. If they become more aggressive when they hear the plight of their fellow elephants it is only man who is to be blamed. Unfortunately in any conflict the elephant is the ultimate loser. We are 1.3 billion in this country and no other species can withstand the destructive hand of man. Will we ever change our ways and allow elephants and other wildlife to live in peace?

I look forward to your inputs and support in preserving the last tracts of wilderness and wildlife of our beautiful country. For other interesting articles and images check - <http://www.indiawilds.com/forums/>

To post in the IndiaWilds forums, you can register free of cost using your Full Name as user id at -

<http://www.indiawilds.com/forums/register.php>

If you are already a member of IndiaWilds and have forgotten your user id and/or password you can mail administrator@indiawilds.com

Regards,

Sabyasachi Patra

Profile: <http://www.indiawilds.com/about.htm>

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