

SIMLIPAL TIGER RESERVE;
ASSESSMENT OF RECENT ELEPHANT POACHING
AND PROTECTION INITIATIVES



Report submitted to the
National Tiger Conservation Authority

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Cover Photo: – Dead Calf (Elephant No. 2) at Balikhal Beat

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Simlipal Tiger Reserve (STR) is part of one of the largest contiguous tiger and elephant habitats in the world. With a Biosphere Area of over 5,000 sq km, it is one of the most promising landscapes for tigers and their prey species.

After a number of elephant deaths were reported in April and May 2010, the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) constituted an independent assessment team on 3rd June 2010. The two-team members proceeded immediately to Simlipal to visit the Tiger Reserve from 6 to 11 June 2010. We made the following observations.

- From the evidence, we confirmed seven elephant deaths, all of which have most likely been killed by poachers.
- In some of the cases the field staff were aware of the elephant deaths but chose not to report them; rather they deliberately attempted to conceal the elephant deaths/poaching incidents, by destroying the evidence.
- At least six of the elephant deaths might never have been exposed had it not been for the local informers and two courageous and determined conservationists from Mayurbhanj District.
- Very little animal presence was noted. We did not see a single tusker (for which Simlipal is renowned) or fresh elephant dung, even though we travelled over 100 km a day, at all hours.
- The Forest Staff appeared to be thoroughly unmotivated and demoralized.
- There have been regular incursions of tribal mass-hunting groups of 100 to 200 people entering the Park for over a year. While we were there, at least three such groups entered the Park on 7, 9, and 11 June 2010.
- Forest staff can only try and persuade the hunters to turn back with “folded hands” since they do not have armed support; all arms have been withdrawn in view of the continuing threat from the Maoists.
- After last year’s concerted attack on the forest infrastructure, many of the protection beat houses in the National Park are yet to be re-occupied.
- Due to a new system of dual jurisdiction, by creation of the post of Regional Chief Conservator of Forests (RCCF), the Field Director no longer has control over three DFOs that manage 1,555 sq km of the Buffer Zone.
- The Park’s senior management has not exercised tight control and supervision over the field staff due to insufficient visits to the Parks.
- There is little interaction with local tribal communities living inside and on the periphery of the Park thereby leading to distrust and lack of support to the Department.

Executive Summary contd.

We have detailed 25 recommendations, which we have tried to keep as practical and implementable as possible. They include a strong recommendation to implement the advice of a previous NTCA team that visited Simlipal in August 2009.

Our recommendations that are considered to be of “**Immediate Priority**” are:

1. Action against field staff for concealment of elephant deaths and destruction of evidence;
2. An independent monitoring committee should be formed by NTCA;
3. A wildlife crime intelligence gathering system should be started;
4. Special drive to seize country-made guns;
5. Protection Funds should not be re-allocated;
6. Funds to DFOs for enforcement raids;
7. Vacant Deputy Director and 2 ACF posts to be immediately filled;
8. Park management to exercise greater supervision and control;
9. Confidentiality of wireless messages should be maintained; and
10. Enlist local community support from peripheral areas bordering the Park.

As we were signing off on this report today, we received news from the Honorary Wildlife Warden’s team that they had confirmed evidence of three more elephant carcasses and information of seven or eight more dead elephants, bringing the total to possibly 18 dead elephants in Simlipal, all possibly killed by poisoning and gun shot. This matter should be professionally and thoroughly investigated immediately, although with the onset of the monsoon, this is not going to be an easy task.

Simlipal Tiger Reserve is too precious to be left unattended or uncontrolled. It is our considered opinion that unless our recommendations are swiftly implemented by the State and NTCA, that we may soon see a disastrous situation in Simlipal.

22 June 2010

BACKGROUND

On 3 June 2010, the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) constituted an independent, two-member team to assess the ground situation at Simlipal Tiger Reserve in Orissa, in the wake of a recent spate of elephant deaths there. The elephant carcasses were first detected in April 2010. Since then, there have been many conflicting reports, some indicating that the number of elephant deaths may be as high as twelve.

The team was also instructed to assess the disturbance being faced owing to the presence of left wing Maoist extremists that carried out sustained attacks in the area between 28 March and 15 April 2009. The extremists had targeted the forest department infrastructure and razed a number of buildings to the ground. Even today, a year after the attacks, the forest staff of Simlipal feels unable to carry out their daily tasks in fear of further attacks from the extremists. As a result of this, the wildlife and the habitat are suffering gravely.

The team was constituted to:

- a) Assess the ground situation in Simlipal Tiger Reserve vis-à-vis the recent incidents of poaching/ elephant deaths; and
- b) Assess the ongoing protection initiatives while suggesting immediate measures for strengthening the same.

The team visited Simlipal Tiger Reserve from the 5 to 11 of June 2010, to gather firsthand information for the investigation. During the field visit, the team met with and interviewed a large number of stakeholders of the Tiger Reserve, including the local MLA, the RCCF, the Field Director and the Deputy Director, the ACF, Range officers, Foresters, forest guards, casual labourers, members of the Simlipal Tiger Protection Force (STPF), the Honorary Wildlife Warden and her team, and local villagers. The team also conducted a public consultation with NGOs, activists, VSS members, and the public.

The team covered large areas of the reserve, to assess the state of the habitat and its wildlife and the damage that the leftwing extremists had caused, and to study the extent of restoration and reconstruction of infrastructure that had taken place over the last year. They also visited two of the locations at which the elephant carcasses were found.

Having met with important stakeholders and visited large areas of the park, considerable information was collected regarding the elephant deaths, as well as about the current protection initiatives that are underway at Simlipal.

Simlipal Tiger Reserve

Simlipal Tiger Reserve is situated in the Mayurbhanj District of northern Orissa. It is known for its legendary waterfalls, its rich and varied forest types, and as the source of numerous streams and rivers.

The Reserve is 2,750 sq km in size. The National Park consists of seven Ranges with 39 protection camps. The Buffer Zone has three Forest Divisions with 12 Ranges and 19 protection camps. There is a road network of 597 km within the Core, and 139 km in the Buffer Zone of Simlipal Tiger Reserve.

The 1,194.75 sq km Core Area has three villages inside it, along with two small settlements at Bahaghar and Upper Barakamda (UBK). Two of the three villages, Jamungarh and Kabatghai, have expressed their willingness to relocate. A total of 41 families were relocated from these villages in 1994 and 2003, and 61 families are waiting to be shifted. The relocation of a fourth village, Jenabil, was completed in March 2010.

The 1,555.25 sq km Buffer Zone has 65 villages, with a population of over 12,500 people, mostly within the Simlipal Reserve Forest. An estimated 250,000 people from nearly a dozen tribal denominations reside in over 400 villages on the fringes of Simlipal Tiger Reserve. The people depend heavily on the Reserve for their resources.

The elephant census in April 2010 revealed a population of 551 elephants in Simlipal, up from 434 in 2007. The authors, however, remain skeptical about this figure.

In 2008, the Wildlife Institute of India reported a population of 21 tigers in Simlipal. The census carried out by the Orissa Forest Department in January 2009, reported the somewhat optimistic figure of 47 adult tigers. However, we were happy to note that the Department is now using WII's figure. Tiger sightings have never been frequent in the thick vegetation of Simlipal. The Field Director, who joined his post in July 2009, is yet to see a tiger, as is the case with the Deputy Director. Of the field staff we questioned, one had sighted a tiger in December 2009, while others said that they usually find a set of pugmarks after a gap of between 10 days to two months.



Near the Mondama Hills

In the early days, before the launch of Project Tiger, a single Range Officer managed the Park with four Foresters and 10 Forest Guards. This number was increased to five Range Officers, seven Foresters and 20 Forest Guards when Simlipal was included among the first nine tiger reserves to be declared in 1973.

The older field staff told us that when they went out patrolling in the late 1970s, they used to pray that they did not meet any elephants. But invariably they did, and many of them were tusked. One monsoon a Forester saw a herd of 45 elephants. Now, they say, sightings have drastically reduced. In those early days they would also see large numbers of sambar and dhole. Sadly, the last dhole was sighted in 1996, near Barehipani.

The older field staff also told us that tigers used to be found near the periphery of the Park, and that they frequently killed village cattle. From 1975 to 1985, about six to seven cattle kills would be recorded every month in and around the Buffer Zone, and there were regular tiger sightings. Tigers started decreasing from the 1990s, and now there are no cattle kills.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The situation in Simlipal is chronic and a serious shake-up needs to take place if the problems are to be overcome. After carrying out a fair assessment of the ground situation in Simlipal Tiger Reserve in June 2010, and keeping in mind that our recommendations should be simple, practical and implementable immediately, we make the following recommendations:

First and foremost, we strongly recommend that the excellent recommendations of the NTCA expert team that visited Simlipal in August 2009, should be implemented without further delay. It is clear that the state has not paid heed to these valuable recommendations, which would have gone a long way to ensuring the protection of Simlipal. The recommendations are listed as Item 25. We are also attaching a table showing the status of their implementation. **[Appendix 6]**

Immediate Priority:

1. Action against field staff for concealment of elephant deaths and destruction of evidence:

Out of the 7 elephant deaths that we analysed, there is enough evidence to suggest that field staff were involved in the concealment of some of the deaths. Moreover, there was a concerted effort to destroy the remains of at least two of the elephant carcasses, and perhaps more, which amounts to destruction of evidence without registering a case. Unless accountability is fixed for this, the situation in Simlipal can never improve. We recommend that the state government should take strong action as per service rules against these field staff.

2. Independent monitoring:

The recent spate of elephant deaths could probably have been avoided if an independent monitoring team had been in place. A small team should be constituted and nominated by NTCA. The composition of the team for a period of 3 years is suggested as follows:

- a) The Honorary Wildlife Warden of Mayurbhanj district
- b) 2 wildlife experts who reside in the state of Orissa.

At least 2 members of the team should undertake quarterly visits to the Park and assess the status of protection. They should submit a brief report, in a predesigned format (with "Yes" or "No" answers where possible) that should include the following information:

- Progress in implementation of recommendations made by NTCA teams
- Implementation of directives from NTCA
- Weakness in the protection system on the ground
- Observations related to prey species abundance and sightings
- Observations related to tiger and elephant presence
- Observations related to illicit timber felling
- Functioning of the informer network system
- Degree of supervision & control of park management over frontline field staff
- Outstanding staff issues; welfare measures, postings, promotions, etc.

- Interaction of park management with local communities

The authors are of the opinion that unless such an independent monitoring system is put in place, Simlipal Tiger Reserve could soon reach a point of no return and the nation would lose an irreplaceable wildlife heritage.

3. **Wildlife crime intelligence gathering system:**

Apart from a covert informer network system, there is an urgent need to gather overt information from the public. The Park authorities should develop a robust wildlife crime intelligence gathering system using the following methods.

- a. A confidential reward system should be announced for information that results in successful seizures.
- b. A toll free mobile number should be set up to operate on a 24-hour basis at the HQ at Baripada.
- c. A wildlife crime database should be managed by an ACF at the Park HQ; this should include crimes detected over the past 10 years, current crimes detected and information received, and action taken on such information.
- d. Park management should put up posters and wall-painted hoardings in all the important peripheral towns, villages and panchayat headquarters that surround Simlipal, seeking information on illicit timber trade and other wildlife crimes, and trade in trophies.
- e. Hotels, lodges, taxi drivers, and auto rickshaw drivers of Baripada town should be approached to seek their help in checking out any suspicious movement of people who visit or stay there.

4. **Special drive to seize country-made guns:**

Most mass-hunting groups (*aka Akhand shikar*) from the peripheral villages are now using country-made guns, along with bows and arrows. It is important to seize these illegal guns to prevent large scale poaching of wildlife, including the killing of elephants. We recommend a reward of Rs.1,000 to every informer whose information leads to the recovery of such country-made guns. A special drive should be launched, using posters and flex banners, throughout the peripheral villages giving the mobile number of the Range Officer or DFO of the area and assuring a reward in case of a successful seizure.

5. **Protection Funds should not be re-allocated**

Funds provided by NTCA and/or STR should not be reallocated or withdrawn since this negatively affects protection measures. In March 2010, there was an acute need for funds to cover the expenses for the relocation of Jenabil village from inside the core area of Simlipal. As a result, the balance funds for critical anti-poaching camps in Baripada Division were withdrawn to cover the financial shortfalls of the relocation.

The Baripada Forest Division maintains 15 protection camps in eastern STR. The protection camps are now running with 30% staff strength, and with no vehicles to carry out patrols. The expenses are being met by two allocations from CAMPA funds amounting to 3 lakhs. A serious outcome of this is the termination of the services of casual labourers, who are expecting to work for the full season. The hardship and discontent this creates locally carries long-term implications to STR.

6. **Funds to DFOs for enforcement raids:**

The DFO of Baripada Division could not carry out further raids to seize traps, guns, etc., due to paucity of funds. It is recommended that at least Rs.2 lakhs be provided

every year to each of the 3 territorial DFOs to carry out such raids.

7. Vacant Deputy Director and ACF posts to be immediately filled:

The Deputy Director's post must be filled immediately, along with the 2 vacant ACF posts. At present, out of the 3 sanctioned ACF posts, there is only 1 ACF who is also fulfilling the duties of the vacant Deputy Director post.

8. Park management to exercise greater supervision and control:

We strongly recommend that the Deputy Director should spend at least 10 nights inside the park every month at different locations and the Field Director should spend at least 7 nights inside the Park every month. There should be surprise visits, including late at night, to ascertain if the front line staff (including Range Officers and Foresters) are actually at their posts.

9. Confidentiality of wireless messages:

As there are reports of left wing extremists moving in parts of the Park, it is important to maintain secrecy on wireless messages, particularly about the movements of senior officers and their halting places. At one particular beat we could hear the message being received by the VHF set from a distance of more than 100 feet. Strict instructions should be given to all camp and beat staff not to use the wireless sets at full volume, so that messages are not heard outside the beat headquarter campus.

10. Enlist community support from peripheral areas:

The Park management should frame suitable strategies for seeking local community support from the villages located in the periphery of Simlipal Tiger Reserve. Since poachers and timber smugglers come from these areas, enlisting people's support to protect Simlipal should be a priority of the management. As was clear from the Public Hearing conducted by the authors, there is no dearth of local organisations that are willing to assist with such an initiative. See **Appendix 4**

- a. A strategy plan should be developed with the assistance of experts.
- b. A simple and well-publicised channel should be available to local people to provide information and support to protection efforts.
- c. There could be medical camps, programs for school children, sports programs involving local communities with a Simlipal Cup for football or volleyball matches in villages around the Park.
- d. Ideally most of these activities should be outsourced to NGOs to avoid engagement of valuable time of the park management.
- e. Programs such as the 6-day cycle rally and the proposed 'Haati Mera Sathi' village protection groups (proposed by the DFO Bairpada and the District Environment Society, Mayurbhanj at a cost of 5 lakhs) should be funded and supported.
- f. Key villages (including the small Kharia hamlets at Bahaghar and Upper Barakamda) should be given basic facilities such as a solar light and water and assistance in medical emergencies.

The STR management should also ensure that local protection staff are not employed, only to be unexpectedly dismissed because of lack of funds. This should be done in a planned manner to avoid causing discontent and ill-will with local communities. We further recommend that all temporary staff engaged in patrol and protection duties in the Park should be referred to as "Simlipal Tiger Protection Force" (STPF) as they are in the Buffer Zones, rather than "casual labourers",

Priority:

11. Compatible postings are essential:

The state government should ensure that wildlife-trained officers are posted in key posts such as Field Director, Deputy Director and ACF. Postings should be for tenures of at least 3 years so that the key supervisory rung has sufficient time to gain knowledge about the Park and discharge their duties.

12. Technical refresher field courses:

All officers of the level of Foresters and above should undergo a short 1-week field course to enable them to use GPS, terrain maps and to locate places and routes. A field exercise should be conducted to ensure that they can read and follow maps vis-à-vis their locations and find their way back to camps or beats.

13. Forensic training:

All officers of the level of Foresters and above should be properly trained in the collection and preservation of evidence from the scene of a crime. A 3-day training course should be organized at every Range of STR, including the buffer zones.

14. Field Staff Rotation & Forest Guard Cadre:

A critical demand of the Foresters and Forest Guards is that there should be a systematic rotation of staff between the core and buffer zones. Some field staff have spent decades in the core area. They are cut off from their families for months, suffer from repeat attacks of malaria, and have no transport to take them out, even in emergencies.

The cadre strength of Forest Guards must be raised as it is no longer safe for small groups to stay in the remote beat houses in Simlipal. This requires a relaxation in both the criteria for educational qualifications and height. Every beat should have 2 to 3 Forest Guards and there should be a mobile Strike Force at 3 or 4 places in the core to face *Akhand shikar* groups of more than 100 hunters. Short-term measures such as pleading that the hunters turn back will only work for a while.

At present 16 lady forest guards are employed inside STR, distributed in groups in the 38 camps in operation. Although this is an admirable initiative and fulfils the requirement that 33% of the Forest Guards should be women, hardship posts in the core area of Simlipal should be exempted from women employment.

15. Welfare of Core Area field staff:

Field incentives should be initiated as a priority for the core area staff. These should include but not be limited to, enhanced hardship allowances including a Naxal area allowance (which was announced by the Govt. of Orissa), rations and medicine distribution, medical insurance, family accommodation in towns and hostel facilities for school/college going children of the frontline staff. At present the field staff receive just two allowances; a Rs. 350 'tiger allowance' and a Rs. 350 'food allowance'.

Promotion of field staff that serve in the Core Area must also be a priority. One Forester we met has served for 36 years in the core, without promotion.

16. Field records to be improved:

Patrol registers/log records are maintained that record the daily movements of patrol parties. However, there is no uniform entry system, and the format of the

registers and the type of entries vary from beat to beat. We recommend that a Daily Register should be maintained at every beat or patrol camp. This should be meticulously maintained with details of patrols undertaken, names of staff who went on the patrol, sightings of wildlife and evidence of wildlife presence such as pugmarks, scratches, etc., and evidence of illicit felling or grazing. Even secondary information about wildlife poaching should be recorded. Elephant carcass No.7, which was only 30 to 35 m from a road, was not found by a foot patrol as they had not taken that route for some time. Patrol registers must be checked to see that field staff cover all their routes, and do not just stick to the same daily path.

The Range Officer, Deputy Director, or Field Director should countersign this Register whenever they visit the beat or camp. It would thus be a valuable source of information to assess the level of monitoring and supervision being exercised by the Park management.

17. Park management should maintain up-to-date information on patrol camps:

The Park management should update themselves continuously on the location of camps in the buffer zones that are maintained by the DFOs of the Territorial Divisions.

18. Prosecution of offenders:

There have hardly been any convictions of alleged offenders arrested in the past for wildlife crimes.

- a. We recommend that a special lawyer be engaged, and a reasonable fee paid to him, to handle all the pending cases in the Baripada, Karanjia and Rairangpur Divisions and the National Park area, so that past offenders are convicted.
- b. Certified copies of notifications of Reserve Forests, Sanctuary or National Park should be made available with the Investigating Officer who files the prosecution case in the trial courts. In the absence of such notifications, the cases frequently collapse in the trial courts.

19. Create a socio-geographical database on peripheral villages:

Park management should acquire a thorough knowledge about the geography, location and composition of tribals present in the peripheral villages, including areas outside the TR boundary. Villages that contain high concentrations of hunting tribals, such as Santhals and Kolhas, should be identified. Prevention of entry of hunting groups from these areas should be the focus of Simlipal's protection strategy.

20. Identity Card system:

There should be an identity card system for the inhabitants of the 3 villages and 2 settlements inside the core zone of the Park to monitor outsiders visiting these settlements. The park management should also maintain an up-to-date database, with family details, for each of 65 villages within the Tiger Reserve. We expect the UID project to take care of this exercise. Data from the UID project should be acquired by the FD and maintained in their own database.

21. Restarting tourism:

Tourism should be restarted in Simlipal on a day-visit basis only (i.e. without allowing night stays), as soon as possible. This would enable outsiders to visit the Park and would make it more difficult for the department field staff to conceal

information on poaching and wildlife deaths. We understand that the Department has advised that STR should be opened for day tourism, but that the Police still have security reservations.

22. Research activities should be encouraged:

The STR authorities should encourage field research and support the efforts of various scholars or universities to carry out studies inside the Park. Research results would be valuable inputs for better management of Simlipal. The presence of research teams would also help prevent concealment of critical poaching information and would ensure that people from outside the department get to monitor what is happening inside the Park.

23. Tiger Conservation Foundation:

This important entity is yet to be formed. Delayed receipt of funds from NTCA can be avoided once this foundation is formed. It should also ensure that there is a smooth flow of funds.

24. Compensating the previous resettled villagers from Jenabil:

In 1998, 22 families opted for voluntary relocation from Jenabil village in the core of STR, under the previous compensation package from Project Tiger. They say that they “listened to the government then, but now we are being financially penalised”. We recommend that an additional compensation may be paid to them (say, 2 lakhs per family) to ensure that there is some level of parity with their neighbours who availed the new compensation scheme. In March 2010, the remaining 61 families were relocated from Jenabil, under the new scheme of Rs.10 lakhs per family.

25. We also strongly recommend the implementation, without further delay, of the recommendations of the NTCA expert team that visited Simlipal in August 2009. Most recommendations are yet to be implemented though they were made ten months ago. At our request, the Chief Wildlife Warden kindly responded to this issue on 21 June 2010. See **Appendix 6**.

These are the headings of the August 2009 ‘Recommendations for Better Management’, with our brief comments:

i) Rebuilding of the damaged infrastructure:

Only 38 camps are operational. The remaining camps need to be operative and re-occupied as soon as possible.

ii) Provisions of adequate security to the staff of Simlipal TR:

This issue has not been addressed. Though 2 paramilitary units of the Special Operational Group (SOG) police force have been deployed inside the park, even before the Maoist attacks in 2009, they are not carrying out joint patrols. This does not inspire confidence in the field staff.

Particularly during the summer months, from February to June, when the poaching pressure from mass hunting groups is at its peak, there is an urgent need for the presence of a transitional paramilitary force. A suggestion from the Field Director was for the Central Reserve Police (CRP) to use Simlipal as a training ground.

- iii) Strengthening measures against wildlife poaching & timber smuggling:**
There is no intelligence network in operation, or monitoring of key villages. Thus, the enforcement staff seldom receive news of movement of poachers which would enable them to focus their attention on specific areas.
- iv) Affirmative action with local tribal communities:**
Apart from some valiant efforts by the DFO Baripada and the Range Officer Thakurmunda, unfortunately we did not see any attempt to bridge the gap between the locals and the park staff. The park management works in isolation, creating an atmosphere of distrust and misgivings among the local communities. It is vital that the local people take pride in the Park and become stakeholders to secure a future for Simlipal.
- v) Creating an inviolate core zone to Simlipal TR:**
In March 2010, the Department (led by the Field Director and the overworked Deputy Director) carried out the relocation of the remaining 61 families in Jenabil village, which is highly commendable. Three other villages are still to be relocated from the core area.
- vi) Creating exemplary models of resettlement, and**
vii) Interfacing revenue and forest administrations for village relocation:
Detailed recommendations were given to seek professional help and advice including the establishment of a Relocation Task Force, to ensure that the exercise was conducted smoothly and without ill-will and complaints from the resettled communities. We found that no such guidance had been taken in the relocation of Jenabil in 2010.
- viii) Streamlining the management of Simlipal TR:**
With the new post of a Regional CCF at Baripada, three critical buffer zone DFOs are now reporting to the RCCF and not to the Field Director, who is unable to exercise his powers over them as was done in the past. This is affecting protection inside the National Park, as most hunting groups come from peripheral villages adjacent to the boundary. The Park badly needs a unified command and control system. We were told repeatedly “the present system of two bosses does not work.”
- ix) Lack of technical and outreach support to Park management:**
The Park needs research on an ongoing basis as well as a dedicated veterinary officer. Similarly, for outreach purposes, an eco-development officer or a social scientist is required as there are 65 villages inside STR and hundreds of villages surrounding the park on the periphery. These posts are still vacant.
- x) Filling up of staff vacancies at Simlipal TR:**
No steps have been taken to fill staff vacancies. Out of 3 ACF posts, 2 are vacant. The Deputy Director post is vacant and 2 Range Officers posts are vacant. Eleven Forester and 30 Forest Guard posts, that form the bulk of the cutting edge enforcement staff, are still vacant. Unless these posts are filled we cannot expect sufficient protection. This problem will be further exacerbated in 2011, when a number of experienced field staff are due to retire, including 3 Range Officers, 5 to 6 Foresters and 10 to 15 Forest Guards.

- xi) Time-linked promotion of field staff,***
- xii) Women field staff in core zone, and***
- xiii) Better welfare policies for Simlipal TR staff:***

None of these recommendations have been activated, which has led to a loss of morale and motivation. These issues have also been addressed in our June 2010 recommendations, but we would like to repeat the specific welfare recommendations listed in the August 2009 report:

- a) A generous risk pay component to field staff (Forest Guards, Foresters and Range Forest Officers) to serve as incentive and compensation for the harsh working conditions within the park;
- b) Generous medical insurance cover and a doubling of life insurance cover for field staff during the period when Simlipal TR remains under Maoist threat;
- c) A reliable system of conveying rations and medicines to staff working from field posts;
- d) A free student hostel at Baripada exclusively for school- and college-going children of serving frontline staff; and
- e) A transfer policy that ensures that younger staff are preferentially posted to both the core and buffer of Simlipal TR and are regularly rotated between the two zones.

- xiv) Transition from pugmark-based census to camera trapping sample surveys:***

This important transition is in the early stages of happening. A systematic, scientific and ongoing attempt should be made to assess tiger density and prey populations. It should be carried out in partnership with WII.



The small Kharia hamlet at Bahaghar

RECENT ELEPHANT DEATHS

This was a difficult investigation because precious time had lapsed, and the carcasses of the seven dead elephants that were found in Simlipal in April and May 2010, had already been burnt and destroyed, in some cases illegally by Department personnel. There was also a large amount of confusion, ineptitude, and distrust, between the Forest Department and the informers, and the officers themselves.

The internal correspondence of the Department reveals a string of accusations between the officers, and extreme mistrust on the part of the Field Director and Deputy Field Director towards the people who brought the information of the elephant deaths to the Department's attention. In fact it was only due to the diligence of the RCCF and the DFO Baripada that the information was finally investigated and the elephant deaths revealed. **[Appendix 5]**

Intelligence-led enforcement is absolutely critical to the protection of tiger reserves. It should be encouraged, appreciated, and investigated, at every turn. In the case of Simlipal, if relations between the department and the local people had been fostered rather than discouraged, a situation of this magnitude could almost certainly have been avoided.

The heroes of the story are two "protection casual labourers", who have been employed in the Pithabata Territorial Range for the past four years. They heard about the elephant deaths, and wanted to pass the information on because of their concern for Simlipal. But they felt they could not trust their forest officers as they might destroy the evidence and persecute them, and instead they approached two known wildlife activists – Mr Vanoo Mitra Acharya (VMA) and Ms. Sanjukta Basa, the Honorary Wildlife Warden (HWW) of Mayurbhanj District. VMA is the President of the Simlipal Tiger Protection Force (STPF, earlier known as the "Green Brigade" or *Sabuja Vahini* - the STPF has 716 members, many of whom are employed as casual labourers around Simlipal). The HWW and VMA are the two other heroes of this story. They doggedly pursued the matter against considerable odds until finally, with the support of the RCCF and the DFO Baripada, their informers were able to locate six out of the seven elephants carcasses.

[Appendix 1]

In a shameful outcome to this story, on 3 June 2010, the Range Officer of Pithapada (Wildlife) issued summons under Section 61 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) to the two informers and the Honorary Wildlife Warden. We cannot believe that this action was taken without some advise from his senior officers. However, we are happy to note that the RCCF issued an order, dated 10 June 2010, appointing the Deputy Director as the investigating officer of the elephant deaths in Pithabata Range, thereby effectively removing the Range Officer of Pithapada from this case.

This was the same Range Officer that had earlier refused entry to the Park, on 25 April 2010, to the Honorary Wildlife Warden and her search party, even though she was accompanied by the ACF Baripada and had a copy of a letter from the RCCF.

Unless the distrust and animosity between the forest department and local people - both tribals and well-wishers of Simlipal from the nearby towns - are addressed, large scale poaching, such as this spate of elephant deaths, and other forest crimes will continue to bring down Simlipal. Indeed, it should not come as a surprise that the Maoist attacks in

2009 clearly had the tacit backing of local villagers when they attacked the Forest Department infrastructure. Assistance and support of local communities is a critical component in the protection of the wildlife in Simlipal, and to secure a future for this magnificent tiger reserve.

It must also be noted that an elephant census was conducted throughout Simlipal on 22, 23 and 24 April, 2010. Apart from the first elephant carcass that was discovered on 17 April, none of the remaining carcasses were reported during this “thorough” census operation.

Of particular concern is the fact that a number of the carcasses – including the two dead sambar – were found burnt. The poachers would obviously not have done this. In the case of two of the elephant carcasses (Nos. 5 and 6), there is clear evidence that the burning was done by forest staff, without reporting the incidents and in order to remove evidence of poaching in their ranges. We would like to commend the DFO and the ACF of the Karanjia Forest Division for their thorough enquiry into this matter.

It can be presumed that forest staff may also have been responsible for the burning of another elephant carcass (No.4), and perhaps the shifting of other carcasses and bones. Again there is no motive for poachers, or anyone else, to have done this. Although there is absolutely no evidence to suggest the involvement of forest staff in the actual killing of the elephants, the destruction of evidence and the fact that the elephant deaths were not reported by the staff, should be treated as a very serious matter indeed.

We believe that the two sambar, and a number of the elephants (Nos. 1, 2, and probably 5 and 6) died after consuming poison set by poachers at natural salt licks and that at least one of the elephants (No.3) was probably shot by poachers and its tusks removed. No tusks have been recovered. We do not have any idea how two of the elephants (Nos. 4 and 7) might have been killed. However, going by the evidence, it does not appear that any of these elephants died a natural death. Three poachers’ machans were found at two of the sites to kill wild boar that came to feed on the carcasses.

We do not doubt the sincerity of some of the officers, but we were dismayed by their poor knowledge, their lack of ability to use their tools such as GPS instruments, and their distrust and handling of intelligence from people outside their cadre. Simlipal is being besieged from all sides, and only a sincere effort to put trained, dedicated officers in place is going to stop the rot.

Postscript

On 17 June 2010, the HWW, VMA and their team were given permission to re-enter STR to resume their difficult search for more dead elephants.

As we were signing off on this report on 22 June 2010, we received news that the team had found **three more elephant carcasses**, and that they have **information on two more dead elephants**. Furthermore, the team made contact with another informer today and received information of a **further 5 or 6 dead elephants**. Most unfortunately, they have been asked to leave Simlipal before their search is complete.

If all this information is correct, this would bring the total toll to **18 dead elephants in Simlipal**, all possibly killed by poisoning and gun shot.

DETAILS OF ELEPHANT DEATHS

No. 1 Adult Elephant / STR Core

<i>Date Found:</i>	17 April, 2010
<i>By Whom:</i>	Range Officer, Nawana (S)
<i>Location:</i>	Balikhhal Beat, Badmakabadi Section, Nawana (S) Range Compt. PP-10
<i>GPS:</i>	N-21° 54' 20.40" / E-86° 28' 27.90"
<i>Sex of animal:</i>	Unknown, possibly female
<i>Foot Circumference:</i>	46"
<i>Remarks:</i>	Probably death by poison. 2 Sambar carcasses found burnt

17 April 10:

Range Officer Nawana (S) locates an elephant carcass and a burnt carcass of a sambar near the abandoned Bundadhar beat office. The elephant's tusks were missing and no samples are collected. He informs the Deputy Director (DD) that evening.

19 April 10:

HWW team receives information from informers that poachers have killed 3 elephants, by gunshot and poisoning. After further enquiries the suspected figure rises to 7 elephants that have been killed.

DD inspects elephant carcass No.1. The site is about 400 m from a natural saltlick where it appears that poachers had mixed poison (grey coloured crystals were found) with soil and possibly rock salt. DD discusses matter with Field Director (FD).

20 April 10:

Post mortem is carried out on the elephant and sambar carcasses, along with a second burnt sambar carcass that was found 100 to 150 m from the elephant. After the post mortem, all the carcasses are further burnt.

21 April 10:

HWW & VMA pass on information to DFO Baripada that 5 to 7 elephants may have been killed inside Simlipal. DFO informs RCCF, who speaks to DD. DD informs him of elephant carcass found on 17 April, and passes on information to field staff in neighbouring divisions.

22, 23, 24 April 10:

Elephant census conducted in STR.

22 Apr 10

FD meets RCCF. FD is upset that neither the DFO Baripada nor the DD had passed on any information to him. He asks them for an explanation. RCCF instructs DFO Baripada to take the informers into the field and verify information.

24 Apr 10

RCCF writes a letter to DFO Baripada asking him to urgently verify the information in the field using the informer "even if it is coming outside your jurisdiction". He says the source is "very responsible". The letter is copied to the PCCF (WL) & CWW and the FD.

25 Apr 10

Accompanied by the ACF Baripada, 2 Forest Guards, and a copy of the letter from the RCCF, the HWW team proceeds to Pithabata Gate. VMA, the informers and the 2 hired vehicles are denied entry into the Park by the Range Officer. DD offers to send a government vehicle, but it is too late. On 29 April, HWW writes a complaint letter to the CM, NTCA, PCCF, RCCF, Field Director, etc.

30 April 10

FD writes an irate letter to the DFO Baripada berating him for sending the team to STR without informing him, and questioning “the antecedents of all the persons trying to enter with the Honorary Wildlife Warden in the garb of informers.”

No. 2 Calf Elephant / STR Core

<i>Date Found:</i>	6 May, 2010
<i>By Whom:</i>	RCCF, DD, RO etc., led by HWW's informer
<i>Location:</i>	Balikhhal Beat, Badmakabadi Section, Nawana (S) Range Compt. PP-10
<i>GPS:</i>	N-21° 54' 27.40" / E-86° 28' 57.10"
<i>Sex of animal:</i>	From the skull, it appears to be a young female
<i>Foot Circumference:</i>	24" (height from shoulder 4 to 5')
<i>Remarks:</i>	Probably death by poison

6 May 10:

RCCF takes HWW's 2 informers into the field, along with DD, RO, Forester and Forest Guards. They find the carcass of a calf, possibly killed by poison at the same salt lick as elephant No.1. The body is 10 m from a drying stream and 50 m from a waterhole. They find a large quantity of dung at the site, indicating that the herd stayed with the dying calf. The skull and jaw is removed and kept in the custody of the RO Nawana (S).

It is inexplicable that this second elephant carcass, which was lying about 300 m from the salt lick, was not found when the first dead elephant was found near the same salt lick on 17 April 2010. FD writes a letter on 7 May to RO Nawana (S) asking why disciplinary action will not be initiated against him after he had received “repeated instructions” to search the entire area.



No.3 Adult male, Kachhudan Beat

No. 3 Adult Elephant / STR Core

<i>Date Found:</i>	6 May, 2010
<i>By Whom:</i>	RCCF, DD, RO etc., led by HWW's informer
<i>Location:</i>	Kachhudan Beat & Section, Pithabata Range Compt. PP-11
<i>GPS:</i>	N-21° 53' 25.70" / E-86° 29' 41.60"
<i>Sex of animal:</i>	Adult male
<i>Foot Circumference:</i>	39" [?]
<i>Remarks:</i>	Probably death by gunshot & tusks removed. Machan found

6 May 10, contd.:

The HWW's informers show the RCCF's team another dead elephant about 600 to 700 m from the calf. It is putrefied and lying on a slope of a hill. The RCCF and the informers conclude that it is an adult male elephant that was probably shot by poachers behind the foreleg and that the tusks have been removed. A bullet hole is clearly visible in the photographs, and there was possibly a second bullet injury on the back.

A fresh leaf-covered machan was found about 20 feet from the body; the machan was probably built later to kill wild boar that might come to feed on the carcass.

The post mortem report of 8 May, states that the two elephants died 15 to 20 days ago, and the reasons for their death are unknown. The adult elephant is said to be about 50 years old, the skull was present and – despite evidence to the contrary - no wounds were noticed. After the post mortem the carcasses are burnt and the machan destroyed.

7 May 10

RO Pithabata (WL) is given a show cause notice, and the Forest Guard of Kachudahan beat is suspended for "negligence in duty" for not finding the elephant carcass, even during the census.

Most inappropriately, the full details of the two informers are put on file in a letter from the DD to the FD.

RCCF meets VMA, and writes to FD advising him "once again" to take the help of the informers and investigate the remaining reports of elephant deaths. No action is taken.

13 May 10

RCCF writes a letter to FD asking him to allow VMA with 2 informers inside STR to investigate the elephant deaths. The HWW writes to the FD with a similar request. On the same day, the FD writes a letter to the DFO asking for advance notice of their programme and details of the people going into STR so that permits can be issued. He says the DD & RO will accompany the team. The DFO responds with the details.

15 May 10

HWW, VMA and their team start their search (15 to 21 May) for further dead elephants in Simllipal. Team finds poachers' camp in the core area, near Balikhal, Compt. Palpola-16, with cooking fires and bamboo frames to roast meat.

No. 4 Adult Elephant / STR Core

<i>Date Found:</i>	17 May, 2010
<i>By Whom:</i>	HWW, VMA & their team
<i>Location:</i>	Kachhudan Beat & Section, Pithabata Range Compt. PP-16
<i>GPS, 1st site:</i>	N-21° 51' 11.6" / E-86° 31' 42.9"
<i>GPS, 2nd site:</i>	N-21° 51' 12.0" / E-86° 31' 43.7"
<i>Sex of animal:</i>	Appears to be a large male tusker
<i>Verification:</i>	26 May 2010 - RCCF, FD & DD, led by HWW's 2 informers
<i>FD GPS reading:</i>	N-21° 51.201' / E-86° 31.725'
<i>Remarks:</i>	Carcass burnt & moved

17 May 10

HWW team finds burnt, smelly remains of an elephant carcass. It appears that it was killed in the core area, and later burnt and half of the carcass moved approximately 50 feet into the neighbouring Territorial Division. Casual labourers (CLs) are recorded on video (off camera) saying that this was done on instructions from the Range Officer, using 4 CLs and kerosene and motor oil, to remove the poaching evidence from the core area.

There was no skull, but two charred bones (one looks like a large tusk casing) from this site were handed over to the DO Baripada for further investigation.



No. 4 - Charred bone in the custody of DFO Baripada

This case has been denied by the Forest Department

26 May 10

The RCCF, FD, and DD, inspect the site with the HWW's 2 informers, accompanied by the RO of Dukra Range of Baripada Division and the Forester of Kachudhan (Pithabata STR Range), as the site is on the boundary line between Compts. SJ-7 and PP-16 and borders both these Ranges. There was evidence that it had rained and they find only 1 bone, a vertebrae, and a burnt femur broken into 7 pieces.

The informer is surprised and says that the few bones he had seen on 17 May, including a leg bone and joint (no skull was found at this site), have been burnt and removed. He shows them 2 bones that he had found hidden among the rocks and another place where there had been bones but which have now been burnt. There appears to be footmarks of people who visited the site since the recent rains. The 2 bones were collected for further investigation and are now in the custody of the RO Pithabata. As of 8 June 2010, they had not been sent for forensic analysis, and nor had the RO visited the site.

FD & DD have expressed their doubts about this case: only small fires were evident with no branches burnt, there was no foul smell at the site as reported by the HWW, there was no evidence of dung, the area was steep and without water. They also said that 2 casual labourers from Kachudang Camp, Jayanta Kumar Mahanta and Babula Singh *alias* Naik, who accompanied the HWW team were asked to go back. VMA told us later that they did not want to come with the team and only came to show them the core line.

Nos. 5 & 6 Adult Elephants / STR Buffer

<i>Date Found:</i>	19 May, 2010
<i>By Whom:</i>	HWW, VMA & their team
<i>Location:</i>	<i>Mondama Hills</i> - Kendumundi Beat, K Section, K Range, Karanjia Forest Div., Compt. WD-17P
<i>GPS 1st site:</i>	N-21° 42' 11.5" / E-86° 10' 48.7"
<i>GPS 2nd site:</i>	N-21° 42' 15.5" / E-86° 10' 52.6"
<i>Sex of animal:</i>	Unknown
<i>Verification:</i>	25 May 2010 - RCCF, FD & DD, led by HWW's 2 informers
<i>FD GPS reading:</i>	N-21° 42.182' / E-86° 10.862'
<i>Remarks:</i>	Carcasses burnt & buried

19 May 10

The HWW team find the burnt and buried remains of 2 dead elephants, 50 m apart near a small nullah and a large tree marked B1-28. No skulls were found. Two charred bones from this site were handed over to DFO Baripada for further investigation.

Local people say the elephants were poisoned by local poachers and later burnt by Forest staff to remove the evidence. There were stories of a juvenile elephant that hung around the area for months.

25 May 10

The RCCF, FD, and DD, inspect the site with the HWW's 2 informers. A large sal tree has been deliberately felled across the road to stop vehicle movement. The carcasses had been burnt in two places, about 100 m apart, and scattered in three places along the slope of a nullah bed. The site was on the fringe area of Karanjia Forest Division and the NP. While they were returning, a labourer clearly told the RCCF (in the hearing of the DD) that a Forester had removed the tusks from 1 of the elephants. RCCF called the DFO Karanjia to check if any elephant deaths had been reported. He said 'no'. The RCCF then asked the DFO to meet him at UBK the next morning.

Investigation by DFO and ACF, Karanjia Forest Division:

In the first week of April 2010, the DFO read a newspaper report in an Oriya daily, *The Samaj*, about elephant deaths in STR. He directed the RO Kendumundi to look into the matter. On 5 April, the DFO went with the ACT, Forester and Forest Guard to Mondama nullah and combed the area with 9 people. The DFO informed the FD that nothing was found. After meeting the RCCF on 26 April, the DFO again went to the spot and inspected the remains of the two dead elephants. The DFO and the ACF then started an extensive investigation in which the following facts emerged:

- On 8 April 2010, after getting a message from the DFO, the RO of Kendumundi

Range sent a team (consisting of the Forester, a Forest Guard, and OFDC and CL staff members) to the Mondama nullah to do a search for an elephant carcass.

- On 9 April 2010, a man from Kendumundi village informed the team that he had found the dead elephant. He took them (same team as above) to the site and showed them, what was by then two carcasses. He said that he first found a dead female elephant there around October 2009. A lone juvenile elephant was in the area. He could not identify the sex of the second elephant. After it was inspected by the staff members on 9 April 2010, this **elephant carcass detection was not reported to the ACF or the DFO**
- On 10 April 2010, the Forester, Forest Guard and CL members returned to the site and **burnt the two carcasses**.

Forester Mr J.K. Sethi of Kandu Dhanu Section (who is now posted at Bahaghar Beat) and Forester Mr P.K. Palei (Acting RO of UBK) – both of whom were interviewed by the authors - were out on patrol that day. They came across the Forester of the Kendumundi Section sitting in a stationary vehicle. He told them that his staff were out on patrol and he was waiting for them.

- On 25 April 2010, the CL members again went to the spot and **scattered the bones of the dead elephants**.

Although the DFO and ACF of Karanjia Forest Division are convinced that the Range Officer of Kedumundi Range must have known about the concealment of the dead elephants and the destruction of the evidence, as of 8 June 2010, he has not admitted to the facts.

The casual labourers have admitted their involvement. They have said that they carried out the burning and scattering of the bones **under instructions from the forest officers**. The officers concerned – the RO, Forester and Forest Guard - are now under suspension.

No. 7 SubAdult/Juv. Elephant / STR Core

<i>Date Found:</i>	20 May, 2010
<i>By Whom:</i>	HWW, VMA & their team
<i>Location:</i>	1 km from Jodapal - Nr Dhuduruchampa, Chhatadanda Beat, Jopal Section, Nawana (S) Range, Compt. BLE-24
<i>GPS 1st site:</i>	N-21° 47' 01.5" / E-86° 23' 22.6"
<i>Sex of animal:</i>	From the skull, it appears to be a subadult male
<i>Verification:</i>	25 May 2010 - RCCF, FD & DD, led by HWW's 2 informers
<i>FD GPS reading:</i>	N-21° 47.035' / E-86° 23.378'
<i>Foot Circumference:</i>	29" (head to tail 5'4", shoulder height 5')
<i>Remarks:</i>	2 machans found near the "highly decomposed" carcass

20 May 10

The HWW team return to Jodapal, where they had noted a strong smell on 18 May and of which their informer already had information, and find a juvenile/subadult dead elephant 30 to 50 m from the road. The vegetation was disturbed over a wide area and it appears to have died a violent death. There were 2 poachers' machans in the trees nearby.

21 May 10

The HWW team have information of 3 other dead elephants, but they have to leave STR because their search permission was only up to 21 May.

25 May 10

The RCCF, FD, and DD, inspect the site with the HWW's 2 informers. The RCCF noted that "although the body was in a highly decomposed state, the skin appeared to be intact and the body did not appear to be externally violated". The FD reported that although the skin and footpads looked fresh there was only a "dry skull" and "7 to 8 leg bone pieces". [We later examined the skull that is in the custody of the RO Nawana (S) and it did look older and somewhat bleached, possibly because the site is more open to the weather].

The PCCF (WL) & CWW sent a letter to the FD asking for a report and saying that "intensive protection measures should be ensured" and "immediate" and "drastic action should be taken to control such crime". A similar letter was sent to the RCCF that included an email dated 10 May 2010 that was sent by Biswajit Mohanty to NTCA.

27 May 2010

FD writes a detailed report to PCCF (WL) & CWW. He talks about the informer's team manipulating things (particularly in case No.4) and says that the HWW avoided taking STR staff during her investigation. He ends his letter saying, "the time has come when we need to strongly rebuff the false propaganda using cooked evidence to falsely implicate our range officer..." and recommends that the Crime Branch take up the case. In the RCCF's detailed report of the same date he states that the "the STR staff are not favourably disposed against Shri Acharya" (VMA).

29 May 2010

RCCF sends copies of CD & Report from HWW and others from their Simlipal investigation to FD & DFO Baripada, with a copy to the PCCF (WL) & CWW.

DFO writes to FD to confirm that on 26 May the HWW handed over 4 pieces of elephant bones from 2 sites and that each has been labelled and signed. He also says that despite enquiries that his officers have been unable to recover any tusks.

2 June 10

FD writes to DFO Baripada re the 2 informers – "to have such knowledge one needs to be well acquainted with the poachers or the act itself. In view of this apprehension, necessary steps may kindly be planned and executed."

FD writes again to DFO to say that VMA has informed him & the RCCF that people from Gadsimilipal & other nearby villages (in Manda Range) are involved in poisoning/poaching inside STR "which probably resulted in death of 2 sambar & 6 elephants".

3 June 10

RO Pithabada issues summons under s/n 61 of CrPC to the two informers & the HWW.

10 June 10

RCCF appoints DD as the IO of the case, thereby effectively removing the RO Pithabada from the case.

'AKHAND SHIKAR' & POACHING

The majority of the people staying in and around Simlipal belong to various tribes, including Santhal, Kolha, Munda, Bathudi, Gond, Sauntia, Khadia, Mankadia and Bindhani. The Santhal and Kolhas are traditional hunter tribes. Hunting is a favourite pastime and they take great pride in carrying out mass-hunts. In fact, if an adolescent boy does not kill a wild animal he is not accepted as reaching manhood. Simlipal has been a protected area for decades, and its wildlife - including the sambar, cheetal, barking deer, mouse deer, wild boar and gaur - form an irresistible attraction to these hunting tribes.

The rite of *Akhand shikar* is usually held around mid-April, during *Pana Sankranti*. The forests are dry at this time, and the animals move towards the valleys or the edge of villages where water is available. Large groups of hunters with bows and arrows, and these days guns, enter the Reserve with dogs and drive the animals in a particular direction either by making a noise and beating the undergrowth, or by lighting fires. A small group of the hunters will wait for the animals to be driven in their direction, and will shoot at whatever comes their way. The arrows and bullets injure many of the animals, but the tribal's are excellent trackers and they rarely let an injured animal get away, unless it falls dead near one of the patrol camps inside the park. The exercise is strenuous and ultimately the group may procure just a couple of deer. Every member will get a share of the meat, which is usually less than 200 to 300 gm for each person. But this small prize does not dissuade them from carrying out these hunts every season.



A recent disturbing and growing trend is shooting wild animals for sale in markets. Small groups of armed hunters with dogs are now entering the Reserve to shoot one or two deer to sell the meat to eager buyers from the fringe towns and *panchayat* headquarters. During the free-for-all that followed the Maoist attacks in March 2009, venison was available for as little as Rs.70 to 80 per kg in the villages in the Thakurmunda and Kendumundi areas. Traders were selling the meat from bicycles, moving from village to village. This created a huge demand for cheap game meat, as opposed to mutton, which sells here for Rs. 220 to 230 per kg.

A dead sambar stag found by the team on 8 June 2010; it was killed by a tribal arrow

Due to the presence of many retired paramilitary and defence personnel who belong to the area, knowledge of firearms is widespread. They guide local blacksmiths who make country-made guns using commonly available vehicle steering pipes. These are sold for about Rs.1,000 each. There is a flourishing small arms underground market here and many blacksmiths have mastered the art of churning out cheap country-made guns which can be deadly at short range. Most animals driven out during an *Akhand shikar* are shot from ranges as close as 50 to 60 feet.

The mass-hunts used to take place for 15 days in the month of April, but now the hunts take place virtually all the year round, peaking from January to June. During our short 4-day visit to Simlipal, there were three incursions into the Park, on 7, 9 and 11 June 2010, of mass-hunting groups of more than 100 people each

On 6 and 20 May 2010, three leaf-covered machans were found at two of the elephant death sites. These were made by poachers to shoot wild boar that are attracted to rotting elephant flesh and bones. Surprisingly, the machans were not discovered either by staff from the patrol camps or during the elephant census in April 2010. Had these been found earlier, many wild boar might have been saved from this death trap.

On 8 June 2010, the authors found a large, dead sambar stag with a wound in its side, lying about 20 metres beside the road, while driving between UBK and Patbil. The post mortem revealed that it had been killed by a metal arrowhead that was found embedded in its body.



Arrows seized by UBK field staff, 10 June 2010

Another method that is now being increasingly used to kill animals is the poisoning of natural saltlicks, where poison is mixed with the salty soil. In some cases, the poachers create artificial saltlicks by mixing poison with soil and rock salt.

The Maoist attacks in March 2009 took place just as the *Akhand shikar* period was about to begin. Illegal hunting increased dramatically immediately after the attacks, and the levels have been high ever since. As was evident from our tour of the Park, the animals are now very scared of any human intrusion.

Tiger poaching:

In this region, tigers are usually killed using arrow traps. Two legendary tiger poachers were Bhima Baghua and Sukadev Gunji of Bahalda village. They are no longer active, but used to sell the skins and nails to known buyers in local towns.

Steel jaw traps are now finding their way into the area. Baripada Forest Division seized a steel tiger trap with serrated edges in November or December 2009. Local tribals are also known to poison tiger kills; the people of Jamuna village admitted to poisoning a tiger kill in 1983. In 1982, Jenabil villagers caught a leopard in a noose trap when it attempted to enter a cattle shed.

Elephant poaching:

In 1994, there was a mass-killing of elephants by poachers using poisoned arrows. The origins of this are believed to be that villagers from around Simlipal were posted in defence and paramilitary forces in the North East. There they befriended the local people, many of whom are skilled hunters. They told them about the many tuskers in Simlipal and invited them to visit them. The villagers soon learnt the techniques of using special poisoned arrows and a cylindrical metal device, and now they are doing it themselves. We were told that the poison is still being collected from the North East. Another source told us that the

connection was actually through a contractor who came from the North East to work in Baripada.

The ivory from poached tuskers was supplied to a well-heeled chain of buyers that led to Kolkata and Tatanagar. The trade is now well established. Ganesh Jew was one of the earlier buyers. He apparently placed his people around Simlipal, ready to pay cash for ivory.

Earlier the hunters used to focus on elephants outside STR, but now they are killing elephants inside the Reserve. We were told that the poachers do not take the tusks back to their houses, but carry them away immediately to sell to known buyers.

In 2008, the Forester of UBK Range detected a case where an elephant was killed by poisoned arrows. At first he thought it was an old elephant, but then he found it had been shot with 25 arrows. The flesh around the arrow wounds was “spoiled all around” and dark in colour. The elephant took 10 to 12 hours to die and the tusks were removed.

Agricultural poisons, such as “Danedar”, are also used to kill elephants. The poison is mixed with soil and put near a natural salt lick, or injected in a banana. However, this method does not ensure that you will kill a tusker, and many females and calves die in the process.

The field staff do not believe that there is any connivance of protection staff with the poachers.

Postscript:

On 14 June 2010, acting on information provided by Mr Vanoo Mitra Acharya, the Range Officer Dukuru and DFO Baripada conducted raids that resulted in the seizure of five fresh and three old barking deer skins, one fresh mouse deer skin, 10 kg of deer meat, one country-made gun, 34 bullets and bows and arrows. Five barking deer heads were apparently displayed where the deer meat was being sold. The main poacher managed to evade arrest but one of his close associates was arrested and later sent to Baripada Circle Jail.



Country-made guns and bows and arrows seized at at Dhobighat, Thakurmunda Range, on 12 June 2010

MAOIST THREAT

Orissa has been facing threats from Maoists in recent years. They have increasingly made their presence felt and have caused many violent incidents leading to loss of life and property. Most of their attacks have been in forested areas in the southern districts of the state, such as Rayagada, Koraput, Malkangiri and Gajapati. Recently other tribal districts have also been facing Maoist attacks. While their main target has been the police and paramilitary forces, forest officers have also been killed in places such as Dhenkanal Forest Division, Rairangpur Forest Division and Sunabeda TR.

During the Maoist attacks inside Simlipal in March 2009, no forest staff was killed or severely injured, and fortunately there has been no recorded instance of a Maoist attack since then. However, due to the remoteness and inaccessibility of the area a fear psychosis has developed among the staff that continues to this day. It is certainly true, by virtue of the large expanse of forests that spill over to adjacent districts, that Simlipal Tiger Reserve is potentially an ideal shelter for left wing extremists.

It was impossible, however, for the team to make a meaningful assessment of the current security threats in view of the short time we spent inside the Park. During our interactions with local people and some of the forest staff, we gathered that there was some Maoist movement and presence in the southwestern part of the peripheral areas of the park, in the Thakurmunda, Kendumundi and Satkosia Ranges. These areas adjoin Keonjhar District, which is already a Maoist-infested area.

Although there are two paramilitary units of the Special Operational Group (SOG) stationed inside the Park, they hardly serve as morale boosters since they do not carry out joint patrols with the forest staff. Poachers and timber smugglers have greatly benefited from the Maoist threat perception since it enables them to operate freely inside the Park in the absence of armed forest staff to confront them. Particularly during the summer months, from February to June, there is an urgent need for the presence of a transitional paramilitary force. A suggestion from the Field Director was for the Central Reserve Police (CRP) to use Simlipal as a training ground.

As we have mentioned in our recommendations and elsewhere, we believe that there should be mobile Strike Forces (with about ten rifles/guns each and two to three revolvers) stationed at three or four places in the Core Area. Perhaps one such strike force could be stationed at Nawana South Range, where the paramilitary force is also encamped and which would ensure the security of the stored arms. A second group could be stationed at Upper Barakamada Range (UBK). The arms of the strike force could be kept in the UBK Range HQ.

Our recommendations are of course subject to agreement and clearance by the district police who would have a much better idea about the risk perceptions.

Ultimately, the only effective way for the Forest Department to overcome the threat of Maoist attacks is to get the support of the local people, which has been a continuing recommendation throughout this report. We believe that a sound field intelligence system based on interaction with local communities should give sufficient warning if Maoists are planning a strike. We are attaching a list provided by the Department of STR infrastructure that was damaged during the March 2009 Maoist attacks.

List of Damaged STR Infrastructure during Maoist attacks in Mar 2009				
Date	Range	Place	Nature of damage	Property damaged
28.03.09	Nawana South	Dhuduruchampa	Arson	4 buildings
	Chahala	Chahala	Bomb blast, Damage & Arson	Furniture in FRH & 2 villas broken; 17 tourists & labourers robbed; VHF Station destroyed
	Upper Barahkamuda	Meghasani	Bomb blast	Forest & Police VHF repeater stations destroyed
29.03.09	UBK	UBK	Bomb blast	Range & staff quarters blownup
30.03.09	Jenabil	Gurandia	Arson	Watch tower
31.03.10	Nawana North	Joranda	Arson	4 tents & FG quarters
	Nawana South	Dhundubasa	Arson	FG quarters
	Nawana South	Lengdakacha	Arson	FG quarters
	Gurgudia	Gurgudia	Damage Gunshot/ Arrow wound	Doors & windows of FRH & bamboo hut broken; Captive elephant "Mahendra" injured
01.04.09	Jenabil	Jenabil	Arson	Log house & Range Office burnt down
	Nawana North	Nawana	Attempt to attack	Exchange of fire with police stationed nr Nawana Range Off
03.04.09	National Park	Kalikaprasad	Damage/Theft	Check gate damaged / seized items taken
04.04.09	Rairangpur	Jamuani	Damage/Theft	Jamuani FRH damaged / siezed items taken
05.04.09	Pithabata	Pithabata	Attempt to attack	Pithabata (WL) Range Off. / seized items taken away
	Pithabata	Namti	Damage/Theft	Beat house damaged / seized items taken
	Chahala	Brundaban	Damage	Beat house & check gate damaged
06.04.09	National Park	Ranasa	Damage/Arson/ Theft	Beat House damaged, doors & windows burnt / seized items taken
	National Park	Gurgudia-Nuagaon Road	Arson	Wooden bridge before Ranasa burnt
07.04.09	Upper Barahkamuda	Near Debasthali	Arson	Wooden bridge burnt
	National Park	Nuagaon	Damage/Arson	Doors & windows broken & Beat House burnt
	National Park	Kabatghai	Arson	Doors & windows broken & Beat House burnt
	National Park	Khejuri	Arson	Beat House kitchen burnt & damaged
	Nawana South	Bakua	Damage/Theft	Beat House doors damaged / seized items taken
	Manada	Barehipani	Damage/Theft	Beat House doors damaged / seized items taken
15.04.09	Jenabil	Baniabasa	Damage/Arson	Beat House damaged & burnt
Date unknown	Upper Barahkamuda	Bhanjabasa	Damage	Damage to FRH & staff quarters
	Pithabata	Kachudhan	Damage	Damage to staff quarters

PROTECTION INITIATIVES

It was clear during our field assessment that Simlipal is not in good shape. The team did not see any animals or evidence of animals in the Buffer Zone, other than a few Indian hare and jungle fowl. In the Core we saw a total of 3 barking deer, and a handful of sambar and five elephants who came every night to the UBK saltlick. Compared to the sightings a few years ago, when herds of sambar and large stags were commonly seen, the picture looked dismal.

Since the Maoist attacks last year, there has clearly been a breakdown in protection measures that is yet to recover. The field staff reported that they saw very few animals when they eventually returned to their field posts in August (after brief stays in May and June) and that there has been a drastic decline in the prey base population over the past year. Unless strong protection measures are adopted immediately we fear that the dwindling prey base will further endanger the remaining tigers in Simlipal.

Protection measures in Simlipal TR have been designed and have evolved with local issues in mind, particularly the large-scale tribal hunting for meat and to sell in the markets. There are no specific measures designed to protect tigers or elephants since the management believes that general protection will safeguard all species. Other important threats such as timber smuggling and forest fires are also not being given ample attention, largely due to the fact that the Department is under resourced and short of manpower. Our discussions revealed that under the circumstances they are simply unable to implement other protection measures, and that the wildlife and habitat are clearly suffering.

Some of the major issues that need to be addressed are discussed below:

Unarmed Forest Staff:

After the Maoist attacks, the department was advised to hand over all their arms to the safe custody of the police. The field staff now face the mass-hunting groups, of up to 200 people, with personal appeals and “folded hands” and simply request the hunters not to harm the wildlife of Simlipal. While this method may be somewhat effective for a year or so, it is doubtful that this approach will work in the future, especially when the hunters realize that the forest staff are powerless to stop them. Many of hunters are armed with country-made guns and it is only a matter of time before they begin to exercise their power over the authorities.

We recommend that two or three mobile strike forces should be put in place, armed with at least 10 to 15 rifles and two to three revolvers, and stationed in the Core Area to face *Akhand shikar* groups. The overall enforcement thrust should be in the Buffer Zone and on the prevention of entry of hunting groups from the peripheral villages outside the park. The forest department could achieve this with a real-time information system, fed by a good informer network. It would be much easier and more effective to break up and disperse the hunting groups when they assemble, before they enter the Park.

Buffer Zone Range Officers burdened with other duties:

As discussed, Range Officers in the Buffer Zone play a critical role in protecting the boundaries of the Park. Unfortunately, most of these officers are also burdened with other non-protection department activities, such as NREGA, compensatory afforestation, issuing permits, etc., and they have little time to focus on protection issues.

This problem could be largely relieved by posting a Deputy Range Officer in every Range of the Buffer Zone, who would be exclusively in charge of anti-poaching measures. This would ensure supervision and dedicated control over protection measures in the entire Buffer Zone.

Lack of involvement of Local People:

The local communities are vital stakeholders in the protection of Simlipal. In most protected areas efforts are made to include the local people since no initiatives can be implemented successfully on the ground, without their support. In Simlipal, despite the Maoist problem and the mass-hunting by local groups, the Forest Department has not been able to bring local communities on board. The Field Director admitted that they were “not working much on that”.

Local communities have begun to feel antagonistic towards the Department, and they do not trust them. In the case of the recent elephant deaths, the informers chose to give the details to local wildlife activists, rather than the Forest Department, as they feared their information would be misused and the evidence destroyed by the Department. If the Forest Department were in direct contact with the local communities, and could win their trust, it would make anti-poaching and enforcement so much easier. Problematic villages could be directly monitored, for both poaching activity and insurgency. Only the DFO Baripada has undertaken some community initiatives, organizing a 6-day cycle rally in support of wildlife, and by proposing a ‘Haati Mera Sathi’ campaign to form village protection groups

We believe that such community initiatives are critical around Simlipal and that they should be encouraged and supported to garner the support of local people. We also suggest that the Forest Department should maintain close ties with local representatives of the people, including the MLAs and MPs.

Absence of motivation among Field Staff:

We found that the staff, at practically every level, lacked motivation. Most of the field staff in the Core Area were eager to leave, if they could, as they are cut off from their families for months, with no food rations, no medical aid, meagre financial incentives, lingering malaria, and no transport to go out even in an emergency. Although they are working in a Naxal area, they also do not receive the ‘Naxal Allowance’; a compensation scheme that was announced by the Govt of Orissa. Some of them have spent decades in the Park, without being rotated to the Buffer Zone. This is a major grievance of the field staff.

We have recommended that the frontline field staff be given incentives that should include field/ hardship allowances, medical insurance, food rations and medicine distribution, hostel facilities for student children, and accommodation for their families in the towns.

Another issue appears to be promotion. This is an issue that must be addressed; some of the field staff have been working in the same grade for over 36 years.



Forester at UBK who has completed 36 years of service in STR, without a promotion

Systematic staff rotation between the Core and the Buffer is imperative. To maximize effective enforcement, every beat in the Core Area must also have at least two Forest Guards.

Monitoring:

We have also strongly recommended that a small, independent monitoring team be put in place, nominated by NTCA and made up of local and within-Orissa individuals. The team should make quarterly visits to the Park to assess the status of protection, and prepare brief reports. Further details can be found in the 'Recommendations' chapter.

STR needs more eyes and ears than just the Forest Department to undertake effective wildlife protection. We have recommended that the Department encourages and welcomes researchers to undertake quality studies. This should be from more sources other than just the University of Northern Orissa in Baripada.

Another practice that must be introduced is the maintenance of records in the protection camps that are running in STR. Records should include a logbook that indicates daily sightings, distances covered, time of start of a patrol, and the time a patrol ends. This practice will help monitor the areas being patrolled and the other protection initiatives being implemented in these areas.

Use of Casual Labour as Patrol Staff :

We found that the entire protection system depends heavily on hundreds of local tribals who have been engaged as temporary staff to carry out patrol and protection duties. We view this engagement of a large number of locals as a very positive move, which should help the Department gather local information as well as support from local communities through this employment scheme.

At the same time, the authorities often shut down camps or decrease the number of staff as and when they run out of funds. For instance in Dangadiha and Kendumundi (Ebelbeda) camps, 80 persons were engaged till 31 March 2010. They have now been withdrawn. Attempts have been made to raise funds from other sources, such as camps in Satkosia Range (Chaulajhari and Satkosia Camps), which have been set up with Compensatory Afforestation Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA) funds. This practice should be encouraged across STR.

Due to the diversion of funds from the Baripada Forest Division to help cover the costs of the March 2010 relocation of Jenabil village, protection measures had to be scaled down. We feel this is absolutely wrong. Apart from having to terminate the services of local employees, relaxing the protection in the buffer zone is likely to have disastrous consequence in the protection of the Core Area.

The people who are employed for protection activities are largely tribal. They are called by different names in different areas of Simlipal. In the Buffer Zone they are known as "STPF" (Simlipal Tiger Protection Force) – which is what they are proud to be called - whereas in the Core they are known as "CL" (casual labourers, the connotations of which they dislike). We find this differentiation in nomenclature inexplicable, as two names are being used by two organizations of the same department to describe the same group of employees discharging the same functions. To give these local people some modicum of dignity and recognition, and to encourage their stake in Simlipal, their preferred name of 'Simlipal Tiger Protection Force' should be used. They certainly should not be referred to as "casual labourers"; they carry out field patrol in dangerous landscapes dominated by

poachers. We recommend that the “STPF” title as is currently being used in the buffer zone should be used for all temporary staff engaged in patrol or protection duties.

Lack of coordination in Protection Camps:

In an interview with the DFO Karanjia, we were informed that there were several kinds of protection squads in operation at STR, including “critical squads”, “protection squads”, “camp squads”, “anti-depredation squads”, “anti-poaching squads”, and “elephant squads”. But it was unclear as to the responsibilities of each of the squad, and there appeared to be a lack of coordination between the various “squads”.

The Deputy Director provided us information on the up-to-date status of the Protection Camps operating in STR (see table below). However, it soon became clear that there was also a serious lack of coordination here too. When a site visit was made on 16 June 2010, it was found that the first two camps, Mandaljhari and Dangadiha, had been shifted in January 2010. The STR appeared to be unaware of the change. Key information, such as the location of active protection camps, is vital to coordinate patrols and enforcement efforts and to seek help from field staff in case of incursions by hunters; the lack of such basic coordination can have dire consequences on the protection of Simlipal.

Protection Camps operating in Simlipal TR (Buffer Area) As on 6 Jun 2010			
<i>Forest Division</i>		<i>Campsite</i>	<i>Protections Labourers</i>
KARANJIA	1	Mandaljhari	5
	2	Dangadiha	5
	3	Edelbeda	10
	4	Pahadpur	10
	5	Gurguria	5
	6	Khejuri	5
BARIPADA	7	Podadiha	10
	8	Phulbadia	10
	9	Baniabasa	5
	10	Balma	5
	11	Bahalda	3
	12	Khandabura	2
	13	Shyamsunderpur	5
RAIRANGPUR	14	Uski	3
	15	Barehipani	5
	16	Jamuni	5
	17	Tamalbandh (Manda)	3
	18	Ghatkuanri	5
	19	Kanchhinda	5

Note: The Mandaljhari STPF staff are now staying at Kerketbeda, and the Dangadiha STPF staff at Vejidiha Gate. The Range Officer said that this was done at the advice of local police, because of possible Maoist attacks on these remote camps, and that he had immediately informed the DFO about this relocation.

Lack of a robust Intelligence and Informer Network:

Good enforcement is possible in STR, as we saw from the lists of raids conducted by the DFO Baripada Forest Division and his staff; 21 cases from 12 to 14 April 2009, 7 cases from 30 April to 2 May 2009, and 17 cases from 24 to 27 June 2009. It appears that further sustained enforcement could not be carried out due to a paucity of funds.

At present there is no informer network strategy being followed by the Park. The staff in the Core Area depends upon casual labourers to collect information, which as we are aware they are reluctant to do. Some Range officers of the Buffer Zone have developed their own informers who pass on information about timber smuggling and poaching.

There are no paid informers, no information rewards being offered by the Forest Department, and no training being conducted. We noted that a number of the officers were not aware how information can be solicited, or even used effectively, and there is an urgent need for training on this issue.

Exposing Informers' identities:

The senior Forest Officers of STR have failed to realize that confidentiality is an essential and integral part of running an informer network. After the recent elephant death cases were exposed, officers openly publicised the names of the informers. This is a major setback to the establishment of a robust intelligence gathering system, which is so badly needed in Simlipal.

Legal summons were also issued to the two valuable informers and their contacts, one of whom happens to be the Honorary Wildlife Warden of the District. It was their information that led to the discovery of six dead elephants, and now – thanks to the failure of the forest officers - the entire district knows their names. We feel that this is an unpardonable act that will have serious ramifications for the future of Simlipal. Now, more than ever, local people do not trust the forest officers of Simlipal and the Department, and it may take years to rebuild this important element of enforcement.

Importance of tracking the activities of *Dehuri* priests:

In this region, no *Akhand shikar* group leaves for a traditional hunt without the village priest or "*dehuri*" offering prayers to the forest gods and praying for a successful hunt. Efforts should therefore be made to identify the *dehuris* who reside in the peripheral villages and keep a close watch on their activities. Booking wildlife cases against the *dehuris* as "abettors" could prove to be very useful in preventing them from leading the hunting teams into the Tiger Reserve.

Working infrastructure (Vehicles):

For effective protection to be undertaken in the field, it is extremely important that field officers are well equipped. During the Maoist attacks a lot of the infrastructure in STR was destroyed, and plans have been made and approved to rebuild and repair the structures.

At the field level, STR has a large area that needs constant patrolling and monitoring, and every Buffer Zone Range should have a patrol and enforcement vehicle. Of the 14 vehicles in STR, six are for Range use. Of these six, two are not in working condition (in UBK and Chahala Ranges). Mobility of range field staff is of the utmost priority. Of the three "mobile purpose" vehicles, one (a 1999 Gypsy) is not in working condition and another is a 1996 Jeep. This lack of effective mobility makes enforcement difficult. It goes without saying that by providing field staff with good infrastructure and equipment,

enforcement would immediately improve.

Lack of Financial Planning:

Management and planning are serious issues that can positively impact the protection initiatives in STR. Good financial planning can enhance implementation of planned initiatives, and avoid negative activities when the Department is suddenly faced with a lack of funds. Examples include terminating the services of local people, closing protection camps, and ending anti poaching drives. Diverting funds from one activity to another, as in the case of the diversion of funds from the Baripada Division for use in the Jenabil village relocation project, can cause a threat to protection. Effective financial planning can work to avoid these threats.

It is also worth mentioning that in the year 2008-2009 an amount of 1.6 crore rupees remained unspent in STR, which once again indicates the lack of a cohesive financial plan. The amounts approved and released by NTCA and the State in the last three years are:

STR FUNDS					
Year	Approved	Released		Total	Expenditure (in lakhs of Rupees)
		NTCA	State		
2007 - 08	150	107.75	42.25	150	192.03702
	43.28	43.28		43.28	
2008 - 09	602.46	400	50.23	602.46	439.94732
		152.23			
2009 -10	302.89	200	44.98	244.98	244.26610



Simlipal is the only place in the world that has recorded “black tigers”. This is one of a number of reasons why it is imperative that Simlipal Tiger Reserve receives the highest degree of protection and support, and that it is managed professionally, with dedication and diligence.

Photo courtesy of Wildlife Institute of India

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



We would like to thank all the forest officers, protection staff and people that we interviewed and talked to. A complete list can be found at the end of this report. **[Appendix 3]**

In particular, we would like to thank the RCCF, Mr Ajit Bharthuar, for his hospitality, good company and patience. Without his intervention and efforts, and the efforts of Mr B.K. Panda, the DFO of Baripada Forest Division, the recent elephant deaths in Simlipal might never have been uncovered. We would also like to thank the Field Director, Mr H.S. Upadhyaya, and the Deputy Director, Mr D.N. Samal, for their kind hospitality and company at a time when they were extremely busy.

The three drivers, Mr Rabi Singh, Mr Suresh Behera and Mr Chandramohan Mahanta, patiently and cheerfully drove us around Simlipal for long hours, skillfully removing huge fallen trees and keeping us safe. A fourth driver, Mr Niranjan Puthal, steadfastly accompanied Biswajit Mohanty on his travels through Karanjia Forest Division. The two stars at the UBK camp, the cook Mr Jogendra Chandra Sahu, and Mr Bhaskar Chandra Das, kept us well fed and watered. And we cannot omit mentioning the best cups of tea we have in a very long while, courtesy of the Forester, Mr J.K. Sethi, at the Bahaghar beat.

We leave our last, most heartfelt thanks, to Ms Sanjukta Basa (the Honorary Wildlife Warden of Mayurbhanj District), Mr Vanoo Mitra Acharya (wildlife activist and President of the Simlipal Tiger Protection Force) and their informers, who exposed, and continue to expose with persistent resistance from the Park authorities and under arduous conditions, the large number of elephant deaths in Simlipal. It is courageous people such as these that help keep India's wildlife safe.

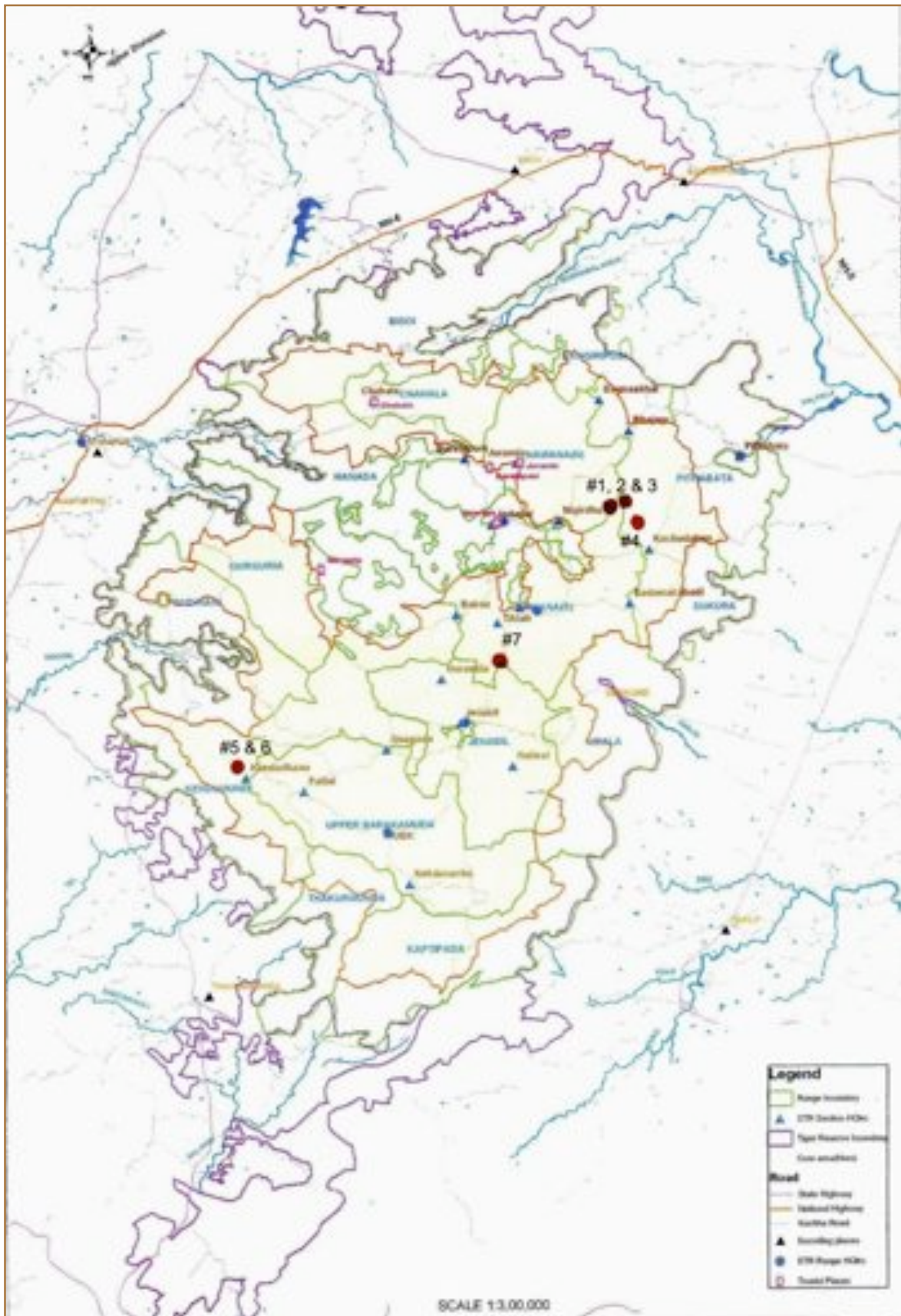
We are grateful to Mr Acharya, Ms Basa and Mr Bharthuar for providing the photographs in this report of the dead elephants. The remaining pictures are by the authors.

Belinda Wright & Biswajit Mohanty

22 June 2010

APPENDIX 1: MAP WITH ELEPHANT DEATH SITES

SIMLIPAL TIGER RESERVE



APPENDIX 2: TOUR REPORT

Belinda Wright and Biswajit Mohanty

5 June 2010

In the afternoon, we met the PCCF (WL) and CWLW and discussed our tour program to Simlipal Tiger Reserve (STR). Overnight at Bhubaneswar.

6 June 2010

Left Bhubaneswar for Baripada at about 3.00 pm. Reached at 8.30 p.m. Met local MLA and Minister, Mr Praveen Bhanjdeo, on the way. Discussed with him his perceptions on the conservation of Simlipal and the current status there. Met the Deputy Field Director of STR at the Circuit House, Baripada. Discussed with him elementary issues. Overnight at the Circuit House.

7 June 2010

Interviewed RCCF, Baripada Circle, at his office at Murgabadi Chak. Met the Field Director and Deputy Director. Left for Simlipal at 4.00 pm. We met the Range officer of Pithabata STR Range, Mr. A.K. Kar, and asked him to meet us at the Upper Barakamada (UBK) FRH the next day at noon. We then entered through Pithabata-Bhajam Gate (where the core area of STR starts). On the way, we stopped at the Khadkai Beat and talked to the staff present there. We inspected the Patrol Register.

Reached Nawana Range Office at around 7.30 pm and had tea there. Then we left for UBK which we reached at around 10.30 pm. Despite the long drive, we did not see a single wild animal till we reached UBK. Smelt a carcass on the way, just after the Patbil Section, and took a GPS location. Saw about 14 sambhar, almost all of which were females, at the UBK salt lick. Also saw 5 elephants at the salt lick; 3 females, one calf and a juvenile. Overnight at UBK FRH, the Camp Office of the Field Director.

The route we took was: Pithabata/Bhajam Gate - Khadkhai beat - Nigirdah - Nawana - Bakua - Jamuna - Nugaon - Devasthali - Patbil - UBK (approx. 120 km).

8 June 2010

In the morning, the RCCF left to check the dead animal smell near Patbil. Gave a wireless message to the DFO, Karanjia, to be present at Kendumundi Range Office in the evening. We interviewed the Field Director in the morning. The Range Officer, Pithabata STR Range, arrived at around 11.45 am. Asked him to wait for 30 minutes since the interview with the Field Director was going on. Interviewed the Range Officer for about 2 hours and saw his case file regarding the elephant deaths in his Range jurisdiction.

Had lunch at UBK and then left for inspection of the dead elephant site at Kanda Dhanu section area of Kendumundi Range. An extensive search was made by the Field Director and Deputy Director but they could not locate the carcasses of the two elephants. They carried a GPS and the co-ordinates of the elephant carcasses that had been obtained when they visited the site earlier with the RCCF during the verification exercise.

During the journey, we found a dead sambhar, a large stag with a visible injury, lying near the road about 20 metres away from where we had smelled it the previous day. Visited Patbil Section where we found that all the CL and staff had left for a foot patrol.

Reached Kendumundi along with the RCCF, the Field Director and the Deputy Director at around 7.30 pm. Talked to the DFO and the ACF about the dead elephant and what action was taken against their staff regarding destruction of evidence. Left Kendumundi at 10.00 pm and returned to UBK via Jashipur as heavy rains had taken place which made the Kanda Dhanu route difficult to negotiate. Still did not see any wild animals other than an Indian hare, until we reached the UBK salt lick.

9 June 2010

Left for the Kanda Dhanu area to look for the site of the elephant carcasses. Again an extensive search was made but it could not be located. Found evidence of tree felling at this area of Mondama Hills near the Deo River. Some of the sal trees were freshly felled, only a couple of days ago. They were lying about 100 feet from the Kanda Dhanu road which goes to the Dukura area (N-21° 42.414' E 86° 10.907'). Took pictures. Also found an old saw pit and planks left behind by timber smugglers.

Headed back with RCCF to UBK to interview Forester Mr Palei, who is in charge of UBK Range. The Field Director and Deputy Director stayed behind at Kanda Dhanu area to look for the elephant carcass.



Freshly felled Sal tree, 9 June 2010

Had lunch and went back to Patbil. Met Field Director and Deputy Director returning from Kanda Dhanu. They said that they had finally located the carcass. Met Patbil section staff and talked to them. Saw their Patrol Register. Went to Bahaghar beat and met the Forester, Mr Jatan Kumar Sethi, and discussed with him about elephant poaching reports and their foot patrols. Inspected their Patrol Register and found it up-to-date. Talked to the local Kharias (a food gathering tribe) who live there.

In the evening, we saw some female sambhar in the UBK area. The same group of 5 elephants seen earlier, came again to the salt lick. They appeared to be agitated and were very vocal. After dinner, went for a drive on the Meghasani road and saw some sambhar and chital grazing on the UBK meadow. There were a few alarm calls in the night.

Obtained photographs and video footage of elephant carcasses from the RCCF.

10 June 2010

Interviewed Deputy Director in the morning. Inspected bows and arrows seized today by the UBK range office staff from hunters. Left UBK at 2.00 pm for Nawana Range office. Visited Jenabil on the way (61 families have recently been relocated from this magnificent location). Saw the remains of the carcass of the elephant near Jodapal chak near Dudhuruchampa, Nawana South Range. Observed a number of felled sal trees near the forest beats and villages of Nigirdah, and Kkukurbhuka.

Reached Nawana (S) Range at 5.00 pm and had lunch. Visited Joranda waterfall and Joranda FRH and the camp site. Returned to Nawana Range and visited the local village to meet with the villagers. Talked to them about various issues. Examined the two elephant skulls kept at Nawana Range and took pictures. Had dinner at Nawana at 10.00 p.m and left for Baripada at 10.30 pm. Reached Baripada at 1.00 am. Overnight at the PWD Inspection Bungalow.

11 June 2010

Met Ms Sanjukta Basa the Honorary Wildlife Warden (HWW), Mr Vanoo Mitra Acharya (VMA) and their team at the PWD IB in Baripada. Discussed with them in detail the entire course of events starting from the time they received information of the elephant deaths, their attempts to get entry into the Park, and the verification of the sites where the dead elephants were found. Obtained video footage and still photographs from them of the elephant carcasses from when they had gone inside the park from 15 to 21 May 2010. Then met DFO, Baripada, at his office. Looked at the bone samples collected and deposited by the HWW team. Discussed with him protection measures for STR and awareness initiatives in the fringes of the reserve. Obtained list of wildlife cases booked by his Division during the last 5 years.

Had lunch at the FRH at Salboni. Then chaired a public consultation at 2.30 pm at the department nursery at Manchabandha to which NGOs, activists, public, and VSS members had been invited. Many people gave suggestions and comments and we received a few written suggestions about steps required to improve protection at STR. About 45 people attended the consultation.

Returned to the PWD IB and collected further still photos of the dead elephant from the HWW and VMA. Asked them to explain each photograph and their location.

Met Mr. Manoj Nair, Former Deputy Field Director, in the evening at the FRH Salboni. Discussed with him the situation prevailing in STR when he was posted there last year. Left Baripada at 10.00 pm. Had dinner on the way. Reached Bhubaneswar at about 2.20 am the next day, i.e. 12 June 2010.

Biswajit Mohanty

16.6.2010

I departed from Cuttack HQ at 6.15 am, to assess protection measures in parts of the buffer zone under the control of Karanjia Forest Division. Took the Cuttack- Anandapur route and finally reached Satkosia Range Office at 9.00 am.

Had a brief meeting with the Range Officer, Mr. Jalahari Nayak, and discussed the local situation. Assessed staff and infrastructure position. Departed at 9.30 am for Thakurmunda Range Office. Reached there at 10.15 am, and then left for a field tour along with the Range Officer, Mr. P.K. Patnaik.

Visited Champajhar on the way and met some locals for information about poaching and *Akhand shikar* in the area. Went to Dangadiha and climbed the hill to reach Banjhikusum ghat situated on the old Dangadiha-Podadiha road. Entered the National Park at Banjhikusum and reached UBK at 1 pm, through the Balidhar and Nekedanacha route. After a brief discussion with the skeleton staff present, returned at 1.30 pm by the same route. Reached Thakurmunda at 4.00 pm and had lunch at the Range Office.

Left for Mituani-Kerketbeda at 5.00 pm. Visited the STPF camp at Kerketbeda which was about 15 kms away and met the TPF boys and FG Mr S.K. Haiburu and discussed protection measures and animal sightings. Returned at 7.00 pm to the Range Office.

Took pictures of seized weapons (3 country made guns and bows and arrows) kept at Thakurmunda. These were seized on 12 June 2010 at Dhobighat. Discussed with the Range Officer about protection measures and incidents of poaching, and finally left at 7.30 pm. Reached Cuttack HQ at 10.40 pm.



Mondama Hills

APPENDIX 3: PEOPLE INTERVIEWED

1. Mr. P.N. Padhi, IFS, PCCF (WL) and CWLW
2. Mr. Praveen Bhanjdeo, Minister for Sports and Youth Affairs, (MLA from Morada, Mayurbhanj District)
3. Mr. Ajit Bharthuar, IFS, RCCF, Baripada Circle
4. Mr. H.S. Upadhyaya, IFS, Field Director, STR
5. Mr. D.N. Samal, ACF, STR, now in charge of Deputy Director STR post
6. Mr. P.C. Mishra, DFO, Karanjia Forest Division
7. Mr. B.K. Panda, OFS (I), DFO, Baripada Forest Division
8. Mr. Lalitendu Jena , ACF, Karanjia Forest Division
9. Mr. Jena, Range Officer, Nawana South Range also holding charge of Nawana North Range, STR
10. Mr. A.K. Kar, Range Officer, Pithabata (Wildlife) Range, STR
11. Mr. Jalahari Nayak, Range Officer, Satkosia Range, Karanjia Forest Division
12. Mr. P.K. Pataik, Range Officer, Thakurmunda Range, Karanjia Forest Division
13. Mr. P.K. Palei, Forester, UBK, now in charge of UNK Range Officer post
14. Mr. Mantribar Mahanta, Forester, Patbil Section, Upper Barakamada Range (UBK)
15. Mr. Jatan Kumar Sethi, Forester, Kanda Dhanu Section, UBK, now staying at Bahaghar beat (Kanda Dhanu is abandoned)
16. Mr S.K. Haiburu, Forest Guard, Kerketbeda camp
17. Beat staff and casual labourers (CL/STPF) of Khadakhai beat
18. Beat staff and casual labourers (CL/STPF) of Patbil beat
19. Beat staff and casual labourers (CL/STPF) of Bahaghar beat
20. Beat staff and casual labourers (CL/STPF) of Nawana beat
21. Beat staff and casual labourers (CL/STPF) of UBK beat
22. Beat staff and casual labourers (CL/STPF) of Kerketbeda
23. NGOs and individuals at public meeting at Baripada Manchabanda Nursery
24. Ms. Sanjukta Basa, Honorary Wildlife Warden, Mayurbhanj District
25. Mr. Vanoo Mitra Acharya, Wildlife activist, Mayurbhanj district
26. Mr. Manoj Nair, Ex- Deputy Field Director, now posted as DFO, Hirakud Wildlife Div.
27. Local villagers belonging to Kolha tribe of Nawana village
28. Local villagers belonging to Kharia tribe of Bahaghar
29. Local villagers at Champajhar village

APPENDIX 4: PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Public Consultation at Forest Nursery at Manchabandha, Baripada 11 June 2010

An invitation to attend the public meeting had been sent out by the Office of the District Information and Public Relations Officer, Mayurbhanj. The meeting started at 2.45 pm with about 45 participants that included NGOs, activists, VSS members and villagers from round STR. We expressed our thanks to the people for attending the meeting at such short notice. The meeting ended at 4.30 pm.

Written memorandums were received on protection of Simlipal TR and how it could be improved. Many people complained about the non-involvement of villagers who live around STR in strategy plans, or even protection of forests and wildlife. Some people expressed their concern about the operation of stone quarries, for granite and quartzite, right next to the boundary of the Tiger Reserve; some of the quarries are within a couple of km of the boundary. We were informed that several complaints have been filed in this regard with forest officials. The officials had apparently replied that they were helpless since it was outside the boundary of the Sanctuary.

Everyone appeared concerned about the problems in STR, and in particular the elephant deaths and the large amount of animal and timber poaching. The participants continually stressed the Department's lack of involvement with the local people.

Statements and written memorandums were received from:

1. Madhusudan Nanda, of the Mahatab Ganashakti, Thakurmunda, who submitted a written and signed memorandum, dated 11 June 2010:

The Mahatab Ganasakhi started an action programme with the peoples of Simlipal named "Hati Mo Sathi". It is purely awareness and protection and information mobilization cadre development system in and around Simlipal.

There are five organization involved for the programme basically on the following points.

1. To identify the Hunting pockets & professional Hunters.
2. To aware local people about the benefit of others creature living inside the Jungel for the human life.
3. To create a confidence development atmosphere within the local people, NGO, Volunteers & Govt. people.
4. To involve self help group Yubak Sangha, Educational institutions for the awareness building programme.
5. To strengthen the Grama Sabha inside & around Simlipal for the protection of Wild life.
6. To be reviewed every month by a high level committee in the District covering Keonjhar, Balasore and Mayurbhanj.
7. Lastly we request your kind support to convey this protection action programme to all the stakeholders of the situation for the future protection benefit with support of stakeholders.

The "Hati Mo Sathi" Programme co-ordinator and monitor by District Environmental Society Mayurbhanj.

2. Santosh Mohanty, social worker, Baripada, and member of the District Environmental Society and a Senate Member of North Orissa University, who submitted a written and signed memorandum, dated 11 June 1010:

Ground Realities on wild life Disturbance in Simlipal

1. The machinery operation in the Bio-Sphere area
2. The Hunting Pockets & hunters are free in their activities
3. The Habitation problem like water & food etc.
4. There is lack of information, mobilization system for hunters & hunting poackets.
5. The problem are only exposed but there is lack of solution for it.

Solution:

1. A Dist level Revenue, Mining, Forest, Police Joint committee should be formed to look out the mining activities inside Bio-sphere area.
2. The Hunting pockets & professional hunters to be identified & follow up action should be taken in continuous process for the operation.
3. The water bodies inside Jungle should be identified & to be managed & protected by local people's with the support of forest official & other concern.
4. The local people information tank should be developed scientifically.
5. An integrated policy & action group should be formed immediately to solve the wild life problem in Simlipal.

3. Vivek Patnaik, of Mayurbhanj Jungle Suraksha Mancha, Baripada, who said he would send us an email with his other suggestions. He also emphasised the point that:
 - The RCCF and Field Director took credit for the UNESCO award, but when something goes wrong, only the lowly Forester and Forest Guards are suspended. Why not the RCCF himself ?
4. Arun Kumar Das, Teacher at the Police High School and co-ordinator of Eco clubs in High Schools, spoke about steps required and expressed the following views:
 - Nobody talks about preventive measures to stop wildlife poaching.
 - Nobody should be allowed to enter STR by a special ordinance or law.
 - No core area or buffer villages should exist and all should be relocated.
 - Eco-tourism should be completely stopped.
 - Local committees will never help in forest or wildlife protection.
5. Mr. Bijoy Kumar Agarwal, Baripada, who is the correspondent for "The Samaj" daily Oriya newspaper, said that:
 - All pending cases of elephant poaching should be properly investigated and the accused prosecuted.
6. Mr. Deepak Pani, Baripada, of MASS NGO spoke well. He pointed out several things which needed to be done:

- Lack of co ordination between different wings of Forest Department. Management exercise should be made simple with each wing well aware of its role and mutual exchange of information and strategy.
- To accept the reality that local people were there to stay and cannot be just moved out. There is lack of sufficient land to resettle them if at all they are moved out.
- STR is not the property of the Forest Department and everybody especially citizens should be concerned about what is happening inside.
- Some of the illegal activities are due to livelihood pressures.
- Local community needs to be taken into confidence for protection measures. There were no consultations whatsoever with locals after the Maoist attacks of March 2009.
- Protection of forests is eminently possible with local communities.

7. Bhaswati Barik, Baripada, representing Maa Laxmi Mahila Sanghathan, said:

- Tourist guides should be allowed inside the Park to see what is inside. Many tourist guides, though trained, have not been inside the Park

8. Sanjukta Basa, Bangriposi, HWW of Mayurbhanj District said:

- VSS should be involved in forest protection

9. Jayanta Kumar Panigrahi, Baripada, submitted a written memorandum which was in the form of a newsletter in Oriya on Simlipal

The clear message was that local people's participation is essential and that "truth must prevail if Simlipal is to survive."



Kerketbeda village, Thakurmunda Range, 16 June 2010

APPENDIX 5: LIST OF DOCUMENTS REFERRED TO

Miscellaneous:

Recent Elephant Deaths:

- Details of findings of Sri Vanoo Acharya & HWW on elephant poaching inside Simlipal TR from 15.5.10 to 21.5.19
- RCCF's report on elephant deaths inside Simlipal TR, 27 May 10
- Memo fr APCCF & Member Sec., NTCA, re. Constitution of Independent Team for assessing the ground situation at Simlipal TR, Orissa, 3 Jun 10
- Memo fr PCCF (WL) / CWW to RCCF & FD re. NTCA team's visit, 7 Jun 10
- Letter & invitation list fr Dist. Info. & PR Officer, Mayurbhanj re Public Hearing with NTCA Team, 11 Jun 10
- Dist. Environment Society: Note on Ground realities on disturbance in STR, 11 Jun 10
- Mahatab Ganasakhi: Proposed Action to be taken for protection of STR, 11 Jun 10

STR Information:

- Rapid Field Assessment of Conservation Status of Simlipal STR, NTCA, Aug 09
- Brief Note on Simlipal Tiger Reserve, Baripada, Orissa, 29 May 10
- Staff Position of STR, as on 1 Jun 10
- Details of Camps & VHF stations in STR, as on 1 Jun 10
- List of Protection Camps operating in Simlipal TR, buffer area, as on 6 Jun 10
- List and age of vehicles in STR
- List of Civil Works in last 3 years (2007-10)
- Funds approved & released by NTCA during last 3 years (2007-10)
- Map: Simlipal TR with Compartments, scale 1:250,000
- Map: Simlipal TR
- Map: Simlipal STR with roads & elephant death sites
- DFO Baripada: Seizure list of joint raids on 12 to 14 April 2009
- DFO Baripada: Seizure list of joint raids on 30 Apr to 2 May 2009
- DFO Baripada: Seizure list of raids on 24 to 27 Jun 2009
- UNI news story, 'Simlipal witnesses large scale poaching, 17 Jun 10

Dept. Correspondence:

- Letter fr FD to DFO Baripada re. negligence in duty, 23 Apr 10
- Response letter fr DFO to FD stating he had informed RCCF, 23 Apr 10
- Letter fr RCCF to DFO re. cross checking elephant deaths, 24 Apr 10
- Letter fr HWW to RCCF re. denial entry of search team, 24 April 10
- Letter fr FD to DFO re. elephant deaths, 29 Apr 10
- Response letter fr DFO to FD re. search team being denied entry, 30 Apr 10
- Response letter fr FD to DFO re. "unsavoury situation, 30 Apr 10
- Letter fr FD to RO Nawana (S) re. poisoning nr Bhandadhar, 6 May 10
- Letter fr DD to RO Nawana (S) re. not taking adequate measures, 7 May 10
- Letter fr DD to RO Pithabata (WL) re. not taking adequate measures, 7 May 10
- Letter fr DD to FD re. elephant carcasses, informers & suspension of Kachudahan beat guard, 7 May 10
- Letter fr RCCF to FD re. asking for sites to be checked with DFO Baripada & action to be taken against negligent staff, 7 May 10

- Letter fr FD to DFO Baripada re. informer not giving info to DFO or RO & location of tusks, 7 May 10
- Email fr Biswajit Mohanty to DIG NTCA re. report of 7 elephant deaths, 10 May 10
- Letter fr DIG NTCA to CWW re. Biswajit Mohanty's letter, 11 May 10
- Letter fr FD to RCCF re. informers, entry denied to ACF & HWW, location of carcasses, DFO Baripada, & making RCCF the FD, 12 May 10
- Letter fr RCCF to DFO Baripada re. background on Bhanu Acharya, 13 May 10
- Letter fr FD to DFO Baribada re. new programme of HWW search team, 13 May 10
- Letter fr RCCF to FD re. allowing Bhanu Acharya inside STR, 13 May 10
- Letter fr HWW to FD re. permission to make a 7-day assessment, 13/14 May 10
- Response fr FD to HWW re. allowing HWW, Bhanu & 3 others into STR, 14 May 10
- Letter fr PCCF (WL) & CWW to FD requesting report on elephant deaths, location of tusks, culprits, etc., 25 May 10
- Letter fr CF (WL) to RCCF & FD requesting report on elephant deaths, location of tusks, culprits, etc., 25 May 10
- Letter fr HWW to ACF (Probation) Pithabata (T) Range re. handing over 4 sample bones collected from elephant carcasses in STR, 26 May 10
- Letter fr DD to RO Nawana (S) re. undetected elephant carcass, 27 May 10
- Response fr FD to PCCF (WL) & CWW with detailed investigation report, including allegations against HWW, 27 May 10
- Letter fr FD to DFO Baripada asking for progress of investigation, 28 May 10
- Letter fr DFO, Baripada to FD stating that HWW has handed over 4 pcs of bones from the dead elephants, 29 May 10
- Letter fr RCCF to FD & DFO Baripada & Karanjia enclosing CD & report from HWW on STR field visit, 29 May 10
- Memo fr DFO Baripada to FD re. enquiry into recovery of tusks, 29 May 10
- Memo fr ACF (Prob.) Baripada re. no information on tusks, 28 May 10
- Letter fr DD to DFO Baripada asking for name of 4 staff members involved in burning of elephant carcass at Comptt No. Palpala-16, 2 June 10
- Letter fr FD to DFO Baripada re. confidential apprehensions about HWW), 2 Jun 10
- Letter fr FD to DFO Baripada re. Vanoo, & re. villagers from Gadsimlipal involved in poisoning/poaching, 2 June 10
- Letter fr DD to HWW re. possible presence of 3 more elephant carcasses, 2 Jun 10
- RCF's order appointing DD as IO in the Pithabata Range elephant deaths, 10 Jun 10

APPENDIX 6: ACTION TAKEN ON AUG 09 RECOMMENDATIONS

	<p align="center">AUGUST 2009 RECOMMENDATIONS TO NTCA-STR</p>	<p align="center">COMMENTS FROM CHIEF WILDLIFE WARDEN, ORISSA, DATED 21 JUNE 2010</p>
<p>1.</p>	<p>DAMAGE TO INFRASTRUCTURE & HABITAT</p> <p>1.1 Rebuilding of the damaged infrastructure: The entire infrastructure & protection mechanism of Similipal TR has suffered a major setback as a result of the attacks. The immediate priority is to rebuild the damaged infrastructure.</p> <p>1.2 Deployment of a transitional paramilitary force to help Similipal secure its park staff, rebuild its damaged infrastructure, & strengthen measures against poaching & timber smuggling by possibly conducting joint patrolling of the parks.</p>	<p>Extensive damage to infrastructure of Similipal Tiger Reserve occurred as a result of Maoist attack during the period from 28.9.09 to 15.4.09. The Govt. of India, MoEF was requested to provide Rs.162.00 lakhs through APO 2009-10 vide letter No. 12862/FandE dt.23.07.2009. However, Govt. of India provided Rs. 66.00 lakhs only. Out of the funds received for Similipal Tiger Reserve under Centrally Sponsored Scheme as well as CAMPA, following restoration/ reconstruction works have been taken up. 15 bridges repaired, 2 permanent bridges constructed at Nawana & Badbil, 3 culverts constructed at Kabatghai Range & Nuadunguri & 35 buildings including camp office & FRH repaired. The Maoist have damaged the Range & Section offices at Chahala, UBK, Jenabil, Dhudurchampa & number of beat houses which are yet to be repaired.</p>
<p>Action taken as per our June 2010 observations: 38 Camps now operational</p>		
<p>2.</p>	<p>POACHING</p> <p>Select reserve staff must be trained & motivated to build a strong intelligence network in the villages lying within their beats. The reserve must enable every range officer to operate an intelligence gathering fund for the purpose. At present, some activities may need to be carried out by reviving the Tiger Protection Force (TPF) & reconstituting it to include members of paramilitary forces, forest staff as well as a dependable cadre of local villagers.</p>	<p>There is no formal intelligence network in operation, but there are few local people who help the Department in intelligence gathering & detection of the cases. Funds for collection of the intelligence need to be augmented. Regarding creation of Special Tiger Protection Force (STPF), Govt. of Orissa vide Letter No.4606/FandE dt. 4.3.2010 have sent signed MoU opting for second option to Gol, MoEF. However, orders of Gol is still awaited. It is a fact that 30% vacancies among the field staff of the core area & 16% vacancy among the field staff in buffer area still exists as on date. Additional number of vehicles are required for proper enforcement of protection system in STR.</p>
<p>Action Taken as per our Jun 2010 observations: No intelligence network established. STPF not operational. 15 protection camps in E. STR have only 30% staff strength & no vehicles.</p>		

3.	<p>STATUS OF TIGER, COPREDATORS, PREY SPECIES & HABITAT</p> <p>Well designed photographic capture recapture surveys should be the method of choice to estimate tiger numbers. However, a very sincere outreach effort is necessary, mainly on the part of NTCA to help states transition from pugmark based censuses to camera trapping sample surveys, & this must be carried out as a genuine partnership between agencies providing technical expertise & park managements.</p>	<p>The estimation of tiger, copredator, prey & habitat in STR area was last done during 2006. Similar exercise has also been taken up in STR area during May,2010. However, as per present practice, the WII makes the analysis of data collected by field staff & comes up with a result. There needs to be technology transfer from Wildlife Institute of India to the field staff so that they can continue the exercises on sustained basis.</p>
<p>Action taken as per our Jun 2010 observations: No sustained attempt to estimate tiger or prey species numbers. No training or partnership with WII, etc.</p>		
4.	<p>AFFIRMATIVE ACTION WITH LOCAL TRIBAL COMMUNITIES</p> <p>4.1 Efforts to address the main concerns of local communities with balance, sensitivity & skill to build the support of local communities must be made. The first step here is to establish direct channels of communication with local communities. The District Collector, Mayurbhanj, together with the Field Director, Similipal TR, has shown serious intent about commencing a direct dialogue with local communities, which is a move that must be strongly encourage & backed by the state & central governments.</p>	<p>Serious initiative has already been taken for interacting with local community. 154 No. of EDCs have already been constituted. Serious effort by the Field Director in collaboration with the District Administration has resulted in relocation of entire Jenabil village from core area comprising of 61 No. of families to Ambadia rehabilitation colony near Udala in Mayurbhanj district</p>
<p>Action Taken as per our Jun 2010 observations: No attempt to dialogue with local communities.</p>		
5.	<p>CREATING AN INVIOATE CORE ZONE IN SIMPLIPAL TR; RELOCATION OF VILLAGES</p> <p>5.1 A serious knowledge-based effort, with professional support from technically competent agencies, must be commenced through the assistance of NTCA to help understand local communities in & around Similipal. This understanding should guide the identification of candidate villages for relocation & for locally appropriate strategies to alleviate resource-conflicts between people & the reserve. Such an agency is crucial in facilitating greater coordination between the forest & civil</p>	<p>As far as relocation from core area is concerned, support from dedicated & sincere NGOs are always welcome.</p>

	administrations to make voluntary relocations fair & speedy.	
	5.2 The NTCA should constitute a Relocation Task Force , a structure/body comprising committed professionals with extensive experience in the human aspects of relocation & rehabilitation who can, either directly or through delegation, interface between the civil & forest administration, coordinate & follow up the entire process of relocation.	The NTCA may examine the issue & take appropriate action.
Action Taken as per our Jun 2010 observations: One village in the core zone was relocated by the Forest Dept in March 2010, but with no professional support. No action taken on Relocation Task Force.		
6. ADMINISTRATIVE & HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT RELATED ISSUES:		
6.1 Streamlining the management of Similipal TR: In Similipal TR, besides the Deputy Director, the DFOs have always reported to the Field Director, Similipal TR, based at Baripada. However, recently, a post of Regional Chief Conservator of Forests (RCCF) was created at Baripada ... In the absence of clear directives from the state government, the DFOs now report to RCCF, rather than to the Field Director. Besides creating considerable confusion, this has effectively undermined the authority of Similipal's Field Director & made the management of the tiger reserve needlessly difficult. This is a very recent development & the NTCA must take up this matter with the Orissa Forest Department & streamline the reporting lines for the tiger reserve.		During 2008 one post of Regional CCF [RCCF] at Baripada has been created. The Field Director, STR & 3 DFOs looking after buffer areas report to the RCCF, Baripada. Total area of STR is 2750 sq.kms. The core area of 1195 sq.kms is under the control of the Field Director, STR whereas the remaining 1555 sq.kms is under the jurisdiction of 3 DFOs namely - Baripada, Karanjia & Rairangpur. These 3 DFOs do not report to Field Director,STR. It is felt that a unified command for Tiger Reserve area (Core & buffer) is always essential for proper protection & management of STR area. Hence an officer in the rank of CF or CCF may be posted as Field Director, STR who should have command over the DFOs in the buffer area as well as core area.
Action Taken as per our Jun 2010 observations: No action taken		
6.2 Lack of technical & outreach support to park management: The reserve management has highlighted that Similipal has been without a research or veterinary officer or any other kind of scientific support staff for a long while. Similarly, while there is clearly a need, proper outreach & extension support in the form of a social scientist or ecodevelopment officer too is unavailable. It would be useful if the reserve-level Tiger Conservation Foundation, once formed,		Difficulties are being faced in the field for attending to ailing & injured animals as well as for conducting postmortem of dead animals for want of Veterinary doctors/VAS in the tiger reserve area. Similarly, for continuous monitoring of various research activities, trend in population dynamics, ecological parameters etc. a Senior Research Officer is essential to be posted in the STR area. These posts need to be created.

	<p>could provide the platform to recruit suitable people in these roles. These could also become areas of fruitful collaboration between civil society groups & tiger reserve managements. The NTCA must issue advisories mandating these roles in tiger reserves & also provide startup support to such positions.</p>	
<p>Action Taken as per our Jun 2010 observations: No action taken</p>		
	<p>6.3 Filling of staff vacancies at Similipal TR: Out of a total sanctioned staff strength of 281 (from the level of Assistant Conservator of Forests to Forest Guard), there were 101 vacancies in the whole of Similipal Tiger Reserve at the time of the extremist attacks; all 3 Assistant Conservator of Forest positions, 5 out of 13 Range Officer positions, 18 out of 44 Forester positions, & 60 out of 108 Forest Guard positions being vacant. Similipal TR is currently facing a severe crisis as far as staff strength is concerned, although efforts are under way to post 39 forest guards recently recruited by the Orissa Forest Department. Unless these vacancies are filled, we expect very little change on the ground. If necessary, NTCA must fully fund these positions &, more importantly, monitor & ensure that there are no vacancies for funded field staff positions.</p>	<p>To fill up the vacancies, recently, one Deputy Director & one Range Officer have been posted to STR. Posting of ACFs is in the pipeline. As regards vacancies in the rank of Foresters & Forest Guards, they belong to promotion quota. There are no suitable candidates for promotion. The matter is being examined for making alternative arrangement for filling up the vacancies.</p>
<p>Action Taken as per our Jun 2010 observations: At present there is no Deputy Director, only 1 out of 3 ACF posts are filled, & the posts of 2 Range Officers, 11 Foresters & 30 Forest Guards are vacant.</p>		
	<p>6.4 Time-linked promotion of field staff: Many of the field staff were likely to retire in the same post they had been initially appointed, even after having put in c. 35 years of service. This deplorable state of affairs is both due to poor human resources management at the state level & because of recent upgrading the minimum qualification for positions, as a result of which staff recruited under lower qualifying requirements are never ever promoted. Time-bound promotions have to be introduced & at least for the old timers, promotion criteria need to be relaxed.</p>	<p>After implementation of recommendation of Sixth Pay Commission, provision of Assured of Career Progression (ACP) has been put in place. However, though financial benefits are given to the field staff as per the provision of ACP, this does not lead to automatic promotion in career. Keeping in view, the adverse working condition in Similipal, time bound promotion will definitely motivate the field staff.</p>
<p>Action Taken as per our Jun 2010 observations: No action taken</p>		

<p>6.5 Women field staff in core zone: The recruitment policy of the state stipulates that 30% of the staff be women. While this is, in general, an extremely progressive move, park managers express legitimate constraints that this policy imposes when it is extended to the recruitment of core zone field staff. Under the strenuous field conditions of Similipal TR, where forest guards are expected undertake rigorous patrolling, women are often unwilling or unable to perform these roles, which genuinely handicap field managers. Hence, we feel that, at least the core STR Division should be exempt from this rule, & women already recruited under this policy (about 20+) should be interchanged with male staff from the buffer/circle.</p>	<p>Already few Lady Forest Guards are working in the Core area of Similipal. Their performance has been found to be satisfactory & nothing adverse has been observed till date. However, the situation will be reviewed from time to time.</p>
<p>Action Taken as per our Jun 2010 observations: No action taken</p>	
<p>6.6 Better welfare policies for Similipal TR staff : Many frontline staff who have served their entire working life in the core zone of Similipal TR, due to constant use of anti malarial drugs have had serious side effects (e.g., hearing loss) after being posted inside the core zone for prolonged periods of time. Specifically, we suggest: (1) a generous risk pay component to field staff (Forest Guards, Foresters & Range Forest Officers) to serve as incentive & compensation for the harsh working conditions within the park; (2) generous medical insurance cover & a doubling of life insurance cover for field staff during the period when Similipal TR remains under Maoist threat; (3) a reliable system of conveying rations & medicines to staff working from field posts; (4) a free student hostel at Baripada exclusively for school & college going children of serving frontline staff; & (5) a transfer/policy that ensures that younger staff are preferentially posted to both the core & buffer of Similipal TR & are regularly rotated between core & buffer zones.</p>	<p>The field staff stay without family in the core area. It is desirable that their families should be placed at the nearest points in the periphery for proper health care & education of children. Therefore, small family accommodation need to be developed in cluster at Joshipur, Baripada, Udala & Thakurmunda.</p>
<p>Action Taken as per our Jun 2010 observations: 1 hostel for Foresters & Forest Guards was constructed in 2009-10 at Jashipur. A 2nd hostel is under construction. No other action taken.</p>	