

## 2002/2003 Annual Report

- Report From The Chair
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We are all used to reading about natural disasters - floods, famines and hurricanes. For Global Tiger Patrol (GTP) the greatest challenge over the next few months will be a drought that is affecting several states in India.

The two places directly affected, in which GTP has ongoing project work, are Ranthambhore and Sariska Tiger Reserves. There had already been 3 poor monsoons before the failed rains in the summer of 2002.

When I visited Ranthambhore in the autumn, the landscape should have been green and lush after the monsoon, with the trees heavily in leaf and many flowering or in fruit. The undergrowth should have been so thick that it was difficult to spot the wildlife. However, shockingly, it already looked as though it could be April - the air was unseasonably hot and bone dry. There was hardly a blade of grass to be seen. Where there were still green leaves on the trees and bushes these were withering - not going brown as in the British autumn, but shrivelling visibly from the ends. The plants and trees were drawing back all their resources to survive the months ahead until the monsoon, which is due at the end of June 2003. The picturesque and internationally renowned Ranthambhore 'lakes' had almost vanished.

Dozens of muggers (crocodiles) scabbled over the few remaining desperate leaping fish, surrounded by painted storks, which seemed strangely unconcerned by the frantic activity in the diminishing stretch of water. Reports are that this lake is now completely dry. Some of the muggers have set off through the park, overland, to search for perennial water.

GTP has been in discussions with the Field Directors of both Ranthambhore and Sariska. GTP has been in discussions with the Field Directors of both Ranthambhore and Sariska. Both parks were filling artificial waterholes even back in December. Fodder for the ungulates is a completely separate problem. We have agreed to keep funds in hand for swift deployment to these two parks to provide whatever resources required.

**Amanda Bright**  
**Chair of Trustees**

## **PROJECTS SUPPORTED BY GTP IN 2002**

### **Project Lifeline Sundarbans West Bengal**

The GTP donated launch continues to provide support to Project Lifeline Sundarbans, which is working on the island of Satjelia, situated deep in the tidal mangrove region of the Sundarbans, south of Calcutta. There is now a female medical officer in charge of the hospital who, with her team, provides 24-hour support for 25 days each month. More than 12,280 patients attended the hospital in 2002.

The launch was used for organising and running medical services, offering diagnosis, treatment and minor surgical operations on four different islands. Community health and environmental awareness campaigns were conducted on this and other islands.

Latterly in 2002, there were several occasions when tigers strayed into Satjelia and nearby islands. The launch was used to keep vigil on the fringe villages and, although a few tigers did stray into them, it was possible to drive all of them out without incident.

There were two confrontations elsewhere in the Sundarbans, where tigers entered villages. Unfortunately both resulted in the death of these tigers, despite everyone's best efforts to capture and release them elsewhere.

The number of children of tiger and crocodile victims attending the Project's informal school has increased to 34. Several of these children are now sponsored by GTP's supporters. If you would like to sponsor a child, please do contact us for more details.

### **Sariska Tiger Reserve Rajasthan**

There are three patrol vehicles working in Sariska (donated via GTP's partnership in 21st Century Tiger with the Zoological Society of London). These vehicles are being used extensively for patrolling during the day, and at night, to prevent the felling or lopping of trees, illegal grazing and also for fire fighting. They have also been used for raids on poachers and for bringing fodder in lean times for the wild ungulates.

The drought is also affecting this area very badly, but this has been tempered by the excellent work by the NGO Tarun Bharat Sangh (TBS). TBS has built numerous water harvesting structures in the buffer zone around Sariska Tiger Reserve and also in the park itself. The Forest Department has also provided water harvesting devices in

the park, which provide water sources for wildlife and for the villages inside the reserve. This work by no means covers the whole area and the drought continues to be a tremendous challenge for the Forest Department. The situation will get worse over the next few months with no rain due until the end of June or July.

### **Tiger Reserve Rajasthan**

Ranthambhore is in the grip of almost the worst drought in living memory. The water tanker, donated by GTP in 2001, has been in daily use replenishing water holes around the park for use by tigers and their prey. The Field Director, Mr G.V. Reddy showed Amanda Bright a photograph (unfortunately of too poor quality to reproduce here) of one of the water holes being filled by a tanker with a tigress and her cubs drinking across the other side.

The well-publicised incursion by villagers into Ranthambhore National Park in August also resulted in the death of a tigress with cubs. However due to the swift action by the Forest Department and other agencies, the incursions were halted and some 400 cattle, which had been driven into the park, were ushered out.

GTP has funded an insurance policy for 283 Forest Department staff. The main policy runs for 5 years, with an additional top-up running for one year. It covers not only personal injury but also death - not something covered by their contracts of employment. In view of the difficult drought ridden months ahead, this will not be an easy time with conflicts between forest staff and villagers more and more likely as, mistakenly, the villagers think that the reserve has fodder and water to spare.

### **Panna Tiger Reserve Madhya Pradesh**

GTP has been supporting Panna Tiger Reserve for the last 7 years. Dr Raghunandan Chundawat's research project on the predator/prey relationship in dry tropical forests has entered phase 2. As we stated in last year's report, GTP's joint funding of this project continues well into 2003.

At the end of 2001 and the beginning of 2002 Dr Chundawat managed to tranquillise and radio collar more tigers bringing the total up to five. Further ungulates were also collared. A newly collared young male tiger was covering huge distances and proving quite difficult and costly to follow in a jeep. GTP therefore quickly donated a motorcycle to enable the research team to keep up!

In March, Judith Keppel accompanied Amanda Bright on a trip to Panna Tiger Reserve. It is thanks to her generosity that not only is the funding of Dr Chundawat's project continuing, but she also contributed to a greatly needed utility pick-up truck for the Forest Department's use.

The vehicle's donation was timely as, within days of its delivery, it was being used most effectively in fire-protection work. As a result, in 2002, there were only three serious incidents of fire in the Hinorta Range, where it is stationed. Only 45 hectares of the park were burnt compared to 16 incidents totalling 600 hectares the year before. It is always gratifying to see a donation being well used and this immediate use was particularly heart warming. The vehicle has also been used for fire protection work in other ranges of the park, as well as for night and day patrolling.

In the nine months since its donation, the vehicle had already covered 24,626 kilometres. The vehicle was crucial in catching:

- 5 people who were absconding in a wild boar poaching case. All five were charged in the court.
- 50 cases of illegal grazing.
- 11 cases of illegal wood-cutting (five charges were made, the others were being disposed of by the department itself).
- 3 illegal fishing cases (charges made in each case) and 7 other forest offences.
- 9 people, in a case where a tigress and female sambar were snared in December 2002. All of them were charged.

Achievements are tempered by the realities of ongoing struggles. At the end of December 2002 GTP was informed that one of the gentlest and best natured radio collared tigresses had walked into a snare set for sambar deer. By the time she was found it was too late and she was already dead.

Dr Chundawat was awarded the prestigious Carl Zeiss Wildlife **Conservation Award for 2002** for achieving excellence in scientific research on the tigers in Panna.

Amongst the four others to be awarded the Carl Zeiss Roll of Honour for their commitment to wild tigers, wildlife and wilderness areas of India were:

Dr P.K. Malik from the Wildlife Institute of India, who handles all the tranquillisation of tigers for Dr Chundawat's research in Panna, and Mr D.V. Girish, for his work in Bhadra Tiger Reserve and with whom both GTP and 21st Century Tiger have been working.

Supporters' donations of cameras, film and binoculars have been passed to staff in Panna Tiger Reserve and are in regular use.

### **Kanha Tiger Reserve Madhya Pradesh**

For the past few years GTP has, with the approval of the Field Director, been encouraging Kanha's guides, who go out with tourists on every trip into the Park, to form their own self help organisation. In April 2002, Amanda Bright met with the guides and discovered that their new organisation was going ahead with registration. We have recently learned that this has now been done. Comprehensive rules have been drafted, by the guides themselves, on how their monthly contributions can provide loans to members, at less interest than from a bank. GTP had always pledged to provide one-off seed funding for this fund, and this was handed over. They have decided to use part of it to buy an insurance policy for all the guides, covering them for injury or death. The guides have always had a rather nebulous status - they are taken into the Park on a strict rotation basis - if only a few tourists arrive at the gate that day, the guides do not get paid. Although provided with accommodation by the Forest Department, no medical expenses are covered. During the summer months, when the Park is closed for the monsoon period, the guides are employed by the Department for patrolling work - but not for the first 2 weeks of closure and then not again for the 2 weeks prior to the re-opening of the park. It is anticipated that this new Association will enable the guides to run their own self help group, providing much needed back-up to each other.

Three 12 month pilot projects of Community Leadership for Tiger Conservation are being funded by 21st Century Tiger in:

- Anshi National Park and Dandeli Wildlife Sanctuary in this important tiger habitat in the Western Ghats of Karnataka. These 2 protected areas are linked to six protected areas in the neighbouring states of Goa and Maharashtra forming a contiguous patch of about 2,200 sq kms with pockets of intact prime habitat for tigers.
- Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve in Maharashtra. A large forested area surrounds the reserve; together they form one of the largest tracts of contiguous forest tracts in central India.
- Sharavathi Valley Wildlife Sanctuary in the Western Ghats, Karnataka. This is a combination of dense evergreen and semi-evergreen forests linking the Kudremukh National Park, Someshwara-Mookambika Wildlife Sanctuaries in the south and Anshi National Park in the north. The Sanctuary acts as an

important link between all the aforementioned reserves and forms a key corridor for wildlife.

- Already underway, the aims are to mobilise public support for wildlife conservation, to improve the protection system in the field and to collect baseline information about the reserves and sanctuaries.

### **Other funding**

GTP was one of the joint funders of Dr K. Ullas Karanth's South Asian edition of his book, 'Way of the Tiger, together with Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) and Save the Tiger Fund. Dr Karanth has studied wild tigers for more than 16 years. In this book he takes us on a journey into the tiger's secret world. He not only looks at human/tiger interaction from prehistoric times to the present, but also at how modern science has helped us replace traditional tiger mythology with reliable knowledge. The book contains useful information on how tigers live in the wild, their prey consumption, how they establish their territories, find each other and raise their cubs.

It was an unfortunate decision of the publishers to use photographs for this book of captive and wild tigers. Apart from this, it is an excellent book bringing together current thinking on wild tiger conservation. The paperback version is scheduled to be published in April 2003, see [www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk)