

2003/2004 Annual Report

Report From Chair Projects Supported By GTP In 2003/2004

GLOBAL TIGER PATROL 15th Anniversary 2004 Report

In last year's newsletter we spoke about the drastic drought facing large areas of India and, in particular, Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve. Those of us who saw the park under such climatic stress felt that it was unlikely that the park could survive until to the rains without suffering and potential repercussions. However reports we have received from the park say that the park is now looking as good as when it was at its acknowledged heyday in the 1980s before the ravages of the early 1990s took place.

In preparation for the last dry months before the onset of the monsoon in June 2003, the Forest Department sunk 13 tube wells in the park and 6 in outlying villages. Stocks of fodder for the ungulates were laid in and subsequently used. As a result very few ungulates have perished. Barley was even laid down for the chital but the wild boar became so greedy that they kept chasing the chital away!

When the park was originally created, 16 villages were moved out leaving behind many traditional wells. Two of the traditional step wells have now been resurrected. Thirteen of the old village wells have been reactivated; the water holes have been deepened and additional tube wells sunk. With the low capacity wells, water is dragged out by hand, whilst seven others have been equipped with diesel generators. Every day more than 200 water holes around the park were monitored, with water from the tube wells being transported by the two park tankers, one donated by GTP.

The ongoing drought situation resulted in the local people outside the park having to sell 60% of their cattle and buffalo, which has reduced the grazing pressures. Fortunately, it will probably take another 5 years for the cattle numbers to come up to the previous level.

The Food for Work programme, initiated by the Indian Government in response to the drought, resulted in a 6ft tall, thick wall, 15 kilometres in length, being built by local people. This has provided a very successful barrier between the park's buffer zone and some of the villages - village cattle are prevented from moving into the forest for grazing and animals from the forest are less likely to stray out and cause crop damage. There are therefore fewer conflict situations and the park itself is looking much less stressed.

It is hoped that the drought has not caused any long-term harm and may even result in further measures being put in place to stand the park in good stead for years to come. Another golden period perhaps? We wish it well.

Amanda Bright
Chair of Trustees

PROJECTS SUPPORTED BY GTP IN 2003

Panna Tiger Reserve Madhya Pradesh

Dr Chundawat originally came to Panna in Central India 8 years ago to undertake a study of the tiger's largest habitat - dry tropical forest. If past trends were any indication then it was likely that the tiger would disappear first from habitats like this. No studies had been undertaken before and very little was known about tigers from these areas and about the factors (other than poaching) that were responsible for their decline. Dr Chundawat expected that perhaps he would be documenting the decline of the tiger, but hoped, that in the process, he would be able to identify the factors responsible and could then use this knowledge to save this magnificent predator from possible extinction in other such areas.

Unexpectedly, and to his delight, his time in Panna has recorded one of the finest recoveries of a tiger population in recent history. The story is mainly of tigress 52 and her offspring - three generations have been observed with a fourth expected soon. 52's family tree has contributed more than 23 tigers to the Panna tiger population. Overall, tigers recovered from 2 or 3 to almost seven for every 100km² of the reserve.

Tigress 52 is showing signs of age and is approaching the end of her natural life. Her territory has dwindled, and she is pressed on several sides by her female descendents. She and her families have shown how resilient tigers can be when given a little judicious management. Against the backdrop of declining tiger populations, the restoration of tigers to their optimal population in Panna has been a real achievement. Few other examples of this exist in tiger conservation. The challenge is now to maintain the long-term viability of Panna's tiger population.

It is vital for protected areas to be well managed for wildlife, but the tigers' future depends just as much on dealing with the adjacent areas, those zones of confrontation outside the protected areas, where predator and people vie for space and resources. Both areas are critical to securing the future for tigers in India.

Comments by Dr Raghu Chundawat and Joanna van Gruisen extracted from an article by BBC Wildlife, December 2003 and reproduced with their kind permission.

On 16th November 2003, BBC2's 'Natural World' broadcast 'The Emerald Forest', which filmed Dr R S Chundawat and his team, as they tracked the movements of radio-collared tigress 52, her mates and offspring through Panna National Park. Global Tiger Patrol has been jointly contributing to Dr Chundawat's acclaimed scientific research in Panna for many years and we are delighted that the BBC has now given a wider audience the opportunity to see his dedicated work first hand.

Bandipur Tiger Reserve

Karnataka

Bandipur is one of the important tiger reserves located in the Western Ghats in south-western India. Bandipur is contiguous with three other protected areas of Nagarhole National Park, supported in the early years of GTP's existence, Mudhumalai and Wayneed Wildlife Sanctuaries. Together these areas form over 2,100 sq km of prime tiger habitat.

The reserve has 310 frontline staff, all key to the protection of the forests. GTP worked with the current Field Director, Mr Yatish Kumar, during his previous tenure as Field Director of Bhadra Tiger Reserve, and is pleased to have responded to his request for incentives and support for the Bandipur staff. Field gear has been donated to give them a sense of authority and confidence when carrying out field protection duty. The kit provided to each member of staff was one set of khaki uniform, one pair of field shoes, 2 pairs of socks, a web belt and a cap. Hunting of prey species, poaching of elephants for ivory, illegal extraction of forest resources, cattle grazing and forest fires are the main threats to tigers and their habitat in Bandipur.

Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve Rajasthan

GTP was one of the sponsors of the "Ultimate Ranthambhore Guide" an innovative and groundbreaking guide for visitors to Ranthambhore. Copies are sold at the gate of the park and all proceeds are donated to the Forest Guards Welfare fund. The first edition has now sold out having raised over 7 lakh (£10,000) for the fund. We have sponsored a reprint of the guide, which is expected to raise an even larger sum.

The Prakratik Society was established, in 1994, when it took over projects from the Ranthambhore Foundation. Prakratik has various integrated projects, which aim to help local people understand their immediate environment and make necessary changes in the way they live their lives - adopting smaller family norms, education, using alternative energy sources by growing their own wood plantations and using bio-gas, stall feeding cattle and improving their breed so that fewer animals are more productive. The threat to Ranthambhore and its tigers comes from its human neighbours. It is Prakratik's belief that only a project that aims to find local solutions with local people can ensure its survival in the long term.

"Whilst it is important that the tiger survives inside Ranthambhore National Park, let us not forget that it is equally important for local people to coexist in harmony." Prakratik Society 2003.

GTP sent a grant to the Prakratik Society for its outreach work, which includes a mobile library, education through drama and involves the villagers and children, who are unable to attend the school.

Sariska Tiger Reserve

Rajasthan

The pressures on this reserve are enormous in terms of visitor numbers, caused mainly by the enormous number of pilgrims that visit the shrine at Pandupole. However, although the entry fees collected now amount to over £50,000 a year, these go to the State Government Treasury and not directly to the park. Despite these pressures, the tiger census figures officially appear to be relatively unchanged in recent years.

Both GTP and the 21st Century Tiger partnership have made regular donations to Sariska Tiger Reserve and the non-government organisation Tarun Bharat Sangh (TBS) in the last few years. The vehicles donated by 21st Century Tiger provide excellent capacity to the Forest Department in anti-poaching patrolling activities both at night and during daylight hours. The large Eicher canter is particularly useful and appreciated for transporting equipment and ferrying large numbers of staff when required for activities such as fire-fighting. The park management has recently informed us that the extra mobility afforded by the donated vehicles plays an invaluable and hugely significant role in the protection of the tiger reserve.

Meanwhile TBS continues its internationally acclaimed work with 750 villages both in and around Sariska Tiger Reserve and further afield. Even Prince Charles beat a path (by helicopter) in 2003 to meet up with Rajendra Singh, TBS's charismatic General Secretary, to learn more about and see at first hand TBS's water conservation measures, and to find out how they motivate communities to protect the forest and wildlife. This latter work was something that GTP funded initially and we are delighted to see and hear direct from Rajendra that TBS is building on these foundations.



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Sundarbans

West Bengal

Shri Susanta Sardar of Satjelia Island, Sunderbans, lost his father to a tiger attack when he was only 8 years old.

Since then Project Lifeline Sundarbans (PLS) has been looking after Susanta, his mother and two younger sisters. With the help of several individual GTP supporters, Susanta has now completed a Masters Degree in Ancient History from Calcutta University. He has

also passed the School Service Commission and is awaiting his posting as a teacher in a Higher Secondary School of the State. PLS has passed on its thanks and pleasure to GTP for supporting this tribal boy. Without such support it would have been impossible for Susanta to achieve this goal.

Global Tiger Patrol holds details of all the children at the PLS clinic school. If you would like to consider sponsoring any of these children, please get in touch with us. Sponsorship of a child costs £15 per month.

GTP's support for the work PLS is doing in the Sundarbans continues. In the autumn, the Irish Ambassador Philip McDonagh and his wife Dr Ana Grenfell McDonagh inaugurated this ambitious new hospital building, built with funds donated by the Irish Government.

In October 2003, poet and writer Ruth Padel accompanied Amanda Bright and another of GTP's trustees, Carole Elliott, on a visit to the Sundarbans to look at the work that PLS is doing there with GTP's support. Ruth has kindly written an article about her trip to this unique tiger habitat, which can be found on the News and Articles page.

Other funding

Regular visitors to Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve will know of, or may even have met Mr G V Reddy who, until the Spring of 2003, was the Field Director of the park. The transformation of Ranthambhore from a place, where so many well-loved tigers had 'disappeared', to the showcase park that it is now, was due, in large part, to the direction that he took and the leadership he gave during the years that he was working there.

Mr Reddy has now taken a sabbatical from Government service to pursue his studies in conservation in Nagarahole, Karnataka. Partly in recognition of his integrity as a forest officer and partly to assist him in his studies, GTP gave financial assistance to Mr Reddy when he attended the World Parks Congress in Durban, South Africa in September 2003. Every ten years, the World Conservation Union (IUCN) organises a meeting to take stock of the state of protected areas (PAs) to appraise setbacks and progress, and define the agenda for PAs for the next decade.

There were nine days of plenary and workshop sessions, side events and field trips. Participants addressed gaps within PA systems by identifying under-represented ecosystems, defined tools to improve management effectiveness, sought new legal arrangements and identified partnerships. It was recognised that the threats to PAs from unsustainable hunting for sustenance and trade can only be reduced through active participation of the local communities.

Mr Reddy has told us that attending this Congress was a rare and unique opportunity. It gave him invaluable insights into the scientific management of PAs. A visit to Kruger

National Park and Timbavati Private Reserve enabled him to learn first hand the various management techniques that are being used there and, further, introduced him to the African concept of private parks being contiguous with National Parks. We look forward to learning more from him, once his own research work in India is complete.

Camera Training Workshop

Supporters will know that on some occasions GTP feels there can be great advantage to working with like-minded partners on various projects. The Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA) is one such informal partner. EIA works to find solutions to environmental and conservation issues, especially those that effect developing countries and the people who rely on their environment for their livelihoods. EIA carries out new research to provide information so that it can help bring about change.

In September 2003, EIA hosted a ten day video camera and editing training workshop for 15 participants with guest speakers, with financial support from GTP. The course was held in Mumbai, India. It was designed to demonstrate the value of video as a campaign tool and to enhance the capacity of organisations and activists to better defend their natural resources from over-exploitation by industrial concerns, in particular, unsustainable and illegal mining. The empowerment of organisations engaged in fighting mining in India's Protected Areas enhances tiger conservation by generating information available to decision makers in government and corporate bodies at national and international levels. The increase of awareness among the media and the international consumer community regarding the true costs of mining upon biodiversity, forests, water and people assist in the stimulation of corrective action of those responsible.

The workshop participants came from Indian organisations, some working to stop illegal, unethical and unsustainable mining that is occurring inside protected forests, which are also home to tigers. The participants were split into four teams and tasked with producing a five to ten minute campaign video, based on a local environmental issue and including three interviews one with an official/expert, one with a victim and one with a campaigner. The technical training covered everything from handling a video camera through to directing the edit of a short campaign video and all the steps in between.

The enthusiasm and commitment of the participants was remarkable. By the end of the ten days, they had produced four excellent and diverse films. GTP has provided additional funds have been provided for the cost of purchasing camera equipment for the Bombay Natural History Society. This will then be available for use by their own and other groups' members for making campaigning films.

This was an innovative use of Global Tiger Patrol's funds. The use of video as a campaign tool is increasingly significant. Even the non-technical aspects of this course provided useful know-how to the participants on the thought process that goes into the preparation of these videos, and well as the "hows and whys" of a campaign from EIA's perspective.

21st Century Tiger Update

2003 has been an amazing year for the partnership GTP has with the Zoological Society of London. Thanks to the European Association of Zoos and Aquariums (EAZA), who chose 21st Century Tiger as the focus for their conservation campaign for 2002 - 2004. A total of 124 zoos have signed up and have raised well over £160,000 so far, with just under a year to go. The Australasian Association of Zoological Parks and Aquariums (AAZPA) has also recently launched their own campaign, having already donated significant funds to 21st Century Tiger in the past. An awareness campaign is also running with the Euro-Asian Regional Association of Zoos and Aquariums (EARAZA), whose members are based in former Soviet states.

A total of 10 projects were approved, nine of which have been funded by 21st Century Tiger, which include Tiger Habitat Consolidation in India, Southeast Asia Wildlife Training Centre, based in Thailand, Curbing Wildlife Crime in Sumatra and Fire-fighting on the Sino-Russian Border. Further projects are in the process of being approved by 21st Century Tiger's panel of expert advisers at the time of writing, with a number being specially allocated for the EAZA campaign's funds. Maybe a zoo near you is involved in the campaign?

For further information about 21st Century Tiger's work, the EAZA campaign and participating zoos, visit www.21stcenturytiger.org.