

Satpuda Landscape Tiger Partnership



Annual Report, April 2016

Executive Summary

The wild tiger is a keystone species in many of Asia's protected areas, and is revered and feared in equal measure. Nonetheless, our fascination with the species has not protected it from multiple threats which have rapidly and steadily decimated their numbers and range. Today, less than 4,000 wild tigers remain worldwide. The Satpuda Highlands of Central India arguably represent the best chance wild tigers have for survival. Here, the partners of the Satpuda Landscape Tiger Partnership (SLTP), funded by the Born Free Foundation, are working relentlessly to stem the tiger's decline and aid its recovery. Throughout 2015/16, the SLTP's eleventh year, the network has maintained this dedication with a range of activities, including legal representation, landscape monitoring and lobbying, field research, mitigation of human tiger conflict, health care provision, environmental education and sustainable livelihood initiatives. The co-ordination enabled through the SLTP network ensures that measures to reverse and mitigate threats to tiger conservation can be delivered in a consistent and cost effective manner, benefiting tigers and people alike.



► Indian Coral tree © Sanjay Karkare

THE TIGER CRISES

With less than 4,000 wild tigers left in the world, the future for this iconic species in its natural habitat is precarious indeed. In India, home to more wild tigers than any other range country, only 11% of original habitat remains in an increasingly fragmented and often degraded state. Whilst there are encouraging signs that the species might be on the rise in some countries, India among them, unequivocal action on several levels is required to ensure any recovery can be sustained. As a conservation dependent species, tigers require large contiguous forests with access to water and undisturbed core areas in which to breed. Against a backdrop of a burgeoning human population desperate to overcome poverty, tiger habitat in India is encroached upon for livestock grazing and agricultural cultivation, and tiger prey is poached for food. Wild tigers continue to be killed for the market in tiger parts and products, with demand being further stimulated by the ongoing breeding and trade of tigers for their parts and products in Southeast Asia and China. Add to this direct conflict with communities living alongside tigers who compete for the same forest resources, often resulting in fatalities on both sides, and it is clear that the threats to tigers are greater now than they ever have been.

A MODEL SOLUTION

The 25,000 km² of contiguous forests in the Satpuda highlands of central India are amongst the world's most important tiger habitats, and the focus of SLTP's efforts. Rich in biodiversity, this landscape is the key to the water security of millions of Indians, delivering essential ecosystem services to the surrounding communities. To combat the threats faced by wild tigers in this region, the SLTP was established in 2004 by the Born Free Foundation and the Wildlife Conservation Research Unit (WildCRU) at Oxford University. As tigers roam widely and, like all wildlife, do not recognize political or land use boundaries, SLTP operates a holistic landscape-oriented conservation strategy, implemented by a network of Indian NGOs active in and around seven Tiger Reserves: Kanha, Melghat, Pench (Madhya Pradesh), Pench (Maharashtra), Saptuda-Bori, Tadoba-Andhari and Navegaon-Nagzira.

Saving the tiger corridors

Corridors interlinking Tiger Reserves are some of the most crucial conservation battlegrounds in the Satpuda landscape. Increasing numbers of linear developmental projects through these corridors are disconnecting the Protected Areas and fragmenting the wider network of Tiger Reserves in the landscape. The application of the landscape approach optimizes habitat and wildlife conservation efforts and results in a more sustained and sustainable environment for tigers. SF and TCF focused their efforts in this regard on the Pench-Kanha Corridor, conducting several meeting and awareness programmes. CAT and SF were involved in strengthening mitigation measures for the widening of the NH7, a national highway which connects Nagpur and Jabalpur.



► Farmers at SFs community resource center Pench for the workshop on Solar Power

Solar Energy to conserve Tigers

Utilization of alternative sources of energy in the remote areas surrounding Tiger Reserves is a key activity for the SLTP network. In various ways, partners have developed the use of solar energy by communities and Forest Department officials living who are dependent on the forest for their energy requirements. These interventions reduce both the pressure on forests and visits into tiger habitat, thus minimizing the incidence of conflict.

SF has introduced solar energy powered water pumping systems to farmers through various training workshops. They also collaborated with CAT to provide electricity to the buffer zone villages of Pench and Tadoba-Andhari TRs. TCF distributed solar powered lanterns to 77 households and 87 Forest Department patrolling camps.

SLTP PARTNERS



Baagh Aap Aur Van (BAAVAN)



Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS)
www.bnhs.org



Born Free Foundation
www.bornfree.org.uk



Conservation Action Trust (CAT)
www.cat.org.in



Nature Conservation Society Amravati (NCSA)
www.satpuda.org/nscsa



Satpuda Foundation (SF)
www.satpuda.org



The Corbett Foundation (CF)
www.corbettfoundation.org



Tiger Research and Conservation Trust (TRACT)
www.tractindia.org



Save Wild Tigers
www.savewildtigers.org



Wildlife Conservation Research Unit (WildCRU)
www.wildcru.org

CONSERVATION FELLOWS

Ashfaq Aarbi - Satpuda
Anoop Awasthi - Pench
Poonam Dhanwatey - Tadoba-Andhari
Debi Goenka - Legal Unit
Nishikant Kale - Melghat
Sanjay Karkare - Mobile Education Unit
Kishor Rithe - Landscape Monitoring Unit
Giri Venkatesan - Pench
Kedar Gore – Kanha



► © www.tigersintheforest.com

Founded on principles of transparent, egalitarian collaboration, SLTP is unique in four significant ways:

- SLTP promotes a close working relationship between small NGOs, local people and Tiger Reserve directors, and encourages the sharing of experiences and best practice between these stakeholders.
- SLTP addresses all of the primary threats to tigers, allowing a holistic approach on how best to tackle them.
- SLTP funding flows directly to field level activities, ensuring that a little really does go a long way.
- SLTP Partners set themselves clear objectives against which their performance can be measured.

ACTIVITY UPDATE

April 2015 – March 2016

EDUCATION

BNHS's Mobile Education Unit (MEU) conducted various activities in the fringes of 7 protected areas in the Satpuda landscape. This year, the MEU commenced operating in Umred-Kharandla Wildlife Sanctuary, one of the most recently notified protected areas of Maharashtra State, and also well known for its increasing tiger population.

In total 432 school programmes were conducted by the Unit. The programmes were oriented towards spreading knowledge and awareness about tiger conservation among school children and the wider community living around Tiger Reserves (TRs). 23,352 students and 1,117 teachers participated in the programmes. Activities included various competitions, film shows, lectures, nature quizzes, wildlife conservation related presentations and Tiger Reserve visits. 1,456 students and 169 teachers were taken on tiger reserve visits as part of nature orientation programs. Visiting the protected areas enabled students to experience nature first hand, enabling a deeper understanding of conservation issues.

SF and NCSA also conducted similar nature education programmes for tribal children in 6 TRs in the Satpuda landscape, and TCF continued its nature education initiatives in 2 TRs.

Special nature-oriented camps were conducted for school children. These camps helped the students to understand the ecology around them in much better way than from textbooks. Partners in the SLTP network celebrated World Wildlife Week, Earth Day, Global Tiger Day and other nature related events with community outreach activities such as awareness rallies, quizzes, rangoli-making, face painting, lectures, film viewings, nature trails, and written tests on natural history in multiple schools as well as Tiger Reserves.

HABITAT PROTECTION

CAT worked closely with fellow SLTP partner SF along with SELCO, a renewable solutions organisation, thus enabling the provision of renewable energy facilities to the villages of Bhagwanpur and Ghatpendari, in Maharashtra. Bhagwanpur is a village relocation site for



► School students motivated to plant saplings in the school vicinity © TCF



► SF field officer Niranjan explains about trees to the children on a nature trail ©SF

Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve and Ghatpendari is a relocation site for Pench Tiger Reserve, Maharashtra. Renewable energy interventions not only provide reliable drinking water but also augment community livelihoods through the creation of associated employment opportunities. Such initiatives also help to insulate Tiger Reserves and wildlife corridors from the negative impacts of conventional fossil fuel projects, and also mitigate human-tiger conflict.

As part of water conservation and restoration initiatives by SF and NCSA, temporary weirs were built on the local streams near the core areas of Melghat and Pench TRs. This mitigated the problem of conflict between wildlife and people over water availability during dry seasons, and assisted in maintaining the water table of the area.

In Pench (MA) and Kanha TRs, further village meetings enabled the establishment and development of Village Eco Development Committees to ensure community participation in the protection of the forest areas around them.

SF and TRACT assisted Forest Department staff by participating in both day and night patrolling in the buffer and core areas of TRs. In cases where traces of illegal activities were observed, these were reported back to the Forest Department headquarters.

SLTP Partners also focused on habitat regeneration by carrying out plantation drives on the periphery of TRs.

POLICY AND LEGAL ACTION

CAT continued its legal work on the planned infrastructure development of NH7, a major road widening project (two to four lanes) which will impact both Pench Tiger Reserve and the nearby corridor area. CAT had intervened in the public interest litigation case in the Nagpur High Courts, and filed two appeals at the Principal Bench of the National Green Tribunal, challenging the road widening and the related work permit. As a result of CAT's efforts the High Court noted the mitigation measures suggested by the Wildlife Institute of India and the National Tiger Conservation Authority, and has directed the National Highway Authority of India to adhere to these. CAT and other SLTP partners are working to ensure that the best possible mitigation measures are implemented.

Another area that CAT has been actively working towards is sending comments and suggestions on the draft of the Eco-sensitive Zone Notifications for the Protected Areas (PAs), under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986. CAT has been sending suggestions for the ESZs all over India with a special focus on ESZs of Tiger Reserves.

COMMUNITY HEALTH

The Mobile Health Unit (MHU) has conducted 380 health check-up camps and treated about 20,000 patients in 150 villages in and around five Tiger Reserves viz. Melghat (12,258 patients), Tadoba-Andhari (3,787 patients), Navegaon-Nagzira (2,156 patients) and Satpuda Tiger Reserve (1,960 patients) during. TCF carried out similar medical camps in villages around Kanha TR and in the Kanha-Pench Corridor where villagers were treated.

These regular health camps have built a rapport between the partners' teams and local communities, which aids in strengthening wildlife conservation in remote villages of the Satpuda landscape. The MHU initiative has been instrumental

in developing a strong network of local communities willing to participate in the active protection of their surrounding habitats.

EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING PROGRAMMES

TCF continued its vocational training programme, "Pukaar", begun in 2012, with a total of 89 individuals undergoing training in sustainable agriculture practices, carpentry, sewing and tailoring, poultry farming, beauty therapy and bike repair. The trainees came from villages in the buffer zone of Kanha and Bandhavgarh TRs and Balaghat Circle of the Kanha-Pench Corridor.

SF also conducted vocational programmes at the Confederation of Indian Industry campus at Chhindwara, aimed at increasing livelihood opportunities for tribals living on the fringes of TRs. Around 150 villagers attended the programmes, and upon successful completion, drip irrigation trainees were offered employment by the GMR group, while construction trainees are expected to be employed by L&T, GMR and Mahindra & Mahindra, among others. This activity helped to generate local community support for SLTP objectives, and also diverted human activities from the forest to urban areas, indirectly aiding conservation.

CONFLICT

The TRACT team conducted patrols alongside Forest Department field personnel on foot and on bikes. Information regarding herbivore poaching incidents involving snares and traps was forwarded to Forest Department guards. TRACT also continued their intelligence gathering activities among key



► Dr Ravi More checks a patient for eye infections. © Satpuda Foundation

communities, as well as monitoring carnivore presence during their patrols in peripheral forests, gathering data from indirect signs and direct sightings, as well as from villagers.

TRACT also participated in wildlife monitoring with the Forest Department, facilitating their camera trapping efforts in the buffer zone protected areas. The Dr. Shyamaprasad Mukherjee Jan Van Vikas Yojana, a Government of India scheme, had been proposed and spearheaded by TRACT, to facilitate conflict mitigation and to promote integrated development of local communities living in the forest fringes of 6 TRs. So far, 150 villages in Maharashtra have benefitted from this scheme.

This year, the TRACT team helped to raise awareness of this scheme and its benefits through informal meetings with elders and other villagers. This scheme introduces various handholding measures to reduce people's dependence on the forest, develop livelihood opportunities, and provide



► Team pose next to water hole constructed through shramdhaan © SF

improved sanitation and a sustainable source of water for a winter crop. Through a lower level of presence and activity in the surrounding forest, a reduction in conflict cases was anticipated.



► Panna Seminar 2016 ©Saket Agasti, BFF

SLTP Seminar Panna 2016

SLTP partner Satpuda Foundation hosted the 2016 Annual Seminar at Panna Tiger Reserve in Madhya Pradesh. This TR is located at the northern end of the Satpuda landscape, where SLTP's newest partner BAAVAN is operational. The seminar was themed "Managing Tiger Populations in Corridors: Challenges", and a key focus of discussions were linear development projects in the Satpuda landscape, hampering corridor connectivity. The

actions taken by the partners on such issues as the NH7 development impacting Pench TR and corridors, the Ken Betwa River Linking Project impacting Panna TR, diamond mines in the buffer zones of Panna TR were presented and discussed. Madhya Pradesh's ombudsman and Panna TR's Chief Conservation of Forests officer attended the seminar and expressed their full support for SLTP conservation efforts.



SLTP's friend and supporter Tony Renton presented the idea of increasing the reach of the network via the internet. Tony initiated the preparation of a plan for a tailor made website and brand for the network. As a result of this initiative a website was developed. It was decided that internationally the brand name for the network would be, "Saving India's Tigers" and locally, "Satpuda Landscape Tiger Partnership". Logo designs for the network were invited and the winning logo was chosen as the official SLTP logo.

See savingindiastigers.org



WHAT NEXT?

Since 2004, Born Free has funded the SLTP to the tune of over £500,000 whilst Partners have received substantial contributions from other donors to support their additional independent activities. The current running cost of the SLTP is £75,000 per year, but additional funds are needed to sustain and, wherever possible, expand the activities of the Partners in the next 5-year phase.

Please refer to our Donor Pack to help us fundraise to support the SLTP for years to come, for additional information on the conservation strategy of SLTP and for other ways to help the partnership.



Contact gabriel@bornfree.org.uk for a copy of booklet and DVD. Or download [here](#)

To watch the film: vimeo.com/12429914

HOW CAN YOU SUPPORT SLTP?

Sponsors have many options to support any of the SLTP projects outlined in the Activity Update section of this report. You can make a real contribution by:

- Pledging long-term financial support for SLTP work
- Supporting Born Free's fundraising events
- Enrolling the support of UK and Indian companies as SLTP sponsors
- Building partnerships by assisting SLTP to develop stronger in-country relationships at the national and local levels
- Spreading the news about SLTP's work and influence

WHY SUPPORT SLTP?

SLTP is cost-effective and achieves real value for money, as it:

- Lays the foundation for a nationally and internationally significant conservation initiative
- Invests in long lasting, high impact, locally relevant resources to educate and build capacity amongst the enthusiastic and committed youth
- 100% funding goes to the partners (No overheads)
- Supports grass-root activities that strengthen social and environmental capital, and are indispensable for sustainable practical conservation

Direct reporting from SLTP Partners will ensure feedback on progress and there would be opportunities to get involved by visiting the region and seeing our work first hand. Corporate sponsors may develop PR opportunities including local, state and national media coverage in association with SLTP Partners and Born Free. Born Free stages a number of events throughout the year and donors would be most welcome to join in and meet others with a passion for conservation.

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Report prepared by BFF and other SLTP partners, April 2016

► Photo: @ tigersintheforest.com

