

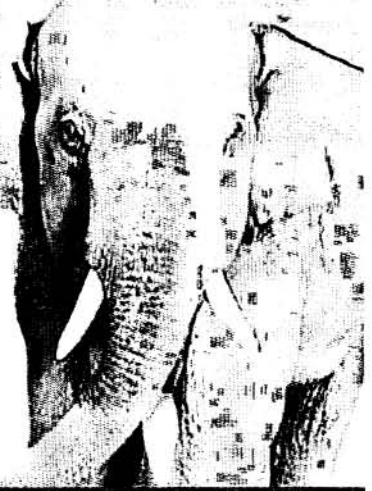


WWF for a living planet

Asian Rhino

AND

AREAS



AREAS Update Issue 3, September 2004

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About AREAS

With the launch of the Asian Rhino and Elephant Action Strategy (AREAS) Programme, WWF strengthened its support for anti-poaching, monitoring and habitat protection for four global important species: the Javan Rhino, the Greater Asian One-Horned Rhino, the Sumatran Rhino and the Asian (Indian) Elephant. AREAS combines cutting edge conservation biology with trade monitoring, community development, socio-economic analysis, public awareness campaigns, dialogue with traditional medicine practitioners, capacity building and policy advocacy. WWF envisions rebuilding and conserving rhino populations in Asia and ensuring the peaceful co-existence of people and wildlife. AREAS reaches beyond national parks and reserves, into surrounding areas, addressing land-use practices. The cornerstone of AREAS is landscape conservation, aimed at connecting and safeguarding networks of protected areas.

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Making a difference

There have been significant gains in the human elephant-conflict, but there is still a lot of ground to cover.

CHRISTY WILLIAMS

As I wrote this short overview on Human-Elephant conflict (HEC), it struck me that we have come a long way since AREAS was launched in 1999.

At that time, we knew of possible mitigation methods like electric fencing, trenches or watchtowers to guard against elephants forced to come into human habitations due to shrinking habitats and increasing human populations, but most AREAS field teams had little real first hand experience in dealing with HEC. Now, the time we put into learning and analysing the HEC situation is beginning to help us get a grip on the problem. Conflicts cannot be mitigated with generic solutions and each HEC dominated landscape requires specific tailor made mitigation strategies.

In the Nilgiris-Eastern Ghats, where human settlements can be easily delineated, solar powered electric fences work very effectively. There has been a decline of about 89% in the incidences of damage reported by villagers in three settlements in the Greater Moyar Valley Corridor over a two-year period after the fence was put up, compared to data from two years prior to the fence becoming operational.

In Riau, Sumatra, a pilot elephant based anti-depredation squad project, involving four captive elephants and eight mahouts, seems to have convinced the management authorities and WWF's own staff that captive elephants can be used effectively in mitigating conflict in some situations. The challenge is now to find a way to make this economically viable and sustainable in the long run.

Scaling up from a site-based conservation projects to a landscape based approach has made the job of conflictmitigation more challenging and invigorating.

The North Bank Landscape is undertaking what is perhaps the largest conflict mitigation strategy ever conceptualised. This autumn, as the crops ripen and the elephants come out of the Himalayan foothills to raid agricultural land, WWF funded Koonkies-trained elephants that were once used as mounts to capture wild elephants by lassoing-their mahouts and forest guards will form a 60 km long daisy chain to prevent wild elephants from breaking through to the crops.

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An elephant roams in the human free areas of the Chilla Range in Rajaji NP

AREAS in Terai Arc Landscape, Nepal



Management, Habitat Restoration and Anti-Poaching Successes and challenges

Conservation of the rhinoceros and elephants in Nepal is part of the larger Terai Arc Landscape (TAL) Program implemented by His Majesty's Government of Nepal with technical and financial support from WWF. Its objective is to link 11 transborder protected areas of Nepal and India through biological corridors and provide larger habitat for the long-term survival of endangered wild Asian elephants, rhinoceros and tigers. Some of the threats that elephants and rhinos face in TAL - Nepal are habitat fragmentation due to 'struggle for land', habitat degradation, poaching, human-wildlife conflict leading to retaliatory killing and, in the case of rhinos, a single large population vulnerable to unpredictable events like natural calamities and diseases.

Over the past couple of years, the AREAS Programme has been involved in habitat management, anti-poaching operations, wildlife monitoring, CITES implementation, rhino translocation and activities to support the mitigation of human-wildlife conflict.

A motorboat recently presented to the Royal Chitwan National Park through the AREAS Programme (WWF UK) has enhanced patrolling in the major rivers that flow through the park. A successful outcome was the arrest of a notorious rhino poacher in November 2003 who has allegedly killed 17 rhinos.



the AREAS Programme in TAL is the active utilization of the Khata Corridor by elephants and rhinos. Khata is a three km transboundary area between Nepal's Royal Bardia National Park and India's Katarniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary, which and is a fine example of successful forest restoration and livelihood enhancement supported by AREAS. Human wildlife conflict mitigation activities have benefited around 300 households here.

One of the main challenges of implementing any conservation programme in Nepal is the prevailing security situation brought about by the Maoist insurgency, which has indirectly allowed poachers, timber smugglers and encroachers to operate with more freedom. Despite the unfavourable political situation in the country, the TAL Program continues to deliver planned activities and targets in conservation and sustainable livelihoods, made possible largely due to the rapport that the program has built with community based organisations.

Sarala Khaling
Coordinator-Program Development,
Research and Monitoring



"There hasn't been a single poaching incident since we got the motorboat."

Asst. Warden, Royal Chitwan National Park, Nepal



Anti-poaching motorboat in action