



Photo credit: WTI

Centre for Wildlife Rehabilitation and Conservation

hills to the south. Displacements also arise due to conflicts with humans and due to animals being stranded in the human-modified environment.

CWRC

The Centre for Wildlife Rehabilitation and Conservation (CWRC) is the first rescue and rehabilitation centre near a protected area in India. Strategically located in Borjuri village, adjacent to Panbari Reserve Forest, near Kaziranga National Park, the centre attends to a wide range of wildlife emergencies resulting from natural or anthropogenic causes.

The CWRC was established in August 2002 with the primary aim of stabilising displaced animals and releasing them back into the wild after treatment (if necessary). The centre follows accepted international protocols and guidelines during the rescue, treatment and rehabilitation of displaced or distressed animals.

A joint venture of the International Fund for Animal Welfare–Wildlife Trust of India (IFAW-WTI) and the Assam Forest Department, the CWRC was constructed with the support of the Animal Welfare Division, Government of India. It is recognised by the Central Zoo Authority (CZA).

INFRASTRUCTURE

The CWRC is managed by two wildlife veterinarians with the assistance of

– Wildlife Trust of India

INTRODUCTION

Kaziranga National Park, in the northeastern Indian state of Assam, is a UNESCO world heritage site (WHS). The park holds the world’s largest population of the greater one-horned rhinoceros and provides refuge to a large number of wild animals, including the endangered Bengal tiger and the Asian elephant.

Bordered by the Brahmaputra river towards the north, Kaziranga lies in the river’s flood plain and experiences flooding each year during the monsoons. Although, these annual inundations play a significant role in maintaining the fertility of the habitat, they also regularly cause large-scale temporary displacement of wild animals.

With an average altitude of 60 metres, the park offers very little escape for animals during floods. Although man-made highlands offer some relief to animals, many get washed away in the floods. Animals also get displaced in their attempts to escape to higher

grounds. Often, young ones, unable to keep pace with their parents, get left behind.

Beyond the park boundary, displaced animals are susceptible to conflicts with humans and sometimes fall prey to poachers. Many also fall victim to road accidents, especially along NH 37, which separates Kaziranga’s low-lying, flooded grasslands from the wooded highlands of the Karbi Anglong



Elephant calf under going an X ray

Photo Credit : WTI

seven attendants who are trained to handle wild animals.

The centre follows accepted international protocols and guidelines for the translocation and release of displaced wild animals. The CWRC has essential veterinary infrastructure including an examination room equipped with an x-ray machine, a theatre for surgery and an evolving preliminary disease investigation laboratory. It also has spacious holding shelters for accommodating birds, reptiles, ungulates, primates and big cats as well as nurseries for megaherbivores and small animals.

The Mobile Veterinary Service (MVS) uses an all-terrain vehicle equipped with the medical supplies necessary for attending to wildlife emergencies stationed at the CWRC. A vital component of the CWRC, the MVS helps extend in-situ medical aid to stranded or distressed animals. This is in addition to its role as an ambulance that facilitates the movement of animals to the centre or back to the wild.

Other MVS facilities and the CWRC Transit Home at Kokrajhar give the CWRC a pan-Assam reach.

EMERGENCY RELIEF DURING FLOODS

One of the main reasons for the existence of the CWRC and its auxiliary stations is to address the displacement of animals caused by the annual floods in Kaziranga.

The severity of the floods in Kaziranga were evident in 2012 too as nearly 600 animals perished in the month-long inundation in June–July. However, the CWRC successfully rescued approximately 100 animals. The IFAW-WTI team currently has its base at the CWRC to deal with the next bout of floods.

SPECIES HANDLED

Celebrating its tenth year this August, the CWRC has saved nearly 1600 animals of 166 species, including common ones as well as rare and threatened species. Some examples

of the latter are the greater one-horned rhinoceros, Asiatic black bear, hog badger, hoolock gibbon, Asian elephant and Bengal tiger.

While most CWRC cases are classified as 'temporarily-displaced' animals and are released in the wild within weeks of admission, those hand-raised are termed 'permanently-displaced'. The CWRC has hand-raised and rehabilitated a variety of avian and mammalian species, including megaherbivores such as rhinos, elephants and bears. These have been successfully soft-released in protected areas of Assam.

Young animals are often displaced or orphaned by natural disasters such as floods or as a result of conflicts with humans as well as many other reasons. A large number of these have been successfully hand-raised at the CWRC. Hand-raising is done with the goal of eventually rehabilitating these animals in the wild.

Over the past 10 years, having dealt with the young ones of rare animals, the CWRC has pioneered the hand-raising and rehabilitation of numerous species of wild animal in India, including the clouded leopard, rhino elephant and India's only ape, the hoolock gibbon. Bears and even birds, such as the greater adjutant stork, have been hand-raised and rehabilitated.

ELEPHANT REINTEGRATION

The Asian elephant is among the most commonly admitted mammalian species at the CWRC, second only to the hog deer. Conflict with humans is one of the key reasons for elephant calves being separated from their natal herds. Many elephant calves have been reunited with their natal herds soon after separation.

Although such reunions are the most preferred rehabilitation option, not all attempts are successful, for various reasons. The CWRC has assisted in the successful reunions of 12 elephant calves. Individuals that are not immediately reunited with their natal herds are hand-raised at the CWRC and prepared for gradual reintegration into wild herds in Manas and other areas.

A third of the elephant calves displaced between August 2000 and October 2011 were found alone. The reasons for their separation from their herds are unknown. Nearly a quarter of the calves displaced had fallen into tea garden ditches.

Fourteen elephant calves hand-raised at the CWRC have been translocated and released in Manas National Park since 2007. The release of calves follows a period of in situ acclimatisation. The calves are monitored with the help



Elephant Calf being unloaded

Photo Credit : Sashanka Barbaruah-WTI

of radio transmitters that are fitted on them before their release.

Since the beginning of the rehabilitation efforts in 2002, the number of rescued elephant calves ending up in captivity in Assam has been brought down to 25 percent: only one-fourth of the rescued calves go to a zoo or to forest department elephant camps.

RHINO REINTRODUCTION IN MANAS

Putting animal welfare ethics into the practice of wildlife conservation, the CWRC has worked for more than just saving individual animals in distress. The most significant achievements of the CWRC include reintroduction of rhinos in Manas National Park – another UNESCO WHS in Assam, which had lost its entire rhino population to poachers. Orphaned rhino calves hand-raised at the CWRC were moved to the wild in Manas in 2006, kick-starting the crucial rhino reintroduction programme.

A total of five rhino calves hand-raised at the CWRC have been released in Manas to date.

CLOUDED LEOPARD REHABILITATION

Among the rarest animals dealt with by the CWRC are clouded leopards. Two pairs of cubs were rescued under different circumstances in Bodoland and handed over to the CWRC Transit Home in Kokrajhar to be hand-raised and rehabilitated. After a few months of care at the CWRC Transit Home, the cubs were moved to a carefully selected release site in a forest in Greater Manas. They were allowed to acclimatise in situ before they were released.

A CENTRE FOR LEARNING AND EXCHANGE OF IDEAS

The CWRC has also provided opportunities to aspiring wildlife veterinarians from India and abroad to hone their skills in treating wild animals and looking after their welfare. About 50 veterinarians have been trained at the CWRC. They have worked as volunteers, interns or staff members.



The article is by the Wildlife Trust of India, Noida

CZA NEWS

The Following Master (layout) Plan and Master Plans were approved by CZA in its 63rd meeting held on 5th Dec 2012

MASTER (LAYOUT) PLANS

1. Lion Safari, Etawah, Uttar Pradesh
2. Padmaja Naidu Himalayan Zoological Park, Darjeeling, West Bengal
3. Panther Safari, Roha, Maharashtra
4. Arignar Anna Zoological Park, Vandalur, Chennai, Tamil Nadu
5. Himalayan Zoological Park, Gangtok, Sikkim
6. Dr. Shivaram Karanth Pilikula Biological Park, Mangalore, Karnataka
7. Sri Venkateswara Zoological Park, Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh
8. V.J.B. Udyan Zoo, Byculla, Mumbai

MASTER PLANS

1. Sepahijala Zoological Park, Agartala.

ZOO NEWS

PARAKEETS FIND NEW PLACE IN LUCKNOW ZOO

The blue-yellow Macau found a new shelter at Lucknow zoo. From a cramped existence in an old enclosure, the parakeets were shifted to a renovated glass enclosure. The frolicking Macau apparently made it clear that they love the space and the ambience of their new shelter. "This will make them more visible," said Renu Singh, Zoo Director. Lucknow zoo had brought the initial pair of the Macau in 1998 from Delhi zoo. The pair bred to produce twelve offsprings. After giving a pair to Kanpur zoo, Lucknow zoo is left with ten of them.

The Delhi Zoo will soon be the owner of a pair of Pumas from the Krasnoyarsk Park of flora and fauna, Roev Ruchey Russia.

ALIPORE ZOO TO GET A PAIR OF ALDABRA TORTOISE

The 63rd Technical Committee approved the donation of a pair of Aldabra tortoise from the President of Seychelles to Zoological Garden, Alipore, Kolkata subject to that all statutory clearances are obtained by the Zoological Garden, Alipore and Government of Seychelles.

RELEASE OF EX SITU UPDATES



The Oct 2012 issue of ex situ updates was released by Dr. Jorg Junhold, Director, Leipzig Zoo, Germany.



Photo Credit: Sashanka Barbaruah-WTI

Clouded Leopard Radio Collaring_Sanfan Forest Range kokrajhar Assam