

COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP FOR TIGER CONSERVATION PROJECT, KUDREMUKH

FINAL REPORT, JULY 2000-JUNE 2001

Submitted to 21st Century Tiger

PROJECT ABSTRACT:

Community Leadership for Tiger Conservation (CLTC) is a pilot Project, to test and establish a model for sustained field conservation activity and monitoring for the next several years in Kudremukh National Park. This project aims to build upon the foundation laid by the Karnataka Tiger Conservation Project (KTCP) in the Park, which was a 3-year state level project, supported by Wildlife Conservation Society-India Program, Save the Tiger Fund of National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and Exxon Mobil Corporation and other donors. KTCP was aimed at improving field protection through basic infrastructure support to the Karnataka State Forest Department and local community involvement initiatives. The Kudremukh National Park was chosen for the KTCP based on the report assessing priority areas for tiger conservation, which included Kudremukh National Park in the Global Tiger Conservation Priority Unit, TCU-55.

The Kudremukh National Park is the largest declared wildlife Protected Area (600 sq.km) of a tropical wet evergreen type of forest in the Western Ghats, in India. The Park is sustaining a diverse assemblage of endangered animals like the Tiger, Lion Tailed Macaque, Dhole, Gaur, Great Pied Hornbill and other threatened species. The Government of Karnataka declared this area as a National Park in 1987, based on a survey of the highly endangered Lion tailed Macaques by Dr.Karant. The Park is subjected to various pressures like hunting, over exploitation of forest resources through firewood collection, cattle grazing, illegal minor forest produce collection, annual forest fires etc. There are several legal and illegally encroached settlements as enclosures deep inside the Park. Even after a decade of notification of the National Park, the Park is still not well protected. Conflicts between interests of local community and the Protected Area are common. The absence of an established protection mechanism was addressed under KTCP by providing training and motivational inputs to field staff, improvement of protection infrastructure like vehicles and wireless equipment. These efforts need to be continued and consolidated.

This project intends to reduce the above-mentioned threats to tigers and its habitat by the following conservation activities:

- Establishing a local information network and building up local conservation leadership in the villages.
- Improving the protection system and motivation of Karnataka State Forest Department (KFD) field staff.
- Community Interface and mobilising public support activities.
- Exploring opportunities for private land buying, of enclosures within the Park.
- Rigorous application of science for a long term biological monitoring of tiger population.

PROJECT PROGRESS:

The activities of CLTC Project started as scheduled in July 2000. The project leader Mr.Niren Jain continued with active field monitoring activities, following up the efforts initiated under KTCP. The highlights of the achievements and the problems faced in implementing the CLTC Project are mentioned below in this report.

The Budgeted Amount under the CLTC Project for one year and the expenditures incurred under various heads under the Project from July2000 to June2001 are enclosed in Appendix – 1.

ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN IN THE CLTC (KUDREMUKH PROJECT)

REDUCING HUNTING PRESSURES

1. Establishing an intelligence network and building up community conservation leadership in the villages.

Several efforts were made by the Project Leader to setup an intelligence network in the villages inside and adjoining the National Park. Presently, there is an anti-wildlife attitude among the villagers; it has been difficult to convince the villagers to cooperate in providing information regarding the illegal activities in the forest. Hence, not much progress has been made regarding this. It is hoped that through sustained education and interaction programs we will be able to build up an effective intelligence network in the future.

The Project Leader collected information regarding anticipated commercial activities in the Park. Some of the interior, privately held land enclosures inside the National Park have recently been bought by businessmen, with the idea of building commercial tourism resorts. The Project Leader informed the officials regarding the threats posed to the wildlife if such commercial resorts are allowed inside the National Park.

2. Improving protection system of the Karnataka State Forest Department in the Park

- a. The Project Leader made several field visits with the protection staff of Karnataka State Forest Department, monitoring the effectiveness of protection and the problems faced by the lower level field staff. During the field visits several hunting, cattle grazing and Non Timber Forest Produce (NTFP) Camps were detected inside the National Park. As there is a shortage of grazing pasture in the adjoining villages during summer, the villagers intrude into the National Park and camp deep inside the National Park with around 300 cattle heads in each camp. The villagers also set fire to the grassland to induce fresh grass growth to facilitate cattle grazing, this is a serious threat to the natural grasslands and the adjoining evergreen shola forests. The Project Leader has followed up with the Park Warden to abandon the earlier management practice*

of early burning the grassland in the winter by the Forest Department; instead grids of fire lines will be taken up on an experimental basis to prevent rapid spread of grassland fire.

- b. *Establishing anti-poaching camps in the Park:* After a follow up by the Project Leader the KFD have taken initiatives to establish anti-poaching camps in the Park, wherein the field staff camp deep inside the forest and stay alert for any signs of poaching or other illegal activities like grazing, NTFP Collection etc. A report showing suitable positions for anti-poaching camps was given to the Karnataka State Forest Department, based on the human pressures recorded during the reconnaissance survey (total distance walked within the Park = 600km) of the National Park under Karnataka Tiger Conservation Project (KTCP). The feasibility of these positions for anti-poaching camps was discussed with the field staff. Even though all the anti-poaching camps as recommended by the project leader have not been implemented, some of them are permanently operational and a few others are operational on rotational basis along with night patrolling. The Park now has a new Warden and the Project Leader has initiated efforts with the new Warden to establish more anti-poaching camps.

(Annexure-1: Map of anti-poaching camp locations, with different human intrusions)

PREVENT MINING FROM PENETRATING DEEPER INTO THE PARK

(Annexure-2: Map of mining location)

A 30-year lease of an open cast iron ore mining project inside Kudremukh National Park lapsed in July 1999. Following this, a 2-year temporary working permission was granted for mining over the broken up area of 14 sqkms. The mining company (a Public Sector Undertaking of Government of India) has now applied for another long-term (20year) extension of the lease and the release of unopened grassland and shola forest areas inside the National Park. The mining operations at Kudremukh other than directly damaging the wildlife habitat through open cast mining, also needs more areas for dumping of waste mud. Already 7 sqkm of a pristine forest valley is submerged for dumping iron ore waste tailing and another 4 sqkm has been damaged due to open cast mining activity. The continuation of the present mining and the opening up of new areas would further fragment wildlife habitat of Kudremukh National Park.

The Project Leader devoted considerable amount of time in campaigning to stop mining operations at Kudremukh since the campaign against mining the company's mining lease had lapsed and public opinion had to be mobilised to ensure that the Government does not give another long-term extension of lease.

The campaign to stop mining at Kudremukh had several facets, which are briefly mentioned below.

ADVOCACY

There was immense pressure on the Government to release unopened areas of the forests to expand the mining operations inside Kudremukh National Park. The efforts of CLTC Project to counter this pressure by creating awareness among the highly respected social and religious leaders on the effects of mining on the rivers downstream and the forests of the region resulted in strong letters written by them to the State and the Federal Government opposing the continuation of mining activity in the region.

A slide show was organized by the project leader on the devastating impacts of mining at Kudremukh at a Workshop in Sariska Wildlife Sanctuary, members present included Mr.S.C.Sharma, Addl. Inspector General of Forests - Ministry of Environment and Forests, Mr. P.K. Sen, Director-Project Tiger, Mr.Valmik Thapar of Tiger Link, Mr. Fateh Singh Rathore - Ranthambore Foundation and Members of Legal Action for Wildlife and Environment (LAW-E). Everyone present expressed their concern and support to stop the mining activity at Kudremukh.

Another slide presentation was organized by the Project Leader Mr.Niren Jain of Kudremukh Wildlife Foundation and Mr.D.V.Girish of Nature Conservation Guild, Chikmagalur regarding the ill-effects of mining in Kudremukh. Three state cabinet Ministers and around 25 local politicians, present at the slide show were sensitized on the extent of pollution in river Bhadra. Earlier a similar slide show was organized to the Member of the Parliament-Chikmagalur and he was also convinced of the pollution in river Bhadra.

An appeal was sent by Kudremukh Wildlife Foundation, Nature Conservation Guild, Green Watchers, Arohana and WILDCAT-C to several cabinet ministers informing them of the pros and cons of continued mining inside the National Park. Solutions to solve some of the issues like loss of employment, revenues to the port... were also provided to counter the mining company's arguments.

As part of the campaign the film was screened at two meetings in Bangalore, where Cabinet Ministers, Legislators (elected representatives of people) opposition leaders cutting across party lines unanimously resolved to support the stoppage of mining. Dr. Ullas Karanth of Wildlife Conservation Society was part of the delegation which met the Chief Minister of the State to whom a copy of the film was presented.

Kudremukh Wildlife Foundation accessed significant data regarding the siltation in Bhadra Reservoir. A memorandum was presented to the Government of Karnataka, regarding effect of mining on Bhadra Reservoir which included signatories from our partner organisations Wildlife First!, Nature Conservation Guild, Arohana, Green Watchers and Wildlife Watch. This was also released to the media and was published in the several newspapers.

MEDIA/OUTREACH

The timely media campaign by the CLTC Project highlighting the impacts of iron-ore slurry pipe leakage inside Kudremukh forests, generated tremendous impact which largely ensured that demands for new areas for mining inside the Park was rejected.

Shekar Dattatri a renowned wildlife filmmaker volunteered to help Kudremukh Wildlife Foundation to produce a **12 minute video documentary - MINDLESS MINING, *The Tragedy of Kudremukh***. This proved to be a powerful tool to support the campaign to stop mining at Kudremukh. The film has been submitted as an audio visual evidence in the ongoing court case in the Supreme Court of India to stop the mining inside the National Park filed by Wildlife First (partner organisation). A Kannada (local language) version of the documentary has also been produced to gain support of the farmers affected by mining activity. The film was mainly aimed at creating awareness among the farmers using the Bhadra Reservoir Command Area (located downstream of mining) who will be ultimately losing irrigation potential due to heavy siltation in the reservoir from the mining site at Kudremukh. Farmers who form a major constituency, play an important role in influencing the decisions of the Government particularly those that affect the farming community. The film was also screened to local religious leaders, who later wrote strong letters to the Government to stop mining at Kudremukh. The film was also telecast in local cable network in important towns around the mining area.

A website www.kudremukh.org was launched using skills of local volunteers to provide information regarding the developments and conservation activities of Kudremukh Wildlife Foundation and Kudremukh National Park. The website has about 20 visitors/day on an average and has formed an important resource base regarding the Park's biodiversity and wildlife importance and the latest events in Kudremukh. Several volunteers from all over the country and abroad have offered help to support the activities of Kudremukh Wildlife Foundation.

BUILDING PUBLIC OPINION TO CAMPAIGN AGAINST MINING IN KUDREMUKH

A Public Rally was organized at Chickmagalur by Nature Conservation Guild and WILDCAT-C (partner organisations) led by Poorna Chandra Tejasvi a noted literateur of the State. Kudremukh Wildlife Foundation and several organizations including Nature Club's of the schools participated in the Rally. The video documentary MINDLESS MINING, the tragedy of Kudremukh was screened where around 150 people including journalists were present. A copy of the film was handed over to the Deputy Commissioner, who heads the administration in the district, with an appeal to present it to the Government. (see photos and detailed report).

Another screening of the film was organized by Kudremukh Wildlife Foundation and Arohana Mangalore to an audience of 250 people which included the former Chief Minister of Karnataka Mr.Veerappa Moily, along with media persons.

OTHER ACTIVITIES TO STOP MINING ACTIVITY

Dr. Ullas Karanth, conservation biologist, Wildlife Conservation Society, India Program, Mr. Praveen Bhargav, and the Project Leader Mr. Niren Jain had provided substantial inputs to the Indian Institute of Science, which was commissioned by the Government to carry out an Environment Impact Assessment of mining on the flora and fauna of Kudremukh. This was the first report where facts of the extent of damage done by mining in Kudremukh was comprehensively covered.

During a field visit the Project Leader Mr. Niren Jain of Kudremukh Wildlife Foundation and Mr. Praveen Bhargav of Wildlife First! observed fresh breaking up of forest land and informs the Deputy Conservator of Forests regarding KIOCL's activity in the Lakya Dam area, where fresh grasslands were being broken for making a new dyke in the Lakya Dam; a case was booked on KIOCL for violating the conditions in the temporary working permission and the work was stopped immediately.

IMPROVE HABITAT QUALITY

Reduce anthropogenic pressures on the park

In general, formation of roads pose one of the biggest threats to wildlife by providing rapid access to human intrusion. There are several trails inside the forest used as an approach to these settlements inside the National Park. There is a growing demand to upgrade these trails into roads, to provide electric and telephone lines to these interior settlements.

There was a move to illegally form a road to an interior settlement like *Tolali* and another road to form a link between 2 major towns passing through *Elaniru* settlement within the National Park; this would have opened up more forests to human intrusion and the road would have cut across a narrow corridor of forest connecting to other larger tracts of forests adjoining the National Park. CLTC Project campaigned and resisted against the formation of this road. The Karnataka State Forest Department has presently rejected the permission to form this road.

There was an attempt to upgrade an existing State Highway (passing through the Park) into a National Highway connecting the port town of Mangalore to another National highway at (NH 4) Chitradurga, which will increase the traffic flow through the Park by several folds; consequently increasing the mortality of wild animals due to vehicle collision and gives more accessibility for illegal activities inside the Park. An alternative route for the diversion of the National Highway has been worked out under the CLTC Project and has been submitted to the Karnataka State Forest Department and the Ministry of Environment and Forests. The Project Leader had met the Additional Inspector General, Ministry of Environment and Forests (Wildlife) recently and he has conveyed that the National Highway Department has accepted to change the route of the proposed National Highway avoiding passing through Kudremukh National Park as suggested by the Project Leader to the Government. Final orders regarding the change in the route of the National Highway is awaited.

LAND CONSOLIDATION OF NATIONAL PARK AREA

CLTC Project has compiled the data on the number of families and the extent of land holdings within the National Park. Certain field officers had misinterpreted the extent of land holdings within the National Park, portions well outside the National Park were considered to be inside the National Park, leading to higher figures of families residing within the National Park for estimating the cost of voluntary re-habilitation packages to these families. Project Leader has coordinated with the KFD in clearing such doubts with the field officers on the compiled data by the Field Staff of the Park.

An initiative for securing an agreement from the State Government to facilitate privately funded conservation acquisitions of private property enclaves within the Park has been mooted. In the mean while Mr.Vikram Nagraj, member of Wildlife First! presently working in Microsoft Corporation, has volunteered to donate \$100,000, specifically for purchase of private land inside the National Park. Several negotiations were made by the Project Leader to buy private land inside the National Park. It is expected that a few land enclaves will be acquired in the near future, which will be handed over to the Government to be declared as National Park.

Project Leader Mr.Niren Jain networked with Dr.Veerendra Heggade, a prominent religious leader of the region, who is spearheading a major Rural Development Project in and around Kudremukh National Park. Possible collaboration for voluntary rehabilitation of private settlements inside the National Park was explored with the Rural Development Project. Dr. Heggade has shown a very positive response regarding his involvement in the voluntary resettlement of the villages from inside the National Park.

A new threat emerged recently, when the State Government sanctioned housing sites for the landless in the existing enclosures inside the National Park. The increase in number of families inside the Park will lead to human wildlife conflict in the long run. The Project Leader got this issue to the notice of the Deputy Commissioner of the district who in turn assured that further housing sites would not be sanctioned inside the National Park.

MOBILISING PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR THE CAUSE OF WILDLIFE

Community Education Activities

- a.) Two training camp were conducted for school teachers, handpicked from schools adjoining the National Park was organized in association with Mr.Chinnappa and Mr. Gopal of Nagarahole Wildlife Conservation Education Project (NAWICOED). A total of 30 schoolteachers from various schools around the National Park had participated in the training program. The training program included – nature walks, bird watching, slide talks and video film of Wildlife Conservation. The following issues were discussed with the teachers
 - To discourage poaching activity among the local community
 - To discourage commercial exploitation of Non Timber Forest Produce collection (NTFP) and its adverse affects on wildlife and the long term ecological effects on the forest.

- To subside the existing anti-wildlife attitude of the villagers, and continuously work on building a pro wildlife view of the local community.

The training program was very successful in terms of creating awareness regarding Wildlife Conservation in Kudremukh. The teachers have in turn voluntarily taken up the campaign in their respective schools to 'Prevent Forest Fire' in around Kudremukh National Park. Slide show and wildlife films were shown to the school children to make them aware of the importance of saving the unique wildlife of the region.

- b.) A slide talk was organized by the Project Leader with the democratically elected representative of the people, Mr. Gopal Bhandary (Member of the Legislative Assembly, MLA), Karkala. The MLA was very supportive of rationalising the boundaries of the Park, which intends to add good tracts of forests (presently not a part of the National Park) adjoining the wildlife reserves to Kudremukh National Park and deleting other densely populated fragments of forests on the fringe of the reserve area. He has also promised to support the cause of wildlife.
- c.) A slide talk followed by discussion was conducted in an enclosure within the National Park. A total gathering of 40 villagers, including children were addressed on Wildlife Conservation issues.
- d.) The Project Leader Mr. Niren Jain, had presented a slide show to an audience of around 70 people in the local Rotary Club of Karkala. The slides presented were on the importance of Saving Tigers and Kudremukh National Park, threats to wildlife and its habitat.
- e.) As part of the awareness building efforts, the Project leader is building support from local journalists to make them aware of the field realities of the problems faced by the Forest Department Personnel in implementing the Wildlife Protection Act in the Park. During the project period a team of 8 press reporters were taken to the field to show them the devastation caused due to mining in the National Park and this was covered well in the local media.

OTHERS:

A Car Rally was organised inside Kudremukh National Park, in spite of the forest officials rejecting such a proposal. There was a strong political pressure to allow the rally to be conducted within the National Park. CLTC Project has supported and coordinated with the KFD officials, to stop the Car rally passing through the National Park and ensured that the media exposed the issue, on the grounds that it will set a precedent for conducting such rallies inside wildlife protected areas.

A team of 10 volunteers has been built up for conservation of wildlife in and around Kudremukh National Park. The volunteers are of different professional background with diverse potentials to support the Project Leader in the effective implementation and co-ordination of conservation activities.

EVALUATION:

As a result of the critical intervention by the Project Leader combined with efforts from other groups to stop mining activity at Kudremukh, the State Government has issued the final notification of the Kudremukh National Park on 16 June 2001 covering 563 square kilometer area; thus protecting Gangdikal and Nellibeedu areas the catchment areas of river Tunga from mining. This was a major conservation success for the campaign to protect Kudremukh which originated in the early 80s with Dr. Ullas Karanth's scientific study on the Lion tailed macaques and his recommendation of the State Wildlife Advisory Board to declare the area as a National Park.

Fieldwork on data collection on Tiger Prey Density Monitoring could not be taken up as permission for research work is pending before the Government. This is expected to be granted soon and the survey will be taken up subsequently.

Dr. Len Thomas, statistician in wildlife population and Dr. Ullas Karanth, wildlife biologist, Wildlife Conservation Society had visited Kudremukh to establish a new scientific protocol for the long term monitoring of the population of Tiger and its prey base at Kudremukh. This will be tested in the field for feasibility and logistics in the difficult terrain of Kudremukh.

PROJECT ADMINISTRATION

It was decided that the base for operations of CLTC Project should be at Karkala (the Headquarters of Kudremukh National Park Administration), instead of Belthangady (as mentioned in the project proposal). The office has been established at Karkala with all the facilities of communications like E-mail, telephone etc.

APPENDIX - I

BUDGET AND EXPENDITURES from July 2000 to June 2001, in US Dollars.

Sl.no.	Expense Categories	Budgeted Amount	Expenditures	Expenditures in Rupees
1	Salaries and stipends	3000	2253	104000
2	Permanent equipment < \$ 5000	700	247	11380
3	Large permanent equipment > \$ 5000	--	--	--
4	Computer equipment	--	--	--
5	Vehicles	10000	9584	442270
6	Travel	--	--	--
	6.1 International travel	--	--	--
	6.2 National travel	400	286	13,193
7	Supplies & expendable equipment < \$ 1000	1000	464	21407
8	Others	--	--	--
	7.1 Repairs & Maintenance	500	1185	54665
	7.2 Food & Per Diems	200	240	11068
	7.3 Utilities	200	346	15954
	7.4 Communications	300	153	7061
	7.5 Postage & Freight	50	13	597
	7.6 Purchased Services	600	869	40080
	7.7 Miscellaneous	500	13	598
9	Expenses towards documentary film	--	1005	46399
	TOTAL	\$ 17450	\$ 16658	Rs.768674

Total Amount Received from 21st Century Tiger

\$17450(Rs.8,05,274 at Rs.46.148/US\$)

Balance Amount = US \$ 792