

## Media Workshop on Human Animal Conflict and Wildlife Trade at Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary, Muthanga

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News about wildlife in media is a regular feature these days. Dedicated journalists cover all aspects of wildlife and this helps create awareness among the public. Inaccurate reporting, at times, has a long-standing impact among the public that create negativism which is not good for species conservation. Media help to promote species conservation by impacting the mindsets of the people in a positive way. Hence involving media in species conservation is an inevitable requirement of the day.

WWF – India in collaboration with Calicut and Wayanad press clubs organized a two-day media workshop on human-elephant conflict and wildlife trade on 8 and 9 March 2013. About 29 media people from Calicut and Wayanad district attended this, a sponsored programme by the Ministry of Environment and Forests, Govt. of India. The aim of the programme was to inform media about the status of the species and to promote positivism to help species conservation.

The workshop was started with an informal inaugural on the 8<sup>th</sup> by Shri. Roy P. Thomas, Wildlife Warden, Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary. Shri. Renjan Mathew Varghese, State Director, WWF-India welcomed the participants and gave the introduction to the programme. Roy Thomas in his inaugural address stressed the importance of Wayanad WLS with regard to physiography, connectivity, ecosystem and its inhabiting wildlife aspects. Shri. Sudheendrakumar, President, Calicut Press Club felicitated the function.

After the inaugural function, Shri. Mohanraj, Co-ordinator, Nilgiris Landscape, WWF-India took the introductory session on significance of ecosystems, landscapes, biodiversity and its conservation in the global, national and local scenario. He also explained in brief on the issues at hand with regard to the conflicts with tigers and elaborated on the ecology, behavior and lifecycle of India's pride, the national animal, the tiger.

Dr. Ajay Desai, Consultant, WWF-India and Co-Chair, IUCN Elephant Specialist



Inaugural address. Photo BA Daniel

Group handled the session on Human elephant conflicts. He took the case study of specific individuals from the elephant population that WWF-India has been tracking over the past many months and explained on the different behaviour patterns of each individual like how they develop the behaviour over the years, the matriarchal family structure in elephants etc. At the end the participants were taken for a brief field visit to Kakkapalayam where fresh tiger pug marks, deers, and carcasses of tiger kills were sighted.

On the second day early morning, the participants went on a field trip to Irulam and Chethalakam where the rather famous and friendly wild elephant 'Maniyan' was being tracked by the WWF-India Field Staff Mr. Vinayan using VHF antenna and GPS tracking system. The media people had a good time of photo shoot of Maniyan.

The second day of the workshop was set apart for discussions and deliberations on 'Wildlife Trade'. The technical session was led by Dr. Rashid Raza from TRAFFIC India (TRAFFIC – Trade Records Analysis of Flora and Fauna in Commerce), the global wildlife trade monitoring organization. He elaborated on the wildlife trade as big business with specific case studies from India and especially South India. He gave facts and figures on the global and national wildlife trade and also on the various species which are in high demand in trade with regard to its various body parts.

The author also addressed the participants briefly on the topic of coexistence of humans with elephants.

During valedictory all participants received certificates. Each participant was given a resource material kit which contained 'TRAFFIC POST' the newsletter of TRAFFIC-India, posters and documentary CD on wildlife trade titled 'Don't Buy Trouble', copy of the Wildlife Protection Act, WWF Reports on Owl Trade, Leopard Trade and an Ele-kit packet by ZOO.

The logistics team of the workshop included A.K. Sivakumar and Vishanth from WWF-India and Ashish George and Murukan Pareparambil from ATREE.

This two day workshop is the first of a series of workshops on the theme being organized in Kerala by WWF-India (World Wide Fund for Nature – India) in association with the local press clubs and with the support of Ministry of Environment and Forests. The second workshop for Ernakulam Press Club has been planned at Periyar Tiger Reserve on 18 & 19 and the third and last in the series for Thiruvananthapuram Press Club at Shendurney Wildlife Sanctuary on 21 & 22 of March, 2013. For more details of the programme contact Mr. Renjan Mathew Vargheese at renjanmv@wwfindia.net

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