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BOOK REVIEW

THE STATE OF WILDLIFE AND PROTECTED AREAS IN MAHARASHTRA: NEWS AND INFORMATION FROM THE PROTECTED AREA UPDATE 1996-2015

Reviewed by L.A.K. Singh

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The State of Wildlife and Protected Areas in Maharashtra: News and Information from the Protected Area Update 1996-2015

Reviewed by L.A.K. Singh

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With about 7,000 stories and news reports, the Protected Area Update (PAU) constitutes a huge and valuable database. For nearly 25 years, and in over 140 issues, edited by Pankaj Sekhsaria, we have been getting brief access to happenings in different Indian states about aspects related to administration, legal aspects, management, conservation, people & research in wildlife, protected areas, and nature conservation.

The book in hand is about the state of Maharashtra. It is with news and information compiled and edited from PUCs published during 1996–2015. The earlier such compilation was in 2013 covering PAU news about northeastern India during 1996–2011. Congratulations to the editor and his team for the purpose addressed and output delivered through this well designed, neatly laid-out publication on Maharashtra, from the house of the famous Duleep Matthai Nature Conservation Trust.

The editorial notes and brief introduction about the protected area network in Maharashtra with a selected list of relevant references set a well-toned beginning, providing the minimum required details for global readership.

The Melghat Tiger Reserve (year 1973) of Maharashtra is one of the first nine tiger reserves of the country. The growth of tiger reserves to six numbers by 2014 and the concept of having interstate Pench Tiger Reserve holds the state in respect. Also, the state has a list of six other national parks, 38 wildlife sanctuaries, and two conservation reserves. Pages of the book offer chronological news from these areas, thoughtfully aided by an Index.

The Index-entries will be useful for lobbyists, conservationists, wildlife managers and governments which, before taking their own decision, seek examples in wildlife management practices or decisions from other parts of the country. Certain entries in the Index need

rectifications or omits after page-matching. Although a book on Maharashtra, it does mention about a few other states like Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Chhattisgarh, Goa, Gujarat, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, and Uttarakhand. A state like Odisha not appearing in this list indicates the future need to have better news-networking and translations of news from local other state languages for primary entry in PAUs. Some of the acronyms also need a place at page ii.

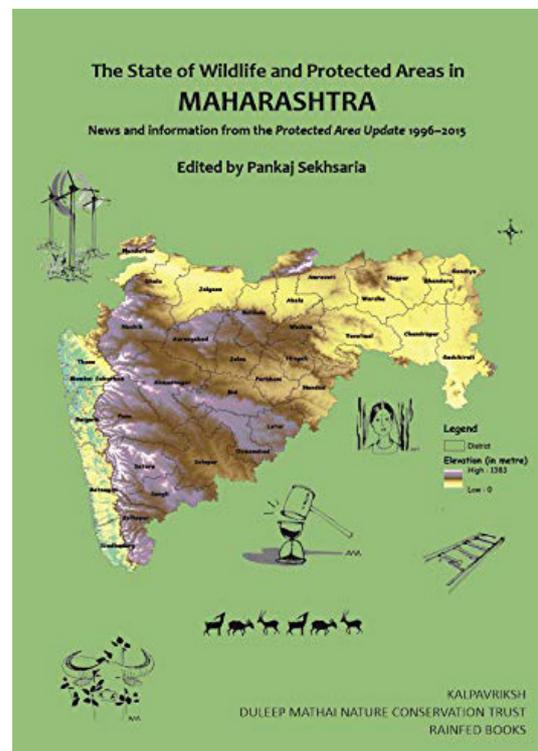
Out of three subject sections, the first section takes us year after year, through selected news and information from 34 areas covering wildlife sanctuaries, bird sanctuaries, conservation reserves, tiger reserves, national parks, eco-sensitive zones, and prime wetlands of importance in Maharashtra State. It also provides information about special research projects, like that

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Edited by Pankaj Sekhsaria

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Pages: xii+235pp, 100 line-drawings; Price Rs. 400/-



on the Forest Owlets, the references to CAMPA, the Scheduled Tribes and Other Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Rights) Act (FRA 2006), developments about the Coastal Regulation Zone, Environment Protection Act, Biological Diversity Act, National Tiger Conservation Authority, decisions of the judiciary, decisions by the National Board for Wildlife, road expansion, staff deployment, garbage management, village relocation, mining, sacred groves, actions related to Great Indian Bustard, wild Water Buffalo, leopard problem, etc. It is a news treat.

Section-2 on 'Analysis and Perspectives' of five important aspects give access to research results and is thought provoking. 'Tribal Rights and Tiger Reserves' under the Wildlife (Protection) Act is still a topic of debate and challenge for wildlife manager of any Wildlife Protected Area.

Media contents in newspapers often constitute primary source of information as 'data' for verification, inclusion and analysis while writing an article or taking a managerial decision or process a research plan. Many a times, wildlife research have to start from such pieces of data obtained from the public direct or through local newspaper, which the modern and international scientific community may not like to bring under wildlife scientometrics (Singh 2015). On the other side, wrong reporting may also bring an end to facts hidden behind a report, as it had happened in 1930s for 'black tigers' (page-ii in: Singh 1999).

When I came to stay in Similipal Tiger Reserve for the next 16 years from 1987 after return from Government of India, it was after a gap of 80 months away from most of the fields in Odisha and with terrestrial wildlife. I resumed with newspaper items on man-wildlife interface, and developed my personal collection on bits of happenings from different parts of Odisha. Some items were understandably spiced-up by reporters,

and needed to be accepted with editing; but there were the others that possessed 'something to accept about locations and the problem'. Around the same time, in an all-India scene, typed and mimeographed 'Environmental Abstracts', based on compilation of various news items were in circulation.

That was the click about location-wise importance of wildlife news. From 1990s PA Updates have presented professional compilation of news items focusing protected area locations. With Kalpavriksh-tag and support from Duleep Matthai Nature Conservation Trust, Pankaj Sekhsaria has obviously clipped off a lot and used selected items in the compiled-book on Maharashtra.

Pankaj Sekhsaria, well known for his research and books on the Andamans, with experience of more than two decades, has very thoughtfully added Section-3 to provide a complete issue of PAU (Vol. XXV, No. 4, August 2019, no.140). It gives ready reference to the original style and content of PAU issues.

It is interesting to search about the chronological news pertaining to any particular protected area in Maharashtra. Overall, the PA Update compilation in book format provides a good reference point and shows the need to have similar compilations for other states. Professionals as well as general readers, interested in or searching for happenings about wildlife conservation, will find the style and contents engaging. These could be the starting point for some research studies.

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Review

Ramifications of reproductive diseases on the recovery of the Sumatran Rhinoceros *Dicerorhinus sumatrensis* (Mammalia: Perissodactyla: Rhinocerotidae)

– Nan E. Schaffer, Muhammad Agil & Zainal Z. Zainuddin, Pp. 15279–15288

Communications

Diet ecology of tigers and leopards in Chhattisgarh, central India

– Krishnendu Basak, Moiz Ahmed, M. Suraj, B.V. Reddy, O.P. Yadav & Krishnendu Mondal, Pp. 15289–15300

Building walls around open wells prevent Asiatic Lion *Panthera leo persica* (Mammalia: Carnivora: Felidae) mortality in the Gir Lion Landscape, Gujarat, India

– Tithi Kagathara & Erach Bharucha, Pp. 15301–15310

Taxonomic and ecological notes on some poorly known bats (Mammalia: Chiroptera) from Meghalaya, India

– Uttam Saikia, AdoraThabab & Manuel Ruedi, Pp. 15311–15325

Angiosperm diversity in Bhadrak region of Odisha, India

– Taranisen Panda, Bikram Kumar Pradhan, Rabindra Kumar Mishra, Srusti Dhar Rout & Raj Ballav Mohanty, Pp. 15326–15354

Short Communications

Sighting of *Petaurista petaurista* (Pallas, 1766) (Mammalia: Rodentia: Sciuridae) on limestone hills in Merapoh, Malaysia

– Priscillia Miard, Mohd Nur Arifuddin, Izereen Mukri, Siti Syuhada Sapno, Hafiz Yazid, Nadine Ruppert & Jayaraj Vijaya Kumaran, Pp. 15355–15358

Molecular detection of *Murshidia linstowi* in a free-ranging dead elephant calf

– Sourabh Ranjan Hota, Sonali Sahoo, Manojita Dash, Avisek Pahari, Bijayendranath Mohanty & Niranjana Sahoo, Pp. 15359–15363

Parasite commonality at Swamp Deer (Mammalia: Artiodactyla: Cervidae: *Rucervus duvaucelii duvaucelii*) and livestock interface

– Animesh Talukdar, Bivash Pandav & Parag Nigam, Pp. 15364–15369

Prevalence and seasonal variation of gastrointestinal parasites among captive Northern Pig-tailed Macaque *Macaca leonina* (Mammalia: Primates: Cercopithecidae)

– Phoebe Lalremruati & G.S. Solanki, Pp. 15370–15374

New record of *Tulostoma squamosum* (Agaricales: Basidiomycota) from India based on morphological features and phylogenetic analysis

– Arun Kumar Dutta, Soumitra Paloi & Krishnendu Acharya, Pp. 15375–15381

Notes

An account of a first record of the Common Goldeneye

***Bucephala clangula* Linnaeus, 1758 (Aves: Anseriformes: Anatidae) in Bhutan**

– Sangay Nidup, Gyeltshen & Tshering Tobgay, Pp. 15382–15384

First record of the hawkmoth *Theretra lyctetus* (Cramer, 1775) (Sphingidae: Macroglossinae) from Bhutan

– Sangay Nidup & Jatishwor Singh Irungbam, Pp. 15385–15386

Occurrence and association of the Scarce Lilacfork

***Lethe dura gammiei* (Moore, [1892]) (Lepidoptera: Nymphalidae: Satyrinae) with Woolly-leaved Oak *Quercus lanata* Smith, 1819 (Fabaceae) forest in the Kumaon region of the Indian Himalaya**

– Arun P. Singh & Tribhuwan Singh, Pp. 15387–15390

Additions to the Odonata (Insecta) fauna of Asansol-Durgapur Industrial Area, West Bengal, India

– Amar Kumar Nayak, Pp. 15391–15394

***Gynochthodes cochinchinensis* (DC.) Razafim. & B. Bremer (Morindeae: Rubioideae: Rubiaceae): an addition to the woody climbers of India**

– Pradeep Kumar Kamila, Prabhat Kumar Das, Madhusmita Mallia, Chinnamadasamy Kalidass, Jagayandatt Pati & Pratap Chandra Panda, Pp. 15395–15399

Record of *Oldenlandia hygrophila Bremek.* (Spermacoceae: Rubiaceae), a lesser known herb from Palghat Gap of Western Ghats, Kerala, India

– Vadakkevedu Jagadesh Aswani, Vasudevan Ambat Rekha, Pathiyil Arabhi, Manjakulam Khadhersha Jabeena, Kunnamkumarath Jisha & Maya Chandrashekar Nair, Pp. 15400–15404

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