

Project Update: June 2010

Due to the dry and hot climatic conditions and weather throughout the study area, the herd of eight elephants now prefers to stay in and around the Shenbagathope dam in the Forest Range of Santhaval, which comes under the Tiruvannamalai Forest Division, Vellore Forest Circle in Tamil Nadu. During peak summer, especially since there was scarcity of water in the study area, the herd of eight elephants did not leave this forest range for around 3-4 months. Until then they had been raiding crops throughout the study area, whereas in Santhaval Range they were feeding on the pods of *Prosopis juliflora* trees.

During the herd's stay in Santhaval Forest Range, one sub-adult female elephant gave birth to a calf. Since then it has been difficult to confirm whether the calf is alive. If the calf has survived, then the herd now consists of nine elephants again. It is difficult to establish whether the single male tusker (mentioned earlier) has fathered the calf that died, and also whether the elephants of this herd are in-breeding, which led to this second female giving birth to a calf recently. The Tamil Nadu Forest Department is yet to decide on a long term solution for this herd and all the other elephants present in the study area. The information from the report of this project will be contributing to their decision-making process. The field work for the project was completed in May 2010, and work on the final report is underway.