

Project Update: March 2010

Despite the Forest Department staff warning people and trying their best to avoid confrontations between the people and elephants, some human deaths have been recorded and compensated for, throughout the three divisions of the Vellore Forest Circle. A calf born to the matriarch of the herd of nine elephants died a natural death and one sub-adult male belonging to the same herd died recently by electrocution, so the herd now comprises of eight elephants.

Structured interviews continue as the elephants continue their crop raiding behaviour, whereas the information on habitat quality is being gathered by laying vegetation plots in the area. Information on the habitat quality of the whole area will give a holistic comparative view of habitat availability and use.

The herd of nine elephants (now eight elephants) and a single male tusker (moving independently) are the cause of major conflicts, while the herd of 13 individuals have moved out of the area, and there has been no record of their movement for more than 6 months. Recently, however, three to four adult male individuals have been moving in the area and it is speculated that they belong to the herd of 13 elephants and have returned to the area. They raid crops regularly in a group and one of them has been identified as a large male tusker. The movement of this herd is confined to only one range in the study area, while the herd of eight elephants move through several ranges.