

Project Update: March 2011

In the last 3 months the project team has done elephant tracking in Mayurjharna Elephant Reserve (West Medinipur portion) and influence zone (Bankura district portion) outside the reserve.

During elephant tracking we visited 17 villages to study the crop damage pattern and instigated an experience sharing programme with farmers. The preliminary discussions revealed that the villagers need more prompt support from the forest department during crop raiding activities of migratory herds. There is also a need to develop an early warning alarm system to protect the crops in the fields. The villagers are also unhappy with the present compensation rates and in some places the ex-gratia payment process lasts a year. We have discussed the 'CROP against CROP' concept with the farmers and they are interested if the process is to be introduced but we feel more discussion is required before recommending it. There is also a chance to develop a crop calendar related to the elephant movement calendar.



Apart from the slide-illustrated talk we have conducted film shows on elephants and their conservation efforts. During this programme we found that the public interference during elephant driving caused deaths of people. The majority of these accidents were caused by the tusker elephant which guards the herd from behind. We are focusing on this specific incident during the sensitisation programme and appealing to the villagers not to interfere during elephant drives.

The 1st Elephant Squad Range was established on 15th November 2010 in Sonamukhi, an elephant influence zone of Bankura (North) Division of Directorate of Forests, Government of West Bengal. During study and community interaction activities we feel that the Elephant Squad Range can be modernised in terms of training and equipment. We also appreciate the initiatives of forest department to mark the elephant crossing zone on the road for the safety of both humans and elephant.

A very sad incident was occurred on 14th November 2010 in Nayagram of Kharagpur Range of West Medinipur. A five-month-old elephant cub died when it fell into mud hole. Another adult tusker elephant died in 5th March 2011 when it drank pesticide contaminated water in Belshulia village of Bankura district.

We produced a movie on our projects and 100 CDs of this movie will be produced for free distribution to the NGOs, Institutions and Government offices in May 2011.

