

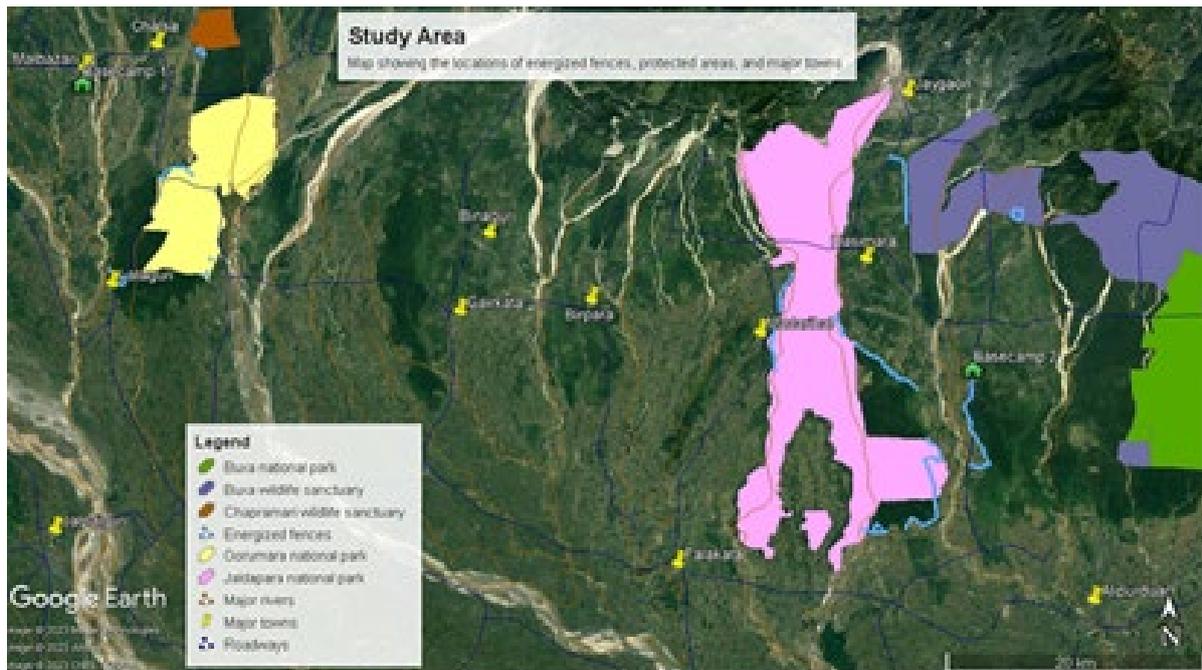
Project Update: March 2023

Summary of work completed:

- Setting up basecamp and arranging a field vehicle.
- Reconnaissance survey and identifying sample villages.
- Mapping of energised fences around sample villages and protected areas.
- Camera trapping focuses on elephant movement around energised fences and elephant-proof trenches.
- Fifty questionnaire surveys around four protected areas: Gorumara National Park, Chapramari Wildlife Sanctuary, Jaldapara National Park, and Buxa Tiger Reserve.
- Informal interviews with forest range officers, tea garden managers, and locals.
- Group discussions focussing on rice beer and energised fences.
- Secondary data (about conflict and compensation) has been collected from a few divisions/ranges of the forest department.

Summary of future task:

- Conduct 250 more questionnaire surveys in the fenced and non-fenced villages.
- After completing the questionnaire surveys, in-depth interviews will be conducted with senior forest officers, politicians, NGO heads, and tea garden secretaries.
- Observation of rice beer production process and understanding its cultural and socio-economic significance.
- Camera trapping will continue throughout the landscape.
- Depending on the availability of time and resources, I'll extend the study to the reserve forests.
- After collecting the secondary data from all divisions, I'll map the conflict hotspots at a landscape level and correlate it with the compensation data. Simultaneously, it will be linked with the change in land use/land cover over the past twenty years.
- In the final month of the fieldwork, I'll share the major findings with the forest department, tea garden managers, and local politicians in multi-interest group workshops. This would ensure knowledge dissemination to conservation gatekeepers and would be available to be taken for policy making.
- Academic conferences and thesis writing will follow.



Map showing major energized fences along with protected areas, major towns, roadways, railways, and rivers.



Image showing energized fence, water canal, and a metalled road in Nimati range.



A group discussion focussing on energized fence and rice beer in Jaldapara national park.



Setting up a camera trap focussing on energized fence in Gorumara National Park.



The locals breach energized fences to collect fuelwood from Gorumara national park. Such images also show that the energized fences are used differently by humans and nonhumans – they both enter each other's' domain based on resource extraction.