

**:: IN THIS ISSUE****:: [Decline in Nepal Rhinos and Tigers](#)****:: [Caught on Camera: Rhinos in Terai Using Corridor](#)****:: [Ivory Poaching Incidents in Sumatra](#)****:: [Update on Riau's Elephants](#)****:: [Elephant Calf Rescued by Tenth Mile Village](#)****:: [Staff News](#)****AREAS Newsletter 2006, Issue 3****:: Decline in Nepal Rhinos and Tigers**

A sweeping operation carried out by WWF Nepal and park staff in the eastern part of Bardia National Park in late May reveals an alarming decline in rhino and tiger populations, indicating widespread poaching in the area.

A 40-member team spent four days fanning out across the Babai River floodplains of the park, looking for signs of rhinos and tigers. It was the first time WWF had been able to assess the area in two years because of political unrest and Maoist insurgency in the country.



A total of 72 rhinos had been translocated from Chitwan National Park to the Babai floodplain area between 1987 to 2003. Given the probable growth rate, there should have been a viable population of more than 100 rhinos in the area, but the current operation indicates the presence of just three individuals.

Likewise, the sweeping operation confirmed the presence of only three tigers in the Babai Valley, compared to 13 reported in a 1998-2000 count. Fewer tigers than previously estimated were also confirmed in a preliminary camera trap survey in the Karnali floodplains in the southwestern part of Bardia National Park.

Following the dismal sweeping operation results, WWF Nepal has expressed great concern at meetings with Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation and the Nepal Army. WWF is urging enactment of an immediate short-term and long-term action plan on the ground and the Parks Department has committed to conducting regular anti-poaching patrols in Bardia National Park before the monsoons set in.

For more information, contact [Trishna Gurung](#) of WWF-Nepal.

:: Caught on Camera: Rhinos in Terai Using Corridor

For the first time, WWF-Nepal has photographic evidence that a newly restored corridor between Nepal's Bardia National Park and India's Katarniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary, in the Terai Arc Landscape, is being used by rhinos.

The presence of these rhinos in the Khata corridor has been documented many times through indirect means, usually through signs left by the animals. But after weeks of rigorous field work by the local monitoring team, photos have captured a rhino.



For more information, contact WWF-Nepal research officer [Kanchan Thapa](#).

:: Ivory Poaching Incidents in Sumatra

Two Sumatran elephants were found killed within a span of two weeks in areas close to Tesso Nilo National Park, in the province of Riau, Indonesia.

On 3 May 2006, the WWF team -- with information from the local community -- discovered an elephant carcass inside an oil palm plantation. Similarly, on 8 May, another elephant carcass was found in another plantation within the buffer zone of Tesso Nilo National Park. Both carcasses upon examination revealed three gunshot wounds.



From necropsies done by vets from the Conservation Authority in the presence of WWF team, it was evident that the killings were related to ivory poaching, as the tusks had been cut and removed. WWF is urging prompt investigations by law enforcement.

For more information, contact [Syamsidar](#) of WWF-Indonesia.

:: Update on Riau's Elephants

Eight of the 10 endangered Sumatran elephants captured by government translocation teams in late March have been released into Tesso Nilo National Park in Indonesia. The release came seven weeks after they were found chained to trees without food or water.

WWF, which had been providing daily care and medical treatment for the severely wounded elephants, accompanied the Riau provincial government's team to Tesso Nilo to make sure that none of the elephants was harmed during the release.



Of the 10 elephants found on March 21, an eight-year-old male died of an acute infection and a pregnant female escaped after four weeks. The remaining eight were released in good health after intensive medical care provided by WWF, but in late May WWF learned that one of the females that had been treated for tetanus died not far from where she had been released.

Of the proposed 100,000 hectares, the park currently covers only 38,000. WWF fears that the release of the elephants into the park without commitment to its expansion and a plan to stop encroachment will simply shift the human-elephant conflict to other villages near Tesso Nilo.

For more information, contact [Desma Murni](#) of WWF-Indonesia.

:: Elephant Calf Rescued by Tenth Mile Village

On March 27, an elephant calf wandered into a village in the North Bank Landscape (NBL). The animal's prints were tracked back to the river Bharelli and it was deduced that the calf, which the villagers named Chitra, had somehow crossed the river alone. The villagers gave the elephant some water and brought her to the highway where she caught the eye of the WWF NBL team. The animal was immediately loaded on their truck and taken to Bhalukpong, where the forest department took charge of her.



This region of northeast India sees some of the worst human-elephant conflict on the planet. Only a few years back a large number of elephants were poisoned in retaliation. Since then, WWF has been working in this area on elephant conservation. Given the location of the village in the Ballipara corridor, it is significant that the calf survived the ordeal. NBL staff hope the positive reaction of the villagers is an indicator of WWF's success in changing people's attitude towards wild elephants.

As for the elephant, she was moved to a wildlife rescue centre at Kaziranga National Park.

:: Staff News

Sameer Singh has joined the AREAS programme as a communications officer, based in the WWF-Nepal office. Sameer, who holds bachelors and masters degrees in environmental science from Nepal's Tribhuvan University, will work closely with AREAS coordinator Christy Williams and AREAS communications manager Jan Vertefeuille to expand communications support to the field and generate increased international attention for AREAS projects. Look for more from Sameer soon.



Want your stories in the AREAS newsletter? Send them to [Sameer Singh](#).