

# IYB-2010 and Countdown 2010 Celebration

## A Brief Activity Report

By

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The Uttarakhand region of the northwestern Himalayas in India has a rich biodiversity all across its landscapes, particularly in its terai-bhabar region in its southern edge. The wildlife biodiversity in the terai-bhabar belt of Uttarakhand is found in Corbett National Park and the Rajaji National Park as well as all across its landscapes from the Asan barrage conservation reserve at Kalsi in the extreme west up to Sharda river in the extreme east bordering with western Nepal.

Poaching, forest fire and wildlife body part trade continue to remain as serious threats to the wildlife in the Uttarakhand region. Illegal poaching of leopards and prey animals occurs in the tiger range areas of Uttarakhand state raising the level of threats to the endangered tiger (*Panthera tigris tigris*) population in its *terai-bhabar* tiger range areas. In the recent years, the human population in the fringe villages along the *terai-bhabar* belt in Uttarakhand shows signs of increase coupled with illiteracy and poverty, and their dependency on the local natural resources in the form of cattle grazing, fuel wood and fodder collection is on the rise. Threats to the tiger population are on rise as some of the recent tiger deaths particularly in the buffer zone areas of the reserve forests in the terai tiger habitats have reportedly been found to have links with poaching and tiger body part trade related activities (tiger skins, bones confiscated in village Fatehpur at Haldwani under the Ramnagar Forest Division. The poachers confessed their tiger poaching activity at a place, GPS coordinates: N 29° 14.627' and E 079° 27.877' in the reserve forest under the Fatehpur forest range of the Ramnagar Forest Division).

Moreover, most of the community groups living in the wildlife crime sensitive areas outside the tiger reserves in Uttarakhand are less cohesive, fragmented and isolated and live with negative attitude towards the wildlife conservation programmes in the reserves. This, I believe, acts as a major obstacle not only for the tiger conservation but also for the welfare of the existing tigers and their prey base in the region.

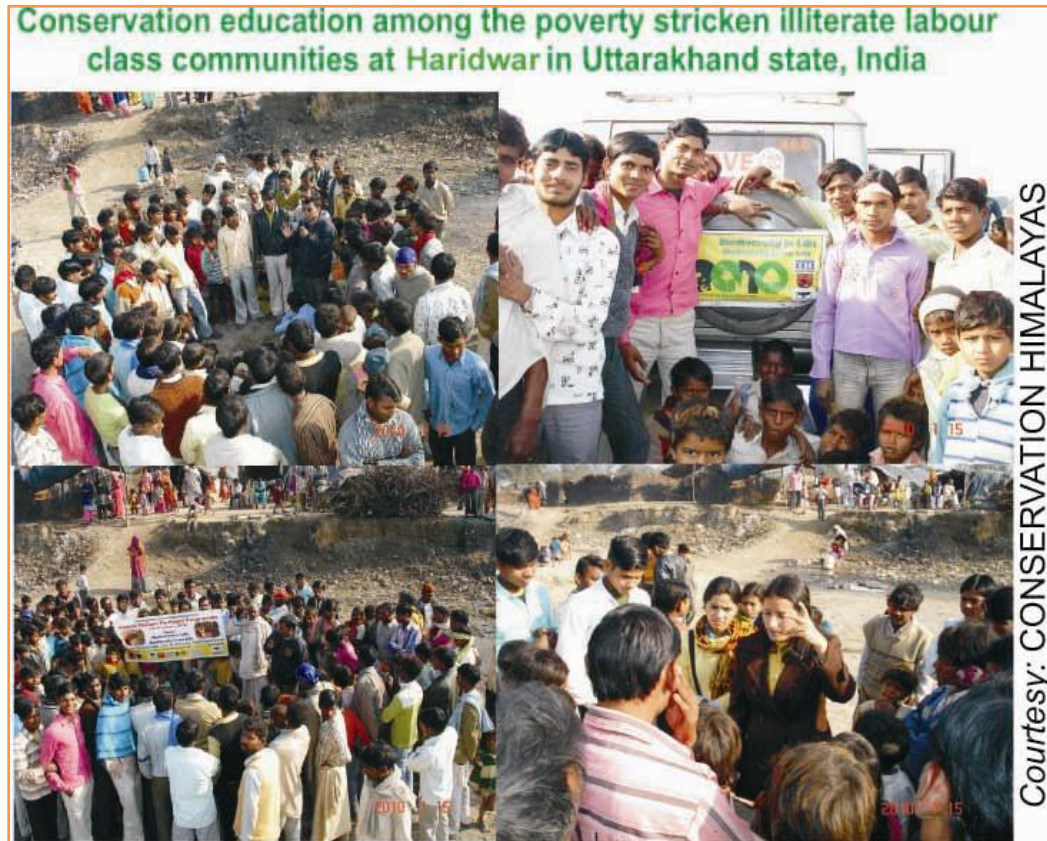
Human-Tiger conflict is another serious problem in certain sensitive areas in the periphery of the Corbett Tiger Reserve in Uttarakhand. Cases of human death due to tiger attacks are increasing in the western and eastern boundaries of the Corbett Tiger Reserve in Uttarakhand during the last few years. On 6<sup>th</sup> of January 2010, a women fell victim of a tiger attack at Dhikuli (GPS coordinates: N 29° 29' 54" Latitude and E 079° 07' 15" Longitude) and lost her life. The villagers in the region arrogantly demand early solution to the growing human-tiger conflicts in the periphery villages of the Corbett Tiger Reserve (CTR) and force the forest authorities to declare the attacking tigers as man-eaters and gun down them to death.

Conservation Himalayas (CH) is involved in a tiger conservation mission project with a grant support from the Rhinoceros and Tiger Conservation Fund of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S.A. This project is being executed in the tiger range *terai* sector in Uttarakhand, particularly in tiger poaching sensitive and human-tiger conflict areas under the leadership of Dr. Santosh Kumar Sahoo (*Project Officer*, Uttarakhand Tiger Project) and Aruna Kumari Negi (*Field Program Officer*, Uttarakhand Tiger Project). The CH currently focuses on mapping the human-tiger conflict sensitive areas, outreaching a wide range of communities including villagers, teachers, students, forest guards, foresters, *Van Gujjars* (forest dwelling shepherds), women groups, and migratory labor class community people with different tiger conservation education programs. It's become a great privilege of the Conservation Himalayas to have a partnership networking with the Countdown 2010 and IYB-2010 of the IUCN. The CH's IYB-2010 celebration focus has been on a community-based tiger and elephant conservation approach though capacity building, outreach, conservation education and promoting biodiversity conservation networking with the stakeholders in the human-wildlife conflict areas in the north western Himalayan state of Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh in India.

Many cases of the wildlife crimes are committed in Uttarakhand by some migratory *Mazdoor* (daily wage labourers) and *Kanjar* (communities who are lured by some wildlife crime mafia groups to work for them in lieu of cash). The CH made effort to reach these communities with the conservation education to give them basic knowledge and understanding of the significance of wildlife and forest resources in the economic growth of the human beings.

### **IYB-2010 Program 1**

Conservation Himalayas is celebrating the IYB-2010 in Uttarakhand with a focus on tiger and elephant conservation. The CH's team jointly led by Dr. Santosh Kumar Sahoo and Aruna Kumari Negi conducted one meeting with the *Mazdoor* communities near their riverside make-shift settlements along the Rawason River at Chiriyapur in Haridwar Forest Division of Uttarakhand.



On 15<sup>th</sup> January 2010, Dr. Sahoo and Aruna Negi addressed the community people in an informal gathering on the dry river bed. Since the people of this community are completely illiterate and know only how to earn their livelihood for survival, this type of program by Dr. Sahoo was altogether a new experience to learn about the term CONSERVATION and its value in the field of wildlife and forest protection, In order to draw attention of this group to the value of biodiversity conservation, Dr. Sahoo and Aruna Negi explained the group with simple examples of food chain (Sun Light-Grass-Spotted Deer-Tiger). This was explained by a role play game activity played by the children of this community. The elders of this poverty stricken community had several questions about the government rules to protect wildlife and forest resources. Dr. Sahoo gave them very simple answers to each question asked by some members of this community. Dr. Sahoo explained the audience about the problems tigers in India are facing due to pressures from poaching and habitat loss. At the end of this meeting, Aruna Negi appealed this community to love wild animals and forests and refrain from doing any wildlife crime in any place they move to for work. This group had heard about the wildlife conservation first time in this meeting and showed interest in conservation education.

### **IYB-2010 Program 2**

Conservation Himalayas (CH) believes that school children are the pillar of nature protection and that if the present generation of school children are involved in the biodiversity conservation campaign and learn the right concept of nature conservation, they can act as a powerful source of inspiration for the people and society as a whole and motivate them to look into the nature from the point of view of its

contribution for human welfare and conservation significance of its sustainability for future generation. The IYB-2010 celebration by the CH focused on Tiger Awareness Education as a theme for the school children of the Gyano Udaya Public School (GUPS) at Saneh village in Kotdwar, Uttarakhand, India.

As many as 120 students comprising of the primary and middle classes up to 8<sup>th</sup> standard and 8 teachers of the GUPS participated enthusiastically in a half day IYB-2010 celebration program conducted by the Conservation Himalayas. The first session of the celebration was an indoor event in which Dr. Santosh Kumar Sahoo presented an interactive lesson study on TIGER FACTS with a brief reference to the significance of IYB-2010 celebration in tiger conservation. Dr. Sahoo explained in a very simple language the meaning of biodiversity and the benefits we get from our biodiversity. Some children enquired about the meaning of IYB-2010 celebration in the world. Dr. Sahoo explained the children the meaning of IYB-2010 celebration and the role the children can play in saving the biodiversity. The CH's special IYB-2010 calendar was a special attraction for the children. Dr. Sahoo told the children about the CH's mission of tiger and elephant conservation as depicted in the IYB-2010 calendar. The Tiger Fact lesson study was taken jointly by Dr. Sahoo and Aruna Negi. The tiger fact lesson comprised of three broad facts: i) About tigers-subspecies types, historical and present distribution, historical and present tiger population, tiger habitat ecology and tiger food; ii) About Why Tigers Need Protection-poaching and habitat loss; and iii) What can children do to save remaining 1411 tigers in India. These lessons were taught with stories, examples and illustrations comprehensible to the children.

The second session was an outdoor event which involved all the students in a Save Tiger Ballon Show Activity. Each balloon represented individual commitment by its carrier to protect the tigers by educating at least ten villagers about the conservation significance of tigers. Each student made a vow not to use any product made from wildlife body parts. Mrs Aruna Negi taught the students how they can do their best to save tigers and other wildlife by small efforts, like participating in the Save Tiger public rally, Writing Letters of Concern for tiger protection to the Honorable Prime Minister of India, Voluntarily participating in the tiger conservation education outreach and Save-Tiger fund raising programs, etc.



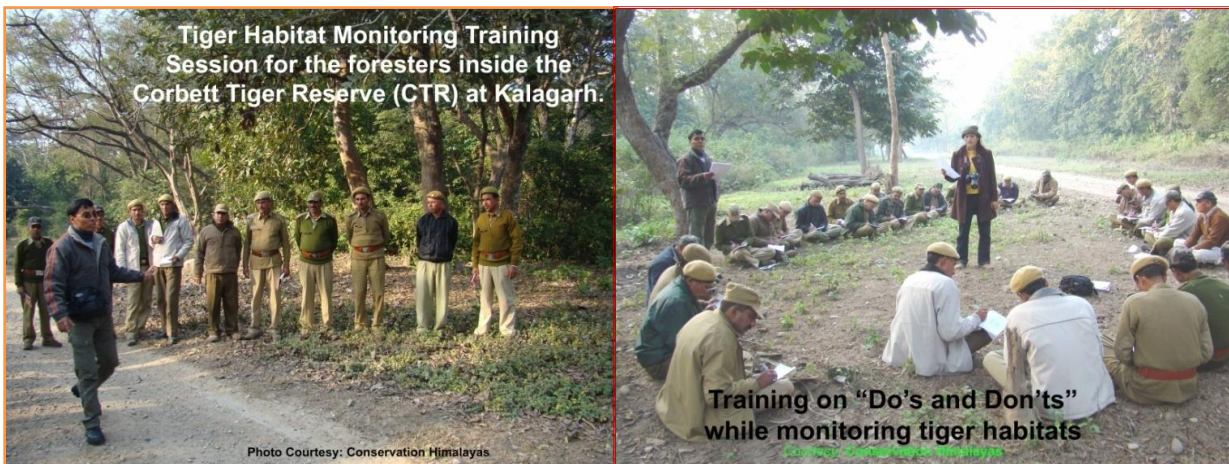
### IYB-2010 Program 3

The IYB-2010 was celebrated with the trainees of the Corbett Wildlife Training Centre (CWTC) of the Corbett Tiger Reserve at Kalagarh, Pauri, Uttarakhand in India by conducting a two-day tiger training workshop for the trainees who were from the Corbett Tiger Reserve and the Nanda Devi Biosphere. All the 45 trainees participated in the workshop which was conducted by Aruna Kumari Negi and Dr. Santosh Kumar Sahoo. All the trainees are working as foresters in the Uttarakhand Forest Department. The training workshop on the first day was divided in two sessions: In the first session, the trainees were asked to prepare a tiger concept map with the knowledge they have about tigers. This activity was immediately followed by an interactive class on tiger facts. Dr. Sahoo taught the trainees how to make a tiger concept map that includes some important facts associated with the tigers: Tiger Food, Tiger Habitat Types, Tiger Distribution, Tiger Subspecies, Threats-to-Tigers, Tiger-in-Culture, Tiger as Dangerous Animals, Ecological Adaptation, Tiger Protection, etc. Soon after this class, each trainees made fresh tiger concept maps and compared them with the concept maps they had made in the morning session before the class on tiger facts. This exercise gave ample chance to each trainee to assess his level of awareness and understanding of tiger issue. In the afternoon session, there was an interactive session on what significant role the foresters can play to save the tigers. The trainees wrote on specially printed Tiger Protection Pledge Cards three important conservation strategies that they think best to give better protection to the surviving tigers in wild. Each trainee presented his tiger conservation ideas to the audience.



The second day workshop was divided into two sessions: In the first session, Dr. Sahoo taught the audience certain basic field observation techniques including GPS data collection methods in the context of the tiger census and daily monitoring of the tiger habitats. During this session, the director and the SDO of the Corbett Wildlife Training gave short lectures on how to collect and maintain the field data from the tiger habitats for better management and protection of the tiger habitats.

The second half of the second day session was devoted for a field training exercise inside the Corbett Tiger Reserve at Colony gate in Kalagarh. All the CWTC participants joined for participation in this field exercise on “**Tiger Survey: Field Observation Technique**” Aruna negi and Dr. Sahoo conducted the full exercise. The whole group was divided into five subgroups- each group with at least six individuals. Each group was assigned separate areas in the forest. Their task was to go for a 20 min. tiger survey schedule in a pre-designated small area where some of the tiger model samples, like tiger mask, pugmark sheet, tiger kill poster, and tiger image poster. As per the survey instruction by Dr. Sahoo, each team had to note down the presence of the tiger by searching for the tiger model kits in the survey area assigned to the group. In addition to the tiger presence identification, the group members were instructed to keep recording of the observations of other ecological information, like habitat condition, water source, prey base status, other wildlife status, human presence / human foot prints. The time limit was 30 min. for each team. At the end of the allotted time, all the participant teams gathered at one place and each group presented its survey report with justifications for each observation of its report. Aruna Negi conducted a special session on **Do’s and Don’ts** during the tiger survey in the forests. Finally, all the participants received special IYB calendars of the Conservation Himalayas.



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