

Project Update: June 2016

The Rufford Foundation supported Human-Elephant Interaction Project is a unique and pioneer project on Human-Elephant Interaction in the study area. Now, other non-government agencies, institution and concerned departments of government are also taking initiatives to save the 'Gentle Giant'.

In the first quarter of the 2016, we have completed the fodder survey and reviewed its status in extended elephant depredation areas. We also did a sample survey on possibility of introduction/reintroduction of fodder plant species in extended elephant migration range. During elephant tracking we have documented the fodder use pattern in forest areas. In the non-forest areas there are mostly agricultural areas and edible plants are very few there which attracts the elephants towards villages.

As part of awareness programme, we have conducted several seminar and capacity building programmes in schools and colleges. The seminar in 'Sonamukhi College' of Bankura district was jointly organised by the 'Research Committee' of college under 'University Grants Commission XIIth Plan, Government of India' where more than 200 participants from different stakeholders group participated. Apart from that, we have conducted several awareness programmes in schools and colleges in 'HEC influence zone'.

We have mentioned earlier that the project area has been expanded outside Mayurjharna Elephant Reserve. These newly added areas are experiencing the 'conflicts' at higher level because these non-forest areas are dominated by human habitation. Unfortunately, the retaliatory action of the villagers killed five elephants by electrocution in January 2016 in these area. We aim to reduce the number of such killing 80% by December 2016. We are also working to strengthen the network and community support to save the elephants. The prior information received from project volunteers of those areas (*Patharmora* Village near *Sonamukhi, Bankura*) in last month saved life of elephants and the forest department took necessary legal action against the wildlife offenders.

During the work, we are closely associated with the '*Hoola Da'* (barefoot elephant drivers/anti-depredation squad) and interacted with them to know the techniques they follow to drive the elephants. We realised that the techniques are primitive and the equipment is not up to the standard. There is a need to add some technical knowledge with their traditional skills to make their efforts more effective. We are shortly going to have a training programme for these people to develop an effective 'Anti-depredation Squad'.

We have also included the Durgapur Forest Division of Burdwan district this year. As the HEC in the area is very new, an incident in recent past took life of four people and one elephant in the area. The forest department is now taking precautionary measures like

'Elephant Proof Trench', 'Early Alarm System' etc. We have visited the place with support from 'Divisional Forest Officer' and shortly initiate the awareness programme there.

We are pleased to inform that 'The Mohamed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund' has co-funded the conservation programme with a small grant.



A sudden encounter during elephant tracking.



Rescued single stray sub-adult elephant in Nadia district. ©M.K.Mandal DFO-Durgapur



Samya Basu along with forest Deputy Ranger Mr. Aditya Rajak (3rd from left) and forest department staffs during elephant tracking at mid-night.



Samya Basu with the Anti-depredation Squad member are getting ready for elephant drive



Encroachment in elephant corridor forest



The forest guards are explaining the effectiveness of 'Elephant Proof Trench'



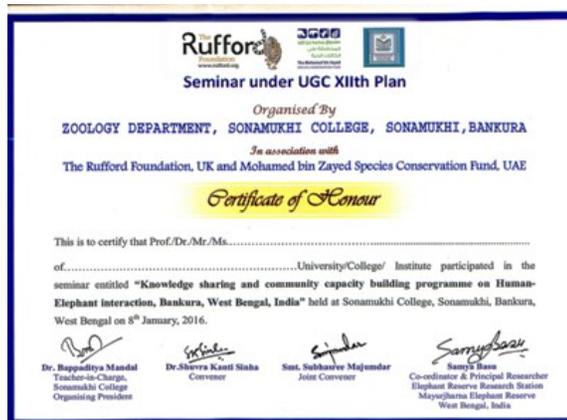
Pre installation testing of 'Fore-alarm system' along with Mr.M.K.Mandal Divisional Forest Officer-Durgapur



Retaliatory killing of elephant by electrocution



Interaction with local villagers



Certificate for seminar & community capacity building programme