

ZOO BULLETIN

A WILDLIFE SOS BIENNIAL UPDATE



Training the Forest Department on Bear Safety

Aside from habitat loss and poaching, sloth bear-human conflict, particularly sloth bear attacks on people, is likely the greatest threat to the species. The first WSOS human-sloth bear conflict workshop, with the help of the Columbus Zoo, took place at the Bannerghatta Bear Rescue Facility May 8, 2018 for the Forest Department. The workshop was attended by 108 Forest Department staff members and was received very well. The Forest Department appears to be solidly behind WSOS's efforts to reach out to the local communities and teach them about safety in sloth bear country.



Keep an Eye Out!

In the International Bear Newsletter Summer Issue, Wildlife SOS reports on the threat caused to sloth Bears from Small Explosive devices used for hunting.

Managing Elephant-Human Conflict in Chhattisgarh

WSOS has been working with the local people in the state of Chhattisgarh for over a year now on how to live with wild elephants. The herd's arrival in roughly 2015 has resulted in severe human-elephant conflicts, including crop raiding, human injuries, and even human fatalities. Wildlife managers have been unable to predict or track the movement of these elephants, and consequently have been unable to warn people or take preventive action. WSOS is attempting to find a way that the herd and residents can coexist.



The wild herd crossing a road in Chhattisgarh.

Our work has four objectives: 1) evaluate the effectiveness of different conflict-mitigation methods, 2) train Forest Department officers and village leaders on elephant ecology, habitat needs, and mitigation practices to keep the elephants out of the farmlands, 3) stress elephant safety and conservation awareness to villagers living near elephants activity, and 4) understand elephant movement in Chhattisgarh and determine why it leads to conflict with humans. WSOS will place real-time GPS collars on three elephants in the upcoming months; two bulls and the herd matriarch. This is a big step in our efforts to understand the movement of the elephants.



A wild bull from the area.

Bear TAG/SSP Visit Wildlife SOS

The first official visit from the AZA's Bear TAG/SSP occurred in February. The visiting group was made up of 10 individuals from seven different zoos. The trip included visits to the Bannerghatta Bear Rescue Centre (BBRC); the WSOS field station near Hampi; the Daroji Sloth Bear Sanctuary, where the group was able to observe wild sloth bears; the WSOS headquarters in Delhi; and finally the Agra Bear Rescue Facility (ABRF) and the Elephant rescue facility in Agra. The group was also able to enjoy a quick side trip to the Taj Mahal.

Even as the official tour began winding down, the work, and play, did not. The team split into two groups, with one going to the Ranthambore Tiger Reserve (where they enjoyed nine tiger sightings) and

the education group staying behind to work with the ABRF staff on signage and tours. The education group also visited three schools in the area to help fortify their environmental education programs. And one member, Mary Elizabeth Hampton from the Little Rock Zoo, even stayed an extra week to work with the bear keepers and bears on training.

This trip was a great opportunity to exchange information and make new friends in the world of bear conservation.

We wish to extend a heartfelt "thank you" to Debbie Thompson, who worked very closely with us to plan this trip.



Sloth bear cubs observe the observers.



Dr. Arun leads a discussion.

Bear Care Conference Hosted by Wildlife SOS in Delhi, India

WSOS is hosting the next Bear Care Conference in Delhi from December 3–5. The conference will be held at the India Habitat Centre. A workshop at the Agra Bear Rescue Facility December 6 is included in the conference cost. Additionally, there are post-conference trips to visit India's national parks. We hope to see you all there!



About Wildlife SOS

WSOS operates 10 wildlife rehabilitation facilities in India, including the world's largest sloth bear rescue center, an elephant care center, and a leopard rescue facility. We also run a tribal rehabilitation project to create opportunities for communities that once depended on wildlife exploitation for subsistence. WSOS runs a 24-hour wildlife rescue service in New Delhi and Agra, as well as an anti-poaching unit called Forest Watch.

For more information, please contact Thomas Sharp at thomas@wildlifesos.org.

