

Odisha Plans Sanctuary To Protect Elephants

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Bhubaneswar: With over 1900 elephants, Odisha has a sizable population of pachyderms. Though historically elephants were mostly concentrated on the northern fringes of Mahanadi, they have now started migrating to agricultural areas following loss of their habitats due to mining and other activities.

Keeping in mind the new track of the jumbos, Odisha government has come up with a proposal to set up an elephant sanctuary in between Berhampur and Kandhamal district. According to experts, elephants are mostly found in two landscapes in Odisha- Mayurbhanj elephant reserve and the Sambalpur & Mahanadi elephant reserve. Though the second landscape is linked, there is a threat due to dams and canals which are creating problems in the movement of the pachyderms. There is a need to construct bridges over the canals so that the fragmentation can be checked.

The Forest department is also mulling radio-collaring of elephants along with the usage of hi-tech gadgets to track the movement of elephant herds so that man-animal conflicts can be averted by timely intervention.

Once jumbos are radio-collared, the officials of the Forest department can track the location and movement of elephant herds on a real-time basis.

Already IIT Bhubaneswar has been asked to provide some infra-range equipment which can come handy in hearing the low frequency waves used by the jumbos to communicate with herd members. Mostly the focus will be on 'panic calls' of the elephants which can be subsequently used to thwart any dangers and even possibilities of man-animal conflicts.

"Elephants usually communicate between themselves even in normal conditions and such (infrasonic) frequencies is much below than our audible frequency range. We have asked IIT Bhubaneswar to come up with some device which can detect such low frequency communication from a range of 4 to 5 kms," said Chief Wildlife Warden, Harishankar Upadhyay.

Atmallik DFO S Samantara said, "What is the panic call used by elephants and how it can be used through modulation to drive herd. Already some research is underway but the radio collar can also play a crucial role in tracking the movement of the jumbos."