

# ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR 2015 – 2016



## Sustaining Environment & Wildlife Assemblage

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## **Contents**

- **Athos SEWA**
- **Our Strategy**
- **Team Involvement**
- **Field study**
- **Work index**
  - Sarus Crane Project
  - Patrolling and monitoring programs.
  - Informers Networking And Information Gathering
  - Black buck and wolf conservation programme.
  - Camera tarp monitoring and census
  - Man – animal Conflict
- Photo gallery
- News clips

**Athos of the organization**

In and around Maharashtra's Gondia district, an NGO called SEWA (Sustaining Environment and Wildlife Assemblage) is helping regenerate tiger habitats, and protecting Sarus Cranes, blackbuck and wolves. Located close to the state borders of Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, Gondia is the gateway to Maharashtra from central and eastern India. It is in this central Indian landscape that Gondia-based NGO, Sustaining Environment and Wildlife Assemblage (SEWA), has been working for wildlife since 2014. Since wild animals do not adhere to human boundaries, SEWA works with communities and forest officials to protect forests, organize anti-poaching drives, conduct mass-awareness campaigns, rescue and rehabilitate wild animals, reduce villagers' dependency on forest resources and monitor the dispersal of tigers.

Reducing human-wildlife conflict in villages around the Navegaon-Nagzira Tiger Reserve is a key intervention. "We began studying tiger dispersal in 2011 to help improve management practices and policies for the long-term survival of tigers in the landscape. We discovered that the predators move from Nagzira to Kanha-Pench towards the north and towards Umred-Karhandla in the south. Protecting these critical corridors therefore emerged as a vital priority," says Sawan Bahekar, President, and SEWA who was presented with a Sanctuary Special Maharashtra Wildlife award in 2016. He adds, "Political will and administrative resolve can turn this landscape into one of the finest tiger habitats in the country."

## Our Strategic

Sustaining Environment & Wildlife Assemblage (SEWA) analyses all the problems using a simple rule that "Problem is like a tree, and every tree has its roots". It assumes reasons for every problem and states that only its effects are visible, not the roots/reasons. So, the first step towards its solution is its understanding, which is done using Problem Analysis.

### **1) Shiksha 2) Jagaran 3) Sangathan 4) Shakti 5) Karya**

The philosophy behind this thinking is that Shiksha helps us to gain knowledge, which is a must in order to start anything. Shiksha doesn't guarantee the development itself, but we must become aware of issues/problems/needs in order to understand the status quo. Hence, we need Jagaran. An individual cannot bring about changes alone; hence we need to form a Sangathan which unites us. Sangathan gives us power and we must understand it thoroughly in order to use it. Hence, it creates Shakti. Finally, we need to act upon what needs to be done i.e. Karya

- To improve service delivery and living conditions of corridor communities through empowerment, good governance and access to information
- To boost economic opportunities in disadvantaged communities through skills development, alternative livelihood opportunity to reduce the pressure of the forest
- SEWA also reaches out to school and college students in Gondia and neighboring districts. Many of these youngsters from rural areas now protect their natural heritage, and some have become a part of SEWA's larger informer and volunteer network.

## Involvement:

The SEWA team is working apprehensively bearing in mind that “To save nature, you’ve to work in Harmony with Humans”, balancing the natural and manmade habitat is what our efforts are put forward for. The awareness programs, celebrating various natures related days marked in the calendar throughout the year, and covering all the peripheral villages in one activity or the other, our team makes sure that everybody is aware of the constant presence of the Wildlife and hence are on guard when dealing with daily prospects of life. This awareness is created in the form of surveys and workshops or group discussions among the villagers and including the management too. These workshops and programs help the Human race to understand the importance of survival of the Wildlife and henceforth, saving the Mother Nature.

Other programs in which the SEWA team cordially organizes and sometimes actively participates include Plantation programs, drawing and painting programs in school, health camps and blood donation camps in villages etc. The team is always actively participating and involving themselves in activities, programs and workshops organized by the Department. Whether it is a rescue operation or catching thieves and poachers in the area or simply monitoring the areas with continuous Carnivore movement, our SEWA team is always working effortlessly and in complete coordination with the Dept.

Protecting the boundaries of Nagzira WLS, working in coordination with the authorities, creating awareness among the population and keeping an eye out on everything that’s going around the area is what the SEWA team is trying to do and at some lengths achieving it too.

### **Field study:**

A team of 8 is always monitoring the corridors and the periphery of the adjoining villages for threats. Patrolling round the clock, be it early morning or mid night, any news of threat and our team is doing double takes on the more unimmunized areas.

The threats and observations are reported daily and collated and forwarded timely.

Be it the water bodies or the villages or the dense forest patches, regular monitoring according to a fixed schedule is done. The areas around the whole Nagzira WLS is monitored daily for Carnivore movement, other Wildlife crossing and the constant Human presence.

The team works effortlessly along with the Forest Dept and various village communities and other NGO’s to protect the Nature and hence protecting the Mankind.

The informers spread all along the area keeps the team informed about the movement of Wildlife and other threats moving around the area. The indirect signs and observations were copied and marked till the situation is under control, this require timing and coordination with different teams working for the same cause.

One such feature which distinguishes Nagzhira WLS from other Sanctuary and Nature Hubs is the population of Migratory birds coming through the year. The poaching activity takes a front seat according to the seasonal cycle of Migratory birds. Due to our watchful team the poachers are keeping their distance from the area.

The remarkable presence of the SEWA team in the area and their coordination with other sources of protection keeps the threats hence at bay and the area protected. The efforts of the poachers and anti nature elements are futile in this landscape due to the watchfulness of SEWA and department.

The main threats which undermine the Nagzhira WLS are Grazing (overly done), Poaching, Timber and Bamboo collection and Forest fires (manmade as well as natural). This poses a great challenge in the Sanctuary throughout the year, some threats are more in particular seasons while some are all year round.

## Work index

### Sarus Crane Project

A. Team SEWA is conducting Sarus crane census in three district of central India in a month of may we target Winganga , Bagh river of 22 ghat& 24 water body. We are arrange 22 team of 44 individuals at a time including farmers, Volunteers and forest department. Count of gondia district of following river ghat and water body



Total count of Gondia district is 39

| GHAT              | WATER BODY AND FARM |
|-------------------|---------------------|
| SATONA -2         | DASGAON-2           |
| DANGORLI-4        | PARSWADA-3          |
| KATI-             | ZILMILI-2           |
| DHAPEWADA-3       | KAMTA-              |
| DEWRI-1           | GHIWARI-            |
| BIRSOLA-          | LOHARA-2            |
| KAWLEWADA-4       | GOREGAON-           |
| GHATEMNI -4       | MAKDI-2             |
| MAHELGAON-3       | NILAJ-              |
| PARSWADA(TIRADA)- | SIWNI-2             |
| TEDWA-2           | BAJARTOLA-2         |
| MURDADA-          | DAWNIWADA-          |

Count of Balaghat district of following river ghat and water body

| GHAT        | WATER BODY AND FARM |
|-------------|---------------------|
| PIPARZARI-4 | DIGHODA-8           |
| MANGOLI-1   | KIRNAPUR-2          |
| DINI-4      | MANGOLI KHURD-2     |
| PUNI-       | NEWARGAON-4         |

|            |            |
|------------|------------|
| RAJEGAON-3 | SARUD-2    |
| MOHGAON-3  | HATTA-2    |
| DEWGAON-2  | RATAPAYLI- |
| MARI-4     |            |
| GAYKHURI-  |            |

Total count of Balaghat district is 53

Count of Bhandara district of following river ghat and water body

Wahni-4, Wangi, Rengepar, Pujara

Total count of Bhandara district is 4

## B) Routine Monitoring of Breeding Pairs and Individuals

We are planning for Routine Monitoring ones in a month of sarus crane presence area for searching Breeding pair and individuals. It is useful for finding their Nesting, Feeding and rusting sides, Information Gathering and networking and also useful for finding their threads with formers and forest guard of belonging areas. During monitoring we cover following aprox. 50 villages and ghat of three districts

Gondia – paraswada, zilmili, kamta, ghattemni, newargaon, temni, ghiwari, lohara , nilaj, makdi, shiwni, goregaon, dasgaon, tedwa, dangorli, kini , kati, birsola , bajartola, nawegaon, dewri, satona, Mahelgaon, murdada ,

Balaghat- Dighida, Piparzxari, Marri, Rajegaon, Dini ,Puni, Kirnapur, Dhadimangoili, Newargaon, Mohgaon ,Sarud, Hatta, Saleteka, Dewgaon , Kirnapur,

Bhandara- Wahni, Wangi, Regepar, Pujara

## C) Nest Identification Monitoring and Protection

We are identify nest with the help of information gathering, past nesting experience, hole year monitoring experience with our farmer, informer, volunteer and forest gourde.

### Two Sarus cranes found dead in Gondia

■ District Correspondent  
GONDIA, Feb 1

CARCASSES of two sarus cranes were found in a field near paddy nursery on the border of Gondia - Balaghat on Wednesday. The birds are said to have died due to poisoning.



The dead crane found in a paddy field in Gondia.

This is the start of Rabi season and farmers are in process of making nursery beds of paddy and to protect them from birds and insects, they use highly harmful Timate chemical pesticide.

Honorary Wildlife Warden Sawan Bahekar expressed (Contd on page 2)

We start searching of nesting sites from September starting in sarus crane presence area with respective formers and volunteer.

After identification of nest. We are start monitoring of nesting sites during monitoring we are identify possible trades of nest and Sarus chicks likewise pry dogs, poachers, fertilizers used in nesting field. During nest protection we co-ordinate with land owner, respective farmer, nabour farmer, forest gourde.

In year 2016-17 we identify 16 nest in three districts Gondia, Balaghat, Bhandara. In following villages

| <b>GONDIA</b> | <b>BALAGHAT</b> | <b>BHANDARA</b> |
|---------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| GHAT TEMNI -1 | DIGHODA-2       | WAHNI-1         |
| DASGAON -1    | MANGOLI-1       |                 |
| LOHARA-1      | NEWARGAON-2     |                 |
| PARASWADA-1   | PIPARZARI-1     |                 |
| KAMTA-1       | DEWGAON-1       |                 |
| BAJARTOLA-1   | MOHGAON-1       |                 |
|               | RAJEGAON-1      |                 |
|               | Diuni -1        |                 |

#### **D) Awareness program in Sarus crane presence area**

Awareness programs are helping us to aware farmer, Villagers, volunteers. It is useful for information gathering, and it is first step to gather and attract interested people for Sarus conservation activities and nest protection it is also useful for crop selection and use of pesticides. We are planning of cover all Sarus presence area specially targeted Sarus nesting villages twice in a year

In year 2016-17 we are cover following villages of three district

| <b>GONDIA</b> | <b>BALAGHAT</b> | <b>BHANDARA</b> |
|---------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| GHAT TEMNI    | DIGHODA         | WAHNI           |
| DASGAON       | PIPARZARI       |                 |
| LOHARA        | RAJEGAON        |                 |
| PARASWADA     | MOHGAON         |                 |
| ZILMILI       | RAJEGAON        |                 |
| KAMTA         | KIRNAPUR        |                 |
| BAJARTOLA     | NEWARGAON       |                 |

- Routine maintaining of breeding pairs individuals.
- Nest identification & monitoring.

- Awareness Programme in Sarus Crane Presence areas.
- Orientation & Sensitization of farmers.

## **E. Annual patrolling and monitoring programs.**

Visit to sensitive area for considering wildlife movement and find out threats which is harmful to wildlife. Patrolling was mainly divided into two parts 1<sup>st</sup> is day patrolling and 2<sup>nd</sup> one is night patrolling these two major way is also divided into three parts Bike/car/foot. In entire three year we had done thousands of km patrolling in surrounding area (buffer) of NNTR landscape and covered almost 90% area of corridor area which is called Navegaon-Nagzira corridor. So many time we found various threats like electrocution, snares, forest fire, illegal tree/bamboo felling. For make it effective we had divided the landscape in different five blocks.



- 1) Koka block
- 2) New Nagzira and old Nagzira block
- 3) NNTR corridor block
- 4) NNTR- Balaghat corridor block.
- 5) Navegaon block.

Basically patrolling is conducted in two ways. On foot and on motorcycles. On an average about 80-100 kms of bike patrolling (DAY/NIGHT) is done per month and about 3-8 km of foot patrolling is done as well. Most of the time we will take help of local villagers and informer for done patrolling most of the time when we are doing foot patrolling locals knowledge are so much important. While patrolling we took care of the following things:

- Checking waterholes with litmus paper.
- Checking for electric lines in the jungles.
- Checking clues for the traps placed in the fields and trails(*pivat*).
- Checking indirect signs of animal presence.
- Direct sightings.
- Sharing knowledge with local informers.
- Target village center and discussion with villagers.

## F. Monitoring awareness of wildlife sensitive area.

Monitoring when done for the benefit of overall aspects of the environment becomes a threat for the anti-harmonic group which is continuously trying to disturb the balance of nature. Keeping a track on Wildlife movement and the periphery of the Park gives us an edge over the threats. Dealing with daily challenges of Wild and maintaining a hold of the area helps in manning the boundaries and protecting the Wild in the Wild without compromising with opposing conditions.



Further daily monitoring keeps the locals aware of the team's presence and that they should be on their guard is constantly preached by our team. Monitoring the dense patches to the open water bodies, opens up a whole new area of observations. The pugmarks, traces and markings of Wildlife keeps us informed about the presence of continuous movement in the Sanctuary. From observing the pugmarks to identifying the scat, SEWA team is always on the move for fresh signs of Wildlife habitat in the area.

Meeting the informers, collecting information and maintaining secrecy to keep the whole function intact and recorded, requires positive response from informers and valuable information hence provided by them. Keeping in touch with informers spread throughout the area requires regular efforts and timely meetings.

SEWA team is always on the watch, be it manning the boundaries, collecting and recording data, to communicating with the forest department to know the latest updates to helping the locals and tribal in dealing with the threats, our team has always been a great source of support and a pillar of strength as an Organization. Camera trapping with the Department and then monitoring those traps is what an essential part of monitoring is.

Identifying the threats, dealing with them in best way possible, trying to lessen the threats and trying to maintain harmony our team has always been on the front to deal with it. The unidentified or suspicious activities inside the forest or suspicious trespass were always reported timely to the officials so that appropriate action can be taken on time.

Walking hundreds of miles on foot in a week to watching the wildlife silently from a distance, our team has always been patient and active all along. From helping the Forest Department in catching thieves or poachers to creating awareness among the local tribes, SEWA team has always set a benchmark to be envied and get inspiration from.

From fighting the threat of over grazing to illegal timber and bamboo extraction, SEWA team has always been present to fight the cause of the threat or the threat itself. Fighting fires in the middle of the night to keeping an eye out on Carnivore movement around the periphery, it has always been the priority of the team to protect the Wildlife and Nature without compromising with its environment.

To identify the specific landscape and biodiversity of a particular landscape it required that a proper study it depend on scientific way and traditional way. We had done various type of monitoring In NNTR landscape which is divided into three type

## **Trap camera monitoring**

In entire two year time span we had done almost two trap camera monitoring in different two blocks which is corridor section of NNTR and buffer area of old Nagzira. In this monitoring period we had installed almost 20 trap camera for 2 month in the sensitive area where we found very good wildlife movement picture.



- 1) **Kill base monitoring-** in the NNTR landscape we are doing kill base monitoring since from eight year. In entire two year we had done almost 15 kill base monitoring with forest department to find out the presence and animal behavior
- 2) **Tiger migration monitoring-** SEWA team has been identified various migration path of tigers which is the result of Tiger migration monitoring. SEWA team successfully identified and study three to four migration from NNTR to peanch, NNTR to UKPWS, NNTR to Balaghat and Balaghat to NNTR.



### **3) Informers Networking And Information Gathering**

- In this programme we had focus on information networking in which informer's gave important & sensitive information which is more useful for Conservation and maintain co relation between man and wild animals.
- These programme had conduct in wildlife sensitive areas. We are targeted few buffer villages which are sensitive for wildlife as well as humans. To build informer network first of all we have to identify villages which is notorious, where man animal conflict level is very high and also we are target those villages which are involved in poaching case. We always try to felicitate our informer.



Now SEWA team working in almost 80 villages of NNTR buffer and NNTR corridor area its very wider level of information gathering network which is very effective to avoid man animal conflict and to identify threats

### **Awareness programme & capacity building programme**

Awareness programme in wildlife sensitive village & areas. Awareness programs are totally related to information gathering and informers networking. It is a first step to gather or attract interested people from mob. Especially we'll take awareness programs throughout the year in summer and winter season by using projector and slides. In the presentation we'll speak about preventive measures about man animal conflict, crop raid issues and how to get compensation from forest department. Awareness programs which build a capacity between local communities we also try to help them to make a Self-Hand Group for village development and to decrees dependency of forest.

Awareness program specially divided in two category

- 1) Awareness program in school/collages- 19
- 2) Awareness program in villages- 35

### **Black buck and wolf conservation and awareness programme.**

Since from decade we are working for black buck and wolf conservation in different three landscapes which is the small pockets where good population of Indian grey wolves and their prey black buck found. We are targeted local villagers to protect and conserve the Antelope species. We also help forest department to guide and inform about black buck conservation.



The following small packets where conservation program is running out.

- i) Dahegoan-monegaen of Amgaon range
  - ii) Khamari-Gonditolapowaritola of gondia range
  - iii) Ambetaliao-Gidhaddi of Goregon range.
- Regular monitoring of blackbuck & wolf packs.

We are doing regular foot patrolling and bike patrolling in that three landscape within a week we targeted



2 days to working in this landscape we also take regular meetings with villagers of surrounding area and beat guard of that range.

- Conduct orientation& sensitization of local committee members, farmers and field staff.

## Recuse programmes

SEWA team has always been a Nature's Guide and a Nature's friend. Keeping in mind that every species of animal be it a reptile or bird or herbivore or carnivore, it should stay in its natural habitat and that it does not disturb the balance, our team works effortlessly in the rescue and release of mostly snakes and birds in their natural habitat with utmost care and precision.

Rescuing not only birds but also snake, tiger, leopards, nilgais, black bugs, sloth bears from poachers, our SEWA team tries with all their might to keep the species safe till they release it in their natural habitat.

### • Livelihood Activities

- We did livelihood activities in ruler& tribal areas.

We selected almost 13<sup>th</sup> villages where we started livelihood program to make villagers self-depended and the main motto behind this program is to decrees dependency of forest. We also improve their mind and thinking about wildlife and why it is important to protect them. We are making Self hand groups in these 13<sup>th</sup> villages we are helping them to improve their crop pattern and we also help them to directly connected to various frame producer company.



### • Man – animal conflict

In awareness programs and workshops our main motto is to avoid Man animal conflicts situation. We discuss with people about animal movement pattern does and don't into the forest area.

### • Anti-poachingactivates and anti-electrocution movement

In NNTR landscape Poaching and electrocution is the biggest threat. People using electric current for killing wild animals most of the time they use electric current fencing to protect their crop from wild herbivore but unfortunately it's a big fact that not only herbivore but also carnivore animals and various time humans are also lose their life. It's a very big issue for NNTR landscape. Our team is frequently working for solving this big issue. We seized and caught various electrocution cases in this two year.

- **Celebrate world wildlife week – 1<sup>st</sup> Oct -7<sup>th</sup> Oct.**

-we had celebrate world wildlife week in wildlife sensitive villages, schools, collages & sensitive areas.

- **Wetland development and monitoring programme**

Gondia district is a lake district, we have more than 10,000 lakes.

We did work on management plan of lake

- **Surveys-**

The team has conducted various surveys including socio economic survey and cattle kill data collection from various Range offices in the Nagzhira WLS. The survey was done according to a pre decided format and was done in the core villages to understand the mode of livelihood and their economic and social gains from the Park and the adjoining forest. It was a detailed survey including the Land they own to their income, means, status to the basic demography. This survey was done in attempt to get a better idea of the dependency of the villages on forest and its products. The survey featured their acceptance to the wildlife and the issues, if any they've with the wild life.

These surveys can be done in a more broader way including all the peripheral villages and pointing out the threats and hurdles in balancing the harmony between nature and mankind.

## **CONCLUSION:**

In order to protect this picturesque landscape rich in both its fauna and flora collectively a very luxuriant bio diversity, we must be prepared to overcome the threats continuously posing in front of us and to be aware and prepared for the challenges in future.

This beautiful piece of land often referred to as the "Green Oasis of Vidarbha", which is home to the diversified wildlife and vegetation equally including Tigers, Leopards, Dhols, Jungle Cats, Sloth Bears, Hyenas, Wolves and plant eaters like Gaur and Sambar and a lot more varied species of Snakes and Birds, it should be preserved to its natural state.

The main objective of SEWA is to keep the nature as natural as possible without hampering with the Ecosystem at Large.

## Photo gallery



## Two Sarus cranes found dead in Gondia

■ District Correspondent  
GONDIA, Feb 1

CARCASSES of two sarus cranes were found in a field near paddy nursery on the border of Gondia - Balaghat on Wednesday. The birds are said to have died due to poisoning.



This is the start of Rabi season and farmers are in process of making nursery beds of paddy and to protect them from birds and insects, they use highly harmful Timate chemical pesticide.

Honorary Wildlife Warden Sawan Bahekar expressed

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The dead crane found in a paddy field in Gondia.



## News clips

## Students participate in bird study tour to mark birth anniversary of Dr Salim Ali

■ District Correspondent  
GONDIA, Nov 15

THE birth anniversary of renowned bird researcher Dr Salim Ali was celebrated with great zeal by Sustainable Environment and Wildlife Assemblage (SEWA).

The organisation organised study tour for the students to famous Paraswadalake where they were guided on various bird species and the need for environment, habitat conservation.

Former Wildlife Warden and SEWA President Sawan Bahekar

threw light on the life of Dr Salim Ali and his dedication in studying the birds. Noted bird lover Bharat Jasani told the students that the books written by Dr Ali were still used by the bird lovers to study the birds and their species. Ali is the inspiration for many to get them attract towards study of bird. Dr Ali earned identity as Bird Man of India, he added.

The students were told about the various species of migratory and local birds and how to identify the bird species.

They saw Sarus, Purple

Moorhen, Common Coot, Lesser Whistling Duck, Pintail, Jacana, Open Bill Stork, Gadwal, Gargani, Northern Pintail, Northern Showler, Grey Lac Goose, Marsh Harrier, Common Pochard and others. Munesh Gautam, Jalaram Budewar, Delendra Harinkhede, Sarpanch Jaipal Thakur (Paraswada), Shashank Ladekar, Dushyant Akre, Salim Sheikh, Ratiram Kshirsagar, Dinesh Harinkhede, Trayambakeshwar Harinkhede, Vikas Farkunde, Gaurav Bopche, Anurag Shukla, Rahul Bhawe and others worked for the success.



Students along with the activists of Sustainable Environment and Wildlife Assemblage organisation.

## Two Sarus congregations in Gondia district create hope of rise in Sarus population

■ District Correspondent  
GONDIA, July 22

SARUS Crane, the tallest living flying bird, has given a new identity to Gondia district. The birds are found only in Gondia and neighbouring Bhandara district in entire Maharashtra and also in Balaghat area of neighbouring Madhya Pradesh. However, there has been a decline in the population of the birds over the last two decades and wildlife enthusiasts are therefore trying to stop further fall in their numbers.

In this backdrop, the two recent 'congregations' of Sarus cranes in Gondia gain importance. Two



A congregation of Sarus cranes captured in the camera lens by former Wildlife Warden Sawan Bahekar.

flocks of 12 and 13 Saruses each were recorded near the borders.

Sawan Bahekar, former Wildlife Warden, informed that the congregation of Sarus cranes lasts for four to five days and during the period the male birds woo the females by dancing and making trumpeting sounds. Sarus are said to be very sensitive and loyal birds. They live together with the same partner once they pair. The male species grows up to 6 feet in height while female partners are shorter. July to October is their breeding time and they make big nests in paddy fields or on wet lands.

The first congregation in Gondia district was recorded in 1970 by 'Aranyasputra' late Madhavrao Patil Dongarwar in Navegaonbandh and later in February 2014, when Bahekar had captured 20 Sarus in one frame, which was highest.

In the recent census conducted in June, around 80 cranes were found in Gondia and Balaghat districts. However, Bahekar said that the population could have been much better but declining wet lands, increasing pollution level in water bodies, excessive use of pesticide by the cultivators, poaching are some reasons behind the low number of birds. As per Bahekar farmers should

use eco-friendly pesticides instead of highly harmful Timat pesticide, which also damages soil fertility of the land. He said that the congregation was a good sign as it would help in raising the bird's population.

The members of SEWA (Sustainable Environment and Wildlife Assemblage) working in the environment and conservation field want the administration to focus more on conservation and protection of the Sarus cranes rather than using them for marketing for the district.

It may be mentioned here that Sarus are in the Red List of International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and classified as vulnerable species. Degradation of environment, habitat destruction is also proving dangerous for them. Bahekar said that the administration should come forward to honour people and villagers who are helping save the cranes.

The SEWA team includes Munesh Gautam, Avijet Parihar, Bharat Jasani, Babloo Chute, Abhay Kachar (Balaghat), Ankit Thakur, Shashank Ladekar, Chetan Jasani and others.



Rice City of Gondia is fast being known for the presence of Sarus Cranes in the district. To glorify the fact that the world's tallest animal is found only in this part of the State, the Gondia district administration has installed statues of a pair of Sarus cranes near Collectorate in Gondia. (Pic by Nilesh Kothari)

## Bison found dead Man-made menace: Forest fire spreads over 5,000 Ha in Gondia

■ District Correspondent  
GONDIA, Mar 26

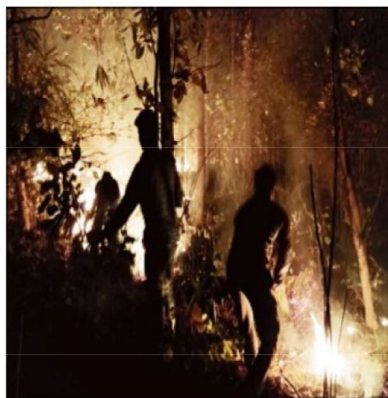
A MALE bison was found dead in FDCM forest range in Jambdi block. The carcass was noticed by the volunteers of Sustainable Environment and Wildlife Assemblage (SEWA) during their monitoring and water management work.

Importantly, the alleged artificial man-made fire has been destroying the forest assets in Jambdi range for past more than a week following which the wild animals are moving in search of water to other places.



The carcass of forest range in

It is assumed prey to thirst. A



Hectic efforts being made to control the fire in Jambdi area of Navegaonbandh - Nagzira.

■ District Correspondent  
GONDIA, Mar 23

GONDIA district has a forest cover of 53% of

its geographical area covered dense forest, 43% of which lies under reserve forest, protected forest and *zudpi* jungle. However, all this is under threat due to the

man-made fires. The steps being taken by the Forest Department to check the fires appear to be falling short as the flames of destruction are only spreading further.

The total geographical area of Gondia district is of 5,425 sqkms out of which 2,895.67 sqkms (about 53%) has forest cover.

Every year, between March and May, which is the start of *tendu* leaf collection activity, the incidents of forest fires spring up. It is alleged that some *tendu* contractors and traders start artificial fires as they help them in getting better quality of leaf.

As of now, the fire in Gondia has spread over 5,000 hectares of forest. The affected areas are Mulla *tendu* unit, Naktaya, Aalebadar, Dongargaon depot, Duggipaar, Shashikiran Hills, Khamtalav, Zhunzaritola, Kohdipaar, Shenda, Koirari, Kelzara, Junewani, Gangazari, Navtalav, Kharoba, Jambdi I and

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