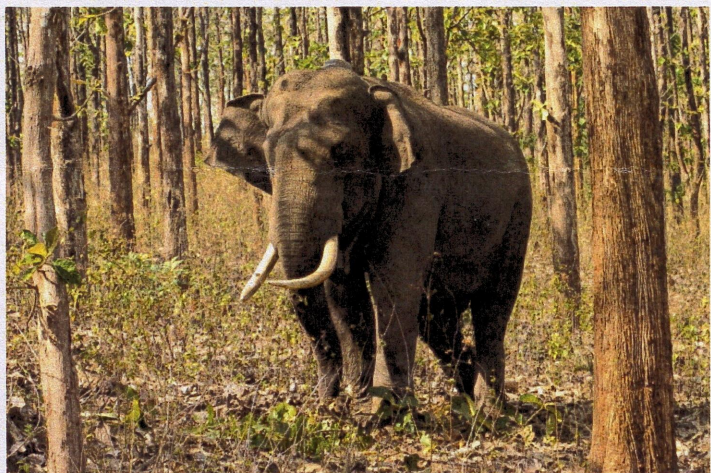


Report of the

Committee constituted for 'Exploring the possibility of releasing a wild bull elephant captured from Sulthan Bathery Range on 22nd November 2016 back to the wild'.

Background

For the past three years or more, a wild Bull Elephant, aged about 30 years, was reported as a conflict animal in the areas such as Kallur 67, Thekkumpetta, Kalichira, Panappady etc., falling under the jurisdiction of Ponkuzhy Section of Sulthan Bathery Range of Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary. It was also reported that the said elephant was frequently transgressing into human settlements and has become dangerous to human life and property. Based on the letter No. W (3)-1454/16 dated 12.02.2016 of the Wildlife Warden, Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary, the Chief Wildlife Warden, Kerala, having convinced of the fact that the elephant has become habitual in transgressing into human settlements and is dangerous to human life and property, and by exercising the powers conferred under Section 11 (1) (a) of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972, vide Proceedings Order No. WL1-8696/2016 dated 18.02.2016, ordered to capture the said elephant by tranquilizing and to release to natural environment away from the human habitations, after affixing radio collar on the animal. The order for tranquilization and radio-collaring was issued considering the communication from Ministry of Environment and Forests in their letter No. F.No.2-11/2012 (PE) dated 19.03.2012, that 'if the rogue elephant has become a matter of serious concern, capture and translocation is generally the best option'. Accordingly, the said elephant was radio-collared from Kallur area on February 22nd, 2016. Tranquillization was carried out by the Forest Veterinary Officer and the radio collar was affixed by the expert team from WWF.



2. **Health Conditions of the Elephant after Capture:** The Veterinary officers opined that the health condition of the animal is overall good.
3. **Translocation & Post-translocation feasibilities:** The elephant captured is now kept in a temporary Kraal at Muthanga. The Veterinary Officers were of the opinion that the adult bulls, especially below 40 years of age are more prone to be habitual crop raiders. These bulls are problematic in the sense that they conduct raids in and around human inhabitations and agricultural crops on a day to day basis in spite of all the mitigation measures. In that perspective, it would be literally impossible to consider release of the elephant back in Wayanad as the region is heavily inhabited by human beings and the animal has clear tendencies of coming back for crop raids. Alternatively, the Committee also considered the possibilities of releasing the animal back to wild conditions other than that in Wayanad, as suggested by Mr. Badusha. Previous experiences of releasing captured problematic bulls back to the wild have resulted in serious Human – Elephant Conflict as in the case of Bannarghatta and Siruvani. Moreover, there is no habitat available North of Palakkad Gap for successful translocation in to the wild. Studies have shown that the crop raiding behavior is attributed to a specific genome. As pointed out by Dr.Easa and Dr.Arun, the Committee observed that a distinct genetic population of wild elephants exists to the South of Palakkad Gap and mixing a conflict animal could result in disastrous consequences like genetic pre disposition. Hence it was agreed upon by the Committee members that admix of the conflict animal to the less conflicting south population is not admissible. Moreover, it was also opined by the Committee members that translocation is a torture and is neither a good option for a problem animal, ethically as well as technically. It was generally agreed to by the Committee that since the animal has been identified as a perpetual crop raider, it should not be released in to the wild as past experiences have shown that the released animal will create problems wherever it was released and translocation is only about shifting of a problem. Hence the possibilities of translocation of the elephant were completely ruled out
4. **Best options for management of the elephant captured:** Committee members had considered various options in view of the above circumstances. After detailed deliberations, it was suggested that the elephant presently kept in a temporary Kraal at Muthanga should be kept in captivity in semi wild conditions and trained as a Kumki Elephant and be used in other Human Elephant Conflict operations. It was also suggested that the elephant should be familiarized with multiple handlers.

Recommendations

The Committee recommends that the tusker captured from Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary on 22.11.2016 should be kept in captivity in semi wild conditions and trained as a Kumki Elephant and be used in other Human Elephant Conflict operations. It is also recommended that the elephant should be familiarized with multiple handlers.

Deliberations of the Committee

A meeting of the Committee was convened at 2 pm on 06.12.2016 in the Conference Hall of 'Gajah' Inspection Bungalow at Sulthan Bathery, Wayanad. The following members participated in the discussions.

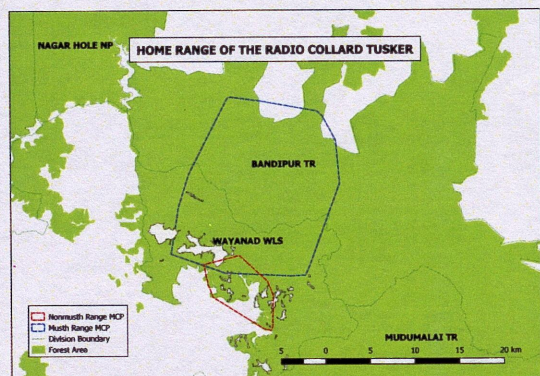
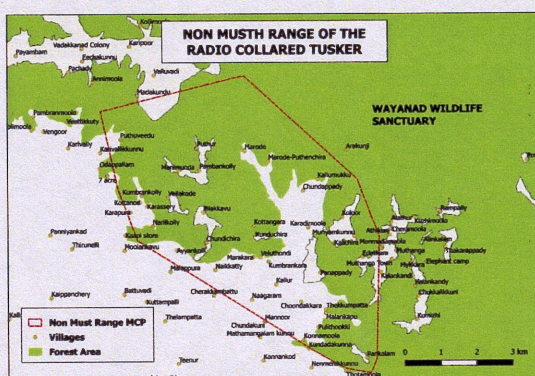
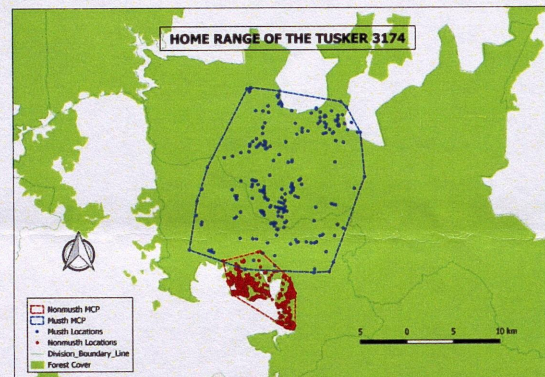
1. Dr. Amit Mallick, IFS, Field Director (Project Tiger), Kottayam
2. Sri. Pramod G. Krishnan I F S, Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife) & Field Director, Palakkad.
2. Sri. P.S. Easa, Scientist (Rtd.), KFRI, Peechi
3. Sri. P Dhanesh Kumar, Wildlife Warden, Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary.
4. Dr. Jayakumar, Forest Veterinary Officer, Konni.
5. Dr. Arun Zachariah, Asst. Forest Veterinary Officer, Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary.
6. Adv. Namasivayam, Environmental Activist (over phone)
7. Sri. N. Badusha, Environmental Activist based in Wayanad.

The Committee deliberated on the following aspects of capture and post-capture management aspects of the elephant.

1. Measures taken before capture, to establish the identity of the elephant.
2. Health conditions of the Elephant after capture
3. Translocation & Post-translocation feasibilities
4. Best options for management of the elephant captured

The views of the Committee on the various aspects mentioned above are as follows:-

1. **Measures taken before capture, to establish the identity of the elephant:** The Veterinary Experts in the Committee were of the opinion that the problem identified as the 'Tusker 3174' is confirmed as a habitual crop raider and it has been radio collared twice in order to track its movement pattern. All efforts to drive it back into its natural habitat were in vain. The animal was very much accustomed to human habitation and crops such as paddy, plantain, areca nut, coconut etc. and recently it even started posing threat to human life. The following map showing the movement pattern of the animal clearly reveals that it is a habitual crop raider.



Movement of the said elephant was subsequently being monitored using radio telemeter by the forest staff. During musth period, it tended to move towards Mudumalai/Bandipur side. After the first four months of collaring, the elephant started crop raiding again. Meanwhile, the collar affixed on the elephant got detached, may be during fight with other elephants. The elephant was again radio-collared on 04.11.2016. The crop raiding behavior of the animal continued and there was also an incident of human injury on 15th of November 2016. The animal had become mostly dependent on the agricultural crops and all the efforts for restraining it from entering into the agricultural lands and the measures taken for chasing the animal away were going in vain. There had been huge agitation from the local people, including blocking of the NH 766, detaining forest officials etc., against the continuous crop raiding behavior of the elephant. Considering all aspects, in view of the situation above, as per the Proceedings Order No. WL1-8696/2016 dated 17.11.2016, of the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Wildlife & Chief Wildlife Warden, Kerala; the said animal was successfully captured on 22nd November 2016 using trained Kumki elephants and translocated to the temporary Kraal at Muthanga.

Constitution of Committee to examine the feasible options for management of the Elephant Captured

As per Order No. WL1-8696/2016 dated 25.11.2016 of the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Wildlife & Chief Wildlife Warden, Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, a Technical Committee under the Chairmanship of Dr. Amit Mallick, IFS, Field Director (Project Tiger), Kottayam, was constituted to explore the feasibility of releasing elephant captured into the wild. The other members of the Committee are as follows:-

Members

1. Sri. Pramod G. Krishnan I F S, Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife) & Field Director, Palakkad.
2. Sri. P.S. Easa, Scientist (Rtd.), KFRI, Peechi
3. Sri. P Dhanesh Kumar, Wildlife Warden, Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary.
4. Dr. Jayakumar, Forest Veterinary Officer, Konni.
5. Dr. Arun Zachariah, Asst. Forest Veterinary Officer, Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary.
6. Adv. Namasivayam, Environmental Activist.
7. Sri. N. Badusha, Environmental Activist based in Wayanad.