

## **Project Update: November 2014**

### **Objective**

- To map populations, movement and habitats of gaur - **Partially achieved**

Three herds have been identified. Movements of two herds are being mapped. Various gaur habitats are also being identified. Maps are being compiled.

- To monitor activity in the 'Gaur Trails' - **Partially achieved**

Movements of two herds are being monitored. Their most frequented paths have been identified.

- To create awareness with the help of active participant stakeholder groups - **Partially achieved**

Gaur awareness presentations have been made at schools in Kotagiri. A dialogue has been conducted with the local police on how to react when they come across gaur at night

- To administer perception surveys in the selected areas of study - **Partially achieved**

Surveys have been administered on people who inhabit regions in or peripheral to the "Gaur Trails"

- Implement suitable conservation action to mitigate conflict situations - **Partially achieved**

Personal conversations and interactions have begun with individuals who have very frequent and sustained interactions with gaur, because of their area of residence, or their professional demands. Their concerns are spoken about through an individual interaction, and certain precautionary/safety measures have been suggested. A community radio station 'Radio Kotagiri 90.4MHz' is currently broadcasting information about gaur sightings within the town. They have initiated a call in programme, wherein the public can call in and report about gaur sightings and other relevant information.

- Create a "Gaur Information Pack" - **Partially achieved**

Consultations have been held with the Zoo Outreach Organisation based in Coimbatore, as to the nature of the content of the information pack, and the various audiences it would have to each out to.

- Conduct a "Gaur" festival, showcasing the Gaur from different perspectives- **Fully achieved**

A festival was conducted on 8th-9th August 2014 in Kotagiri. The festival showcased artists, musicians, and storytellers from different parts of India talking about the gaur, and nature as a whole, and the nature of our various interactions with them.

### **Unforeseen difficulties**

There are multiple herds of gaur present around Kotagiri. Mapping movement of all herds simultaneously is a difficulty which arose. Also, the behavioural nature of gaur, where adult bulls are seen wandering alone, separated from the herd have also been observed. This

factor would cause difficulty in identifying which exact individual it is, and which herd he is usually associated with.

To overcome these difficulties, we have begun working with two herds, which move around in close proximity to Keystone Foundation, to enable better monitoring and tracking. Finding a pattern in their movement is also being attempted. With respect to the bulls, photo documentation of all adult bulls around Kotagiri is underway to better understand associations and behaviour of adult bulls.

### Outcomes

- 1. Increased awareness of gaur, and greater interest from the community in learning and understanding more about the gaur.*
- 2. Increased understanding of gaur behaviour and the routes/paths they take.*
- 3. New perspectives towards talking about wildlife and more specifically the gaur to individuals/communities not directly affected by it.*
- 4. Rapid Action Project with the Wildlife Trust of India to involve relevant state departments in creating awareness and conservation of gaur populations in urban landscapes.*

### Community involvement

The local communities have been involved in aiding Keystone Foundation in locating and monitoring gaur. In doing so, we have pursued more interactions with these individuals, sharing our observations and insights as well as documenting some of their concerns and perspectives as well.

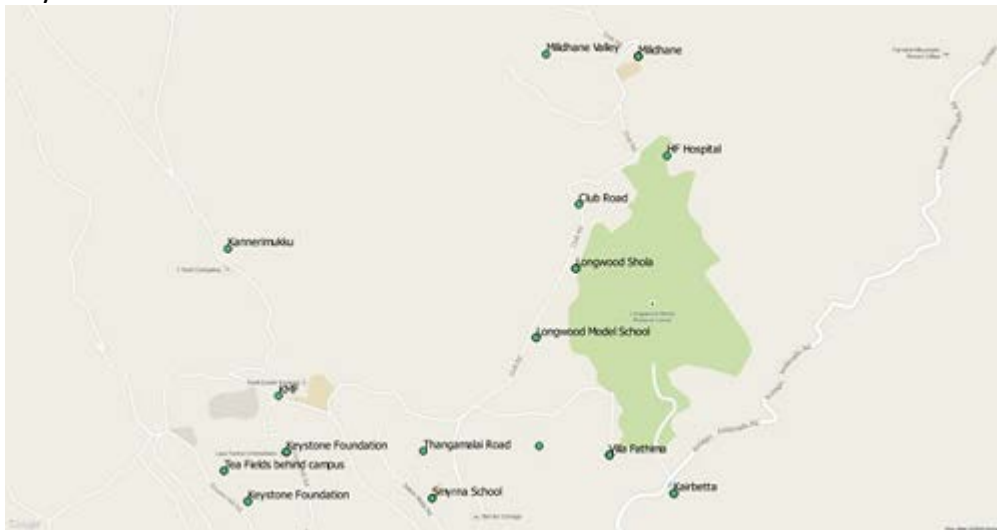
Outreach is currently planned through Gaur Awareness Programmes to be conducted in educational institutions across Kotagiri. A gaur awareness kit is also being compiled with assistance from the Zoo Outreach Organisation to spread awareness to a varied audience. Discussions are being held with the Wildlife Trust of India on putting up signage at crucial gaur crossing points within the town of Kotagiri. The signage will be put up in consultation with relevant state departments.



Left: A herd crossing club road at 4pm. Right: A male trying to find the female (A low pitched moo!)

## Gaur Monitoring Observation Maps

July



August



September





Left: A woman who works at a Greenhouse is ready with her Gaur deterrents. (A stick and a steel glass when hit against the fence can be very disturbing.) Right: An Old Bull moving away from the people and into the Kannerimukh Valley.



Gaur trails