

## Project Update: August 2008

Till date we have identified 64 species of fodder plants of elephant. We are presently studying their availability in the study area. We also visited the fodder nursery of Forest Department in Belpahari (West Medinipore) and Bandwan (Purulia). At present we are studying the natural fodder frequency/density and their regeneration rate in the study area. Simultaneously we are also studying the impacts of planted fodder plants in MER. Natural water sources like streams and artificial water sources like earthen dam made by forest department are the main water source for elephants. But there are no saltlicks present in MER.

During our observation we identified that the problem in MER is conversion of forest lands to agricultural field and/or village. The cultivation of '*Babui*' grass by villagers to make ropes etc. is another problem. There is some misconception in villagers that the government will relocate them from MER area.

There are three identified corridors of MER. Among those the Dalma (Jharkhand) → Kankrajhore (West Bengal) Corridor of Belpahari Range of Jhargram Division is most important and well studied. The other two corridors are not studied in detail yet. More study is required to identify the new routes of elephants.

We have also initiated the community interaction and awareness programme for elephant habitat conservation in MER. Till date we have performed two days slide-illustrated talk and film show to show the importance of MER as elephant habitat and ways to reduce HEC. The target group was the students of standard V to XII (age group 10+ to 18+) residing inside the MER. The total number of participants was approximately 2,300 pupils.



Community interactions



Elephant fodder nursery



Elephant fodder plantation