Project Update: December 2008

Data on Chital deer's (*Axis axis*) group size, density and other population parameters were collected from different habitats in the park (areas with and without livestock). We laid six line transects and covered more than 350 km by forest roads to estimate above population parameters. We have collected the said information on 170 chital groups across the park. We also took their GPS locations to match their habitat selection with the available vegetation and other physical parameters. Vigilance behaviour of chital deer (for determining predation risk) while foraging in different habitats was recorded by using digital handy cam (40 X zoom). Two broad habitats – dense mixed teak forest and open *Acacia-Zizphyus* grassland forest are being considered. So far, we have collected 35 video recordings of chital behavior in their natural habitats. The sightings are likely to improve when the forest dries out in coming months. After the recordings, we also collected the available biomass using 1x 1 m quadrats near their grazed areas to relate predation risk with resource availability and bite rates. Further, I have obtained population and distribution of livestock settlements in the park from the government officials. I am also recording livestock behaviour while grazing to determine their response to their predators (Asiatic lions).

My field work will continue until June 2009 which would enable me to cover the whole range of seasonal influences on resource availability i.e. post monsoon (abundant), winter (moderate) and summer (scarce) on chital's behavior in the areas where it coexists with livestock and where it occurs alone.