

Project Update: September 2005

Wildlife Habitat destruction due to mega projects in the form of mining, mega dams, Highway is among the least focused in the current wildlife conservation movements. The funds from the Rufford Small grant for Nature Conservation are therefore being focused on challenging ecologically disastrous projects through legal support before appropriate legal forums for groups and individuals who cannot afford litigation expenses.

During the last few months over eight cases have been filed before different courts in order to address critical issues related to conservation of the habitat of wild flora and fauna. With a team of three lawyers we have challenged the grant of environmental clearances granted to the Middle Siang dam in the Biodiversity Hotspot area of North East and habitat of the various endangered species such as the Red Panda, Slow Loris, and Clouded leopard. The faulty EIA has failed to take into account various biodiversity indicators of the area. The matter is pending before the National Environmental Appellate Authority. Similarly we have challenged the grant of similar clearances to the Loharinag pala Dam in the Himalayan State of Uttaranchal which will lead to submergence of pristine alpine forests. Significant victories have been achieved wherein a stay was obtained on the electrification of illegal encroachments in an important Tiger corridor forming part of the Terai arc complex (Bindukhatta in Terai East Division). Significant progress has also been made in protecting the habitat of the Wroughton's free tailed Bat in the Western Ghats region and steps have been initiated to declare the area as an ecologically sensitive area for the protection of the endemic Biodiversity.