

government. Circa 152 ha of land in the most pristine parts of Kudremukh, which previously belonged to the resettled families, have been legally integrated into the Park. This has had the benefit of reducing scope for intrusions of development into approximately one-third of the Park.

In April 2016 the government officially proposed resettlement of the remaining 300 families. The government seeks to set aside INR 344,000,000 (USD 5,000,000) for resettlement of 86 scheduled tribe families and INR 871,000,000 (USD 13,000,000) for resettlement of 239 families from other communities. With the formation and working of a District Relocation Committee, the Kudremukh Park officials and other government officials are confident of successfully implementing the proposed resettlement.

Private sector conservation initiatives can play an important role in triggering and promoting fair, generous resettlement programmes. These programmes serve social justice by ensuring that people have access to basic facilities such as electricity, health care and education, and contribute to conservation through consolidation of habitat for threatened species.

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Otters and wetlands training workshop in China

Otters are excellent indicator species and ideal symbols for wetland conservation as they are top predators and use both land and water. In Asia few scientists are carrying out research on otters and their habitats, and therefore the International Otter Survival Fund has been providing a series of workshops to train people in field techniques for otters, public awareness programmes, law enforcement and general conservation issues. The latest workshop was in Zhuhai, China during 5–10 September 2016.

There are three species of otter in China: the Near Threatened Eurasian otter *Lutra lutra*, the Vulnerable smooth-coated otter *Lutrogale perspicillata*, and the Vulnerable Asian small-clawed otter *Aonyx cinereus*. Populations of all three are declining, largely as a result of wetland degradation, depletion of food resources and illegal hunting. The high quality of otter fur makes it a target for the fur trade, and China is a major market, particularly Tibet, where it forms part of the traditional dress. Although otters are now protected in China, illegal trade continues.

Conservation efforts for mammals in Asia are generally concentrated on high-profile species such as tigers and elephants, and this workshop was the first on otters to be held

in China. The 33 participants came from Nepal, Sri Lanka, Thailand, The Netherlands, Australia, Ukraine, UK and China, where they work with zoos, universities and NGOs. The workshop was opened by Matthew Rous, the UK Consul General in Guangzhou.

The workshop began with a look at the otters of the world, covering the identification, ecology and threats to Asian otters, an overview of conservation status, current knowledge and legislation, and threats to Chinese otters, and continued with otters as wetland ambassadors, reintroducing otters, and caring for otters for release. A major element of the workshop was education and public awareness, particularly in schools and zoos, both in presentations and in practice during a session with local schoolchildren. There were also discussions about the best way to work with older children (12–17 years) and adults.

As otters do not occur near the workshop venue, field visits were not possible but survey techniques and use of camera traps were discussed, and participants practised spraint (droppings) analysis and identification of footprints from casts. As fishermen can pose a threat to otters, mitigation measures were examined. The illegal wildlife trade was considered, in Asia more widely and in Nepal and China. Although Tibet has always been a major market for otter furs, one participant, who works on the Tibetan plateau, reported that the use of real fur is declining as people become more concerned about conservation, encouraged by the Dalai Lama.

The final afternoon was devoted to a discussion of a new initiative to establish a Chinese Otter Conservation Network, for sharing experiences and education material for otter conservation. Two priorities were identified for the new Network: baseline surveys for a better understanding of the distribution and status of the three species of otter, and education and public awareness.

Each participant will be submitting their plans for the next 6 months work to the Network coordinators, Ling-Ling Lee of the National Taiwan University and Zhang Xiaohong, Deputy Director of Wetlands International China. The enthusiasm for collaboration has already resulted in a small team in Hong Kong working together on surveys and education in the Mai Po nature reserve. The Chinese Network will also be linked to the Asian Otter Conservation Network, established following earlier workshops.

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