

**Project Bustard:** Various research projects are being initiated by the BNHS team under project Bustard as following

**Project I) Status of Great Indian Bustard *Ardeotis nigriceps* and its conservation requirements in Chandrapur region of Maharashtra**

The Ministry of Coal, Government of India, New Delhi has allotted Kiloni Manoradeep & Baranj I- IV Coal Mining block to Karnataka Power Corporation Limited (KPCL). The project includes approx. 1372 ha of private land and 84.41 ha of forest land. Through vide their letter no. F.No. 8-52/2011 FC dated 9th Dec-2011, From Ministry of Environments and forest (MoEF), Government of India, has imposed the condition with respect to conducting rapid assessment study on the Great India Bustard *Ardeotis nigriceps* in the project area. Karnataka EMTA Coal Mines Ltd. (KECML) on behalf of KPCL approached BNHS for carrying out a rapid assessment survey of GIB in study area.

After detail discussion with KECML, it was decided that a yearlong study including three seasonal surveys will be carried out. A team of BNHS scientists visited regularly to the study area during April 2012 to May 2013 at least a week each month in Bhadravati and Warora tehsils of Chandrapur distirct and seasonal visits made to Bhivapur and Umred tehsils of Nagpur district.

Summary of recommendations for conservation of GIB at Chandrapur area

1. Development of alternative habitat – Afforestation should not be allowed and plantation patches from bustard areas in Bhadravati and Warora tehsils should be cleared for habitat restoration.
2. Additional benefits other than compensation should be given to local villagers at gram panchayat level, so people can be proud on having a critically endangered and habitat specialist bird in their surroundings.
3. Promotion of organic farming for long term benefit for GIB conservation programme.
4. Satellite tracking of GIB for study of their seasonal and local movement.
5. National GIB conservation breeding programme for should be initiated immediately.
6. Strengthening of forest staff personnel for effective conservation of GIB
7. Financial support for all the above activities should be contributed by all the existing and upcoming companies in bustard area

**Project II) Preparation and implementation of Wildlife Conservation Management Plan (WCP) with special reference to conservation of Great Indian Bustard (GIB) based on biodiversity study was carried out at the Solapur Super Thermal Power Project, NTPC, Ltd.**

At present GIB is distributed in five different pockets of Maharashtra,

- A) Great Indian Bustard Sanctuary and adjoining areas (Solapur district)
- B) Umred (Nagpur district) and Warora and Bhadravati Tehsil (Chandrapur district) in Vidarbha region
- C) Tuljapur taluka (Osmanabad district) in Marathwada region
- D) Ozar and Wani (Nashik district )
- E) North and South Solapur, Barshi, Mangalvedha (Solapur district)

The present GIB population in Maharashtra was found to be the lowest and most unstable in the last three decades, especially the population in GIB Sanctuary area which has declined drastically. This suggests that, for conservation of GIB, we need to make special and equal efforts in protected as well as non-protected areas.

NTPC Ltd. has proposed to set up a coal-based Thermal Power Plant of 2x660 MW capacity at Solapur, Maharashtra. The land required for the project is 1650 acres. The project was proposed to be commissioned during the XIIth Plan. The MoEF Expert Committee meeting indicates that a Wildlife Conservation Plan with special reference to Great Indian Bustard (GIB) shall be prepared in consultation with a reputed wildlife expert/institute. NTPC approached BNHS for this study and surveys were conducted by team of BNHS scientists by visiting the area at least once in a month from September 2011 to September 2012 to compile first hand information about the wildlife conservation issues in the power plant as well as from its 10 km radius area.

A conservation plan multidisciplinary actions such as seasonal survey of flora and fauna, socio-economic studies, study for pesticide residues in food chain of GIB, etc. was submitted in December 2012. For GIB conservation the operational area will be entire South-Western region of Deccan Maharashtra including Ahmednagar, Solapur and Osmanabad districts. And plan for conservation of other wildlife will be mainly concentrated in 10km radius area of NTPC, Solapur. This Wildlife Conservation Plan will be helpful in conservation of critically endangered bird Great Indian Bustard as well as the neglected grassland habitat. Other threatened species such as Egyptian Vulture, Painted Stork, Black-headed Ibis, Indian Blackbuck will also be get benefitted from this plan.

### **Project III) Guidelines for State Action Plan for Resident Bustards' Recovery Programme**

Bustards (family Otididae) are obligate grassland birds with slow life-history traits and an open nesting system. These characters make them vulnerable to extinction when faced with environmental changes and direct threats. Out of the 25 species occurring worldwide, six are endangered that includes all three residents of India. This fact highlights the conservation crisis of Indian grasslands, mainly attributed to hunting and habitat modification. The resident bustards: the Great Indian Bustard (*Ardeotis nigriceps*, GIB), Lesser Florican (*Sypheotides indica*, LF) and Bengal Florican (*Houbaropsis bengalensis*, BF) play umbrella and indicator roles for much wildlife that inhabit agro-grass systems and face similar extinction risks.

Indian conservation circles have therefore proposed grassland conservation strategies with bustards as the flagship taxa. With this aim, BNHS is involved in formulation of the Species Recovery Plan (SRP) along with help of the Ministry of Environment and Forests through consultative meetings with Forest Departments, wildlife biologists and non-governmental organizations.



Great Indian Bustard (GIB) in front of a power plant at Warora. Photo by Sujit Narwade (October 2013)