

visitors to the Snake Park and Crocodile Bank included Dr. John MacKinnon from Indonesia, an atomic energy delegation from the USSR and Dr. H R Bustard.

The Crocodile Bank participated in the Tourist Trade Fair held from 8.1.79 to 11.3.79 and the gate collections are being used for the development of the bank.

The Crocodile Bank has initiated a part time training programme for unemployed young men of Vadanemmeli Village. It is felt that with the increasing activity of various state Forest Departments in crocodile husbandry and management, these trainees will enhance their chances of finding employment.

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#### SILENT VALLEY

In spite of appeals from WWF, IUCN, and other conservation bodies in India and abroad, the hydro electric project in Silent Valley one of the last remaining rain forest in India, is going ahead. Prof M.K. Prasad, who has initiated the Society for the Protection of Silent Valley, is not taking this lying down. He writes: "We are very close to our next step. The Society will be filing a civil suit at the High Court of Kerala... to get the Silent Valley Ordinance squashed since it is against the interest of saving the lion-tailed macaque, which is protected under the Wildlife Act. Another case is also being filed by a wellwisher of ours who owns land in Aali, 12 kms from Silent Valley. The advocates themselves are.... conservationists. Though we do not expect any favourable outcome of this case, it will create publicity and attract attention".

Meanwhile, the Kerala State Assembly has said that the Project will abide by the environmental safeguards laid down by the Western Ghats Task Force.

#### SEA TURTLE NOTICES FROM VISAKHAPATNAM

Dr. S Dutt, Head, Department of Marine Sciences at Andhra University, has written about sea turtles on the Visakhapatnam coast. "This year, considerable numbers of Olive Ridges have been captured by fishermen, from the latter half of November '78. At Vizag the number of turtles captured per day has not been more than a dozen. The number captured is on the decline since the second half of January '79. This is also the period (October-March) when the coastal waters support, not insignificant schools of lesser sardines and whitebait. Unfortunately, there are no records from this locality of the turtles coming on shore to lay eggs; probably they are being captured before they can do so. I wonder whether, apart from their coming to the coastal waters on their way to the sandy beaches for laying eggs, their presence here is not also to feed on the small pelagic fishes mentioned above. When I made enquiries of the fishermen in their villages, I could not get a clear reply as to whether they eat the meat on any regular basis. The replies that I got were: the older people among us eat them or some of us eat them. I have no evidence that



they are sent to markets in Calcutta, but you know how difficult it is to collect authentic data in such matters.

The fishermen here do catch and, I am afraid, even treat them with callousness. They certainly do not worship them. According to CMFRI data (Newsletter No.7, October '77 - March '78), 3000 to 4000 green turtles are captured annually in the Gulf of Mannar alone, and regularly slaughtered on Sundays in Tuticorin market.

In May 1976 a leatherback which came on shore at Vizag was injured and killed due to reckless handling by people who should have known better".

#### LETTERS FROM THE ANDAMANS

Satish Bhaskar, Field Officer of the Madras Snake Park, has been in the Andamans since September '78. Apart from his periodic reports we have received several interesting letters from him:

30th November, Havelock Island - "Turtle nesting areas I've visited, since my last letter include the Betapur coast immediately north of Rangat, and English Island, but I didn't find a single track in English, nor could I visit North and South Button Islands where nesting is said to be heavy. This probably was the case in the recent past before fishermen began frequenting these shores. But on a 2 km stretch of Betapur, I dug up plenty of green, hawksbill and Ridley eggs (fresh tracks visible in some instances). What thrilled me more was finding a track 193 cms broad on this coast - almost certainly a leatherback. A huge area had also been excavated by the turtle, but oddly, no craters had been left behind - this, I think, because the turtle didn't lay - an opinion reinforced by about 5 hours of fruitless digging by me. The tracks were about 10 days old, ie made in about early November.

You may be interested to know that my boat crew saw a crocodile ( I saw the bubbles alone) in the channel between John Lawrence and Henry Lawrence Islands (ie just north of Havelock). Am I right in presuming you havn't seen crocs this far south?

I had the privilege of meeting a very brave man here. He and 4 of his crew mates were caught in a cyclone off Havelock about 3 months back. The boat engine conked out and they drifted to Burma, reaching it after 23 foodless days, unconscious but alive. What a story he has to tell! I happened to be in a queue behind him at Port Blair as he was making the last leg of his adventurous journey, purchasing a ferry ticket to Havelock. His name is Tuna (!) and he's a diver (they had been diving for Turbo and Trochus shells when overtaken by the storm). They jettisoned their entire fish catch to keep their boat afloat. 3 men unconscious and 2 remaining to bail out water. Finally they too were unconscious! What a yarn.