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### **Short Communication**

## **A NOTE ON THE STATUS, OCCURRENCE AND DISTRIBUTION OF WILD BUFFALO, *BUBALUS BUBALIS* (LINNEAUS) IN WESTERN ORISSA AND CHHATTISGARH**

The wild Buffalo has now been one of the most highly endangered species of mammals, due to its utility in different ways by human being. The population of this animal is on continuous decline, despite the implementation of Wildlife Protection Act 1972. Several workers, such as Moone (1930), Daniel and Grubb (1966), Divekar (1979), Divekar and Bhusan (1988), Choudhury (1994) have conducted important surveys to study the status and population of this species. Studies undertaken by Gee (1953), Inverarity (1985), Lall (1953), Naronha (1954) are not less important however, they have mainly focused on the morphological features and behavioural characters. Moone (1930) stated that the wild Buffalo had been extinct in coastal districts of Orissa for over 25-30 years back. He opined that the animal was present in Raipur and that there were 40-50 animals, which frequented a locality within ten miles of C.P. Border and a small herd of about 15 individuals, forty miles further east. He added that the first named buffalos might join with the herds in the south of Raipur district. Behura and Guru (1964) reported the existence of two herds of this animal, one each in Kalahandi and Koraput district. During the faunastic survey of Orissa (1970-1983) the survey parties of Zoological Survey of India however, could not see any trace of this wild animal. Daniel and Grubb (1966) estimated 400-500 individuals in Peninsular India. Godwin and Holloway (1972) gave an estimation of 2000 animals in India including Nepal (400-500 individuals in Peninsular India, including 200-250 in Bastar and Chandrapura). Daniel *et al.* (1979) reported that no wild Buffalo was left in Orissa and Maharashtra. Tikadar (1983) has shown its distribution in grass jungle of Nepal terai, extending to the plains of Brahmaputra in Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. He also reported this species to occur in Raipur and Bastar district of Chhattisgrah, Western Orissa and Maharashtra. He mentioned its population to be less than 1000. As per Red Data Book (ZSI, 1994), this species has been reported to occur in Assam (Manas, Pabha, Kaziranga, Loakhowa and Lakhimpur), Orissa (Koraput district), Chhattisgrah (West, North, South Bastar and southern Raipur district) and Maharashtra (Eastern Chandrapura). Choudhury (1994) estimated a population of 3000-3500 in north-east India. Alfred, Ramakrishna and Pradhan (2006) have shown its distribution in Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and Eastern Maharashtra. Alfred and De (2006) stated the occurrence of this species in Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Meghalaya, Orissa and probably West Bengal.

The author conducted a survey of forest ranges in Koraput district from 23-28 December, 2003 but could not get any clue of this animal.

The picture in Chhattisgrah is different. Though their population has been on decline for the last several years, yet they still occur in protected areas of Chhattisgrah in different localities. About 200-250 individual existed upto 1968. In 1986-87, the number of Buffalo was estimated to be around 127 in Indravati National Park and 25 animals in Bhairamgrah Sanctuary, whereas in Pamed Sanctuary and Udanti Sanctuary their number was 58 and 40 respectively. Divekar and Bhusan (1988) reported 39 Buffalos in Indravati National Park and 15 in Bhairamgrah Sanctuary. In Pomed Sanctuary and Udanti Sanctuary, their number was 25 individual in each Sanctuary. Ranjitsinghji *et al.* (2004) have conducted the latest survey of this state and estimated 42-46 Buffalo in Udanti and 25-30 individual in Indravati National Park, the total number being less than 75. The population is split in to three clusters with little or no interbreeding. These clusters remain confined to south-eastern part of the Indravati National Park.

Thus, it is very difficult to say whether wild Buffalo still exist in Orissa. It is quite possible, as also opined by Moone (1930) that the borders of Orissa might be visited by some individuals from across the border. But it is certain that their number is declining very fast and if ultimate effective measure is not taken the animal may vanish forever.

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