

## Odisha: 59<sup>th</sup> Wildlife Week and Award for Wildlife Conservation - another honour for one of ZOO's oldest members

During the 59th Wildlife Week (October 2013), the Chief Minister of Odisha Sri Naveen Patnaik presented the State Biju Patnaik Award for Wildlife Conservation jointly to Dr. Lala Aswini Kumar Singh and Shri Swaraj Kumar Kanhar. Each of them was presented the wood-carved award, Rupees one lakh cash, a body-decoration, the certificate and the citation.

Dr. Lala A. K. Singh is one of Zoo Outreach Organisation's oldest members who took voluntary retirement in December 2010 from his posting as Senior (Wildlife) Research Officer under the Forest and Environment Department, Odisha. Dr. Singh is known for his life time contributions in research, education and management activities towards wildlife conservation.

Shri Swaraj Kumar Kanhar, is a Social Worker from Boudh District, and is working as the Honorary Wildlife Warden of the District from the year 2009. Sri Kanhar received the "Prakruti Bandhu" award during the year 1997-98 in the District of Boudh and "C.P.R Environmental Education Centre Award 2007" from "Dr. M. S. Swaminathan Institute, Chennai".

In his address to the audience, Hon'ble Chief Minister reaffirmed commitment towards protection and conservation of wildlife and their habitats. He stressed about the implementation of the scheme worth RS.21.00 crore for developing traditional elephant corridors to avoid man-animal conflict. The scheme involves programmes for reducing death of elephants due to electrocution and train-hits. The Hon'ble Chief Minister informed about steps taken to generate employment opportunities for local forests dwellers through eco-tourism. He solicited the co-operation of the people of Odisha for more effective protection of wildlife and their habitats.



**59th Wildlife Week: Sri Naveen Patnaik, Chief Minister of Odisha, presents the State Biju Patnaik Award for Wildlife Conservation jointly to Dr. Lala Aswini Kumar Singh**

School students and thirty-three Sub-Division level workers were encouraged with prizes from the Chief Minister. Hon'ble Chief Minister, released three publications on the occasion. These are, "Wildlife Odisha-2013", "Standard Operating Procedure to deal with emergency arising due to straying of wild animals in human dominated landscapes" and "A field Guide on Birds of Chilika".

Congratulations to Lala from Zoo Outreach Organisation ZOO and Wildlife Information Liaison Development WILD.

### Biography of LAK Singh

In the year 1974-1975 when Project Tiger was a year old and Crocodile Conservation programme had just been launched, Lala joined the Orissa Forest Department as a crocodile Research Scholar. He has been a Wildlife Researcher for 39 years. During 1974-1987 he conducted pioneering research on crocodilians and other wetlands fauna in Rivers Mahanadi and Chambal.

Lala's techniques for distinguishing tracks of wildlife at the edge of water, method for estimating

length of crocodiles from spoor marks of body and tail at basking sites, and identifying individual crocodiles from colour patterns on tail scutes have been most helpful to his colleagues and students. He fitted radio transmitters on young



**LAKS at Tikarpada-Mahanadi 1976. Photo by Rajesh Bedi**



**LAKS with his pugmark tracking team Similipal 2000, Photo : anon.**

gharials to study their pattern of movement in river Chambal. His report on non-survival of Gharial in Mahanadi has thrown significant light on reasons for endangered status and possible threats linked encounter with a melanistic tiger in Similipal in 1994 gave him a base for investigation on tiger's range of body colour, its biological and conservation implications and the need to have forest corridors for sustenance of genetic stability and long term survival of tiger in normal colour. His techniques for herbivore estimation are simple and workable at the grass root



**LAKS measuring melanistic tiger at Similipal 1993 with Salku. Photo: Anon.**



**LAKS with Field Director, Similipal at ecotourism guide training 27 March 2003. Photo: Anon.**

level. At Similipal he prepared some of the very first management documents like Project Elephant for Odisha, Ecodevelopment and Ecotourism, and the management plan of Similipal Biosphere Reserve. His doctoral thesis (1978) features the ecology and management of Gharial, and the post-doctoral works extended to a wider range in ecology and management of Indian crocodilians, the chameleon, the freshwater turtles, the water-birds, and the gangetic dolphin in

Chambal, etc. In his effort to encourage wildlife studies, Lala has several collaborators and students at various locations and different academic levels. L.A.K. Singh has instituted the annual 'Puspaswini Wildlife Prize' for the best project work / seminar presentation on wildlife' by Post Graduate students in Utkal University.

In 1993 Singh participated in developing criteria for categorization in IUCN Red List. He was a consultant in the social forestry project of SIDA in 1998-1999 and gave technique for biodiversity monitoring by villagers in JFM areas of Orissa.

Born in Puri on 19 June 1983, Lala Aswini Kumar Singh completed his graduation studies in his home town, and pursued higher studies from the Ravenshaw College, Cuttack, and campus of Utkal University in Bhubaneswar. The research conducted in 1973-74 on a species linked to agricultural economics laid the foundation for a life-long researcher for Lala. He served as the Assistant Instructor, Assistant Director and then the Officer-in-Charge of the erstwhile Central Crocodile Breeding and Management Training Institute of Government of India at Hyderabad and facilitated the setting up of the national Wildlife Institute of India in 1986.

Lala was Convenor of the Technical Committee on Crocodile Conservation of the Ministry of Environment and Forests, Govt. of India. He is a life member of the Bombay Natural History Society, Wildlife Preservation Society of India (Dehra Dun), Indian Science Congress Association, Odisha Environment Society and Odisha Bigyan Academy. Presently Dr. Singh is a member of the IUCN Captive Breeding Specialist Group, the Odisha State Board for Wildlife, Odisha Ecotourism Board, and Satkoshia Tiger Conservation Foundation.

Singh studied wildlife management in the USA, Africa, Venezuela, Australia and Sri Lanka. With a fellowship arranged by ZOO, from the Conservation Treaty Fund, USA he studied Animal Management from National Extension College, Cambridge. He was awarded the FAO Fellowship (1982) to study Wildlife Management in the USA and Zimbabwe, the Chaturvedi Prize (1983-84 and 1990) from 'Indian Forester' for Wildlife Publications, and the WWF Award with Medal (1999) for Exemplary and Innovative work for tiger conservation. The senior citizens and other elites of Bhubaneswar honoured Dr. L.A.K. Singh with Man of the Year Award 2010 for his life time contributions in wildlife conservation. The biography of Dr. Singh has appeared in several International Who's Who and Biographical references.

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