



## Documentation Elephant Birth in Chilkiya-Kota (Dhangari-Sunderkhal) Corridor, an important Wildlife Corridor in Corbett Landscape in Uttarakhand, India

Kundu Sumanta, Tiwari Sandeep Kumar and Singh Anil Kumar  
Wildlife Trust of India, F-13, Sector-8, Noida, Uttar Pradesh, INDIA

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### Abstract

*The Chilkiya-Kota Corridor (Dhangari-Sunderkhal Corridor) is a major wildlife corridor in Corbett landscape in Uttarakhand, India connecting Corbett Tiger Reserve with Ramnagar Forest Division. The corridor is extensively used by Elephant and Tigers and the team documented rare incident of elephant birth from this corridor. The major portion of this corridor is blocked due to growing human encroachment and thus there is need of secure the corridor through relocation and rehabilitation of human habitation for the welfare of wildlife.*

**Keywords:** Elephant birth, corridor, securement.

### Introduction

The Chilkiya-Kota Corridor (Dhangari-Sunderkhal Corridor) forms the most critical area for connectivity and movement of wildlife between the Corbett Tiger Reserve (CTR) and Ramnagar Forest Division in Corbett Landscape, Uttarakhand, India. It is also a vital link for gene flow between Corbett Tiger Reserve and eastern populations of Elephants and Tigers and in Uttarakhand. This corridor is one of the 12 important corridors identified in the North-western Elephant habitat in India and also declared as a Priority II Elephant Corridor by Elephant Task Force, Project Elephant, Govt. of India<sup>1</sup> among total 88 elephant corridors in India<sup>2</sup>. In the present note, we are reporting an observation of elephant birth from the above mentioned vital wildlife corridor. Presently no literature is available on elephant birth in wildlife corridor and this is the first documentation of such incident in any wildlife corridor specially from elephant corridors in India.

**Study Area:** The Chilkiya-Kota Corridor (Dhangari-Sunderkhal Corridor) lies between N 29° 30' 49" to N 29° 31' 55" and E 79° 06' 38" to E 79° 07' 19" and presently it is about 0.7 km in length and 1.5 km wide<sup>2</sup>. Unfortunately, a major portion of this corridor has been illegally occupied by humans (Sunderkhal settlement) from 1974 onwards and has gradually obstructed the movement of animals at several places. The corridor is situated along the Kosi River and NH 121 between Garjia Temple and Dhangari in Dhulwa block of Kosi Range under Ramnagar Forest Division.

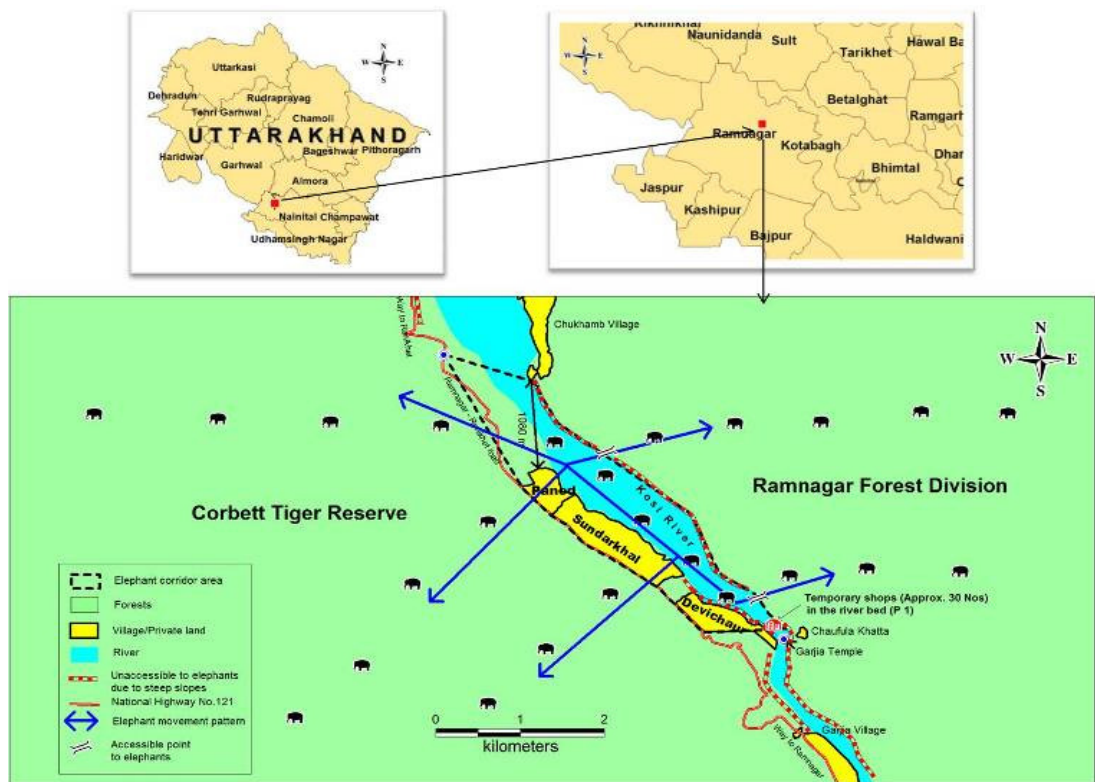
### Description of the Incident

The corridor is being monitored for wildlife usage, especially for elephants and tigers by Wildlife Trust of India from January 2010 to till date. The average yearly elephant dung encounter

rate in the corridor in the year 2010, 2011 and 2012 were 0.49 ( $\pm 0.42$ ), 5.05 ( $\pm 7.51$ ) and 5.90 ( $\pm 7.09$ ) dung piles/Km respectively. The average yearly tiger pugmark encounter rate in 2010, 2011 and 2012 were 1.75 ( $\pm 0.99$ ), 1.53 ( $\pm 1.15$ ) and 1.33 ( $\pm 0.73$ ) pugmark /Km respectively.

On the 6<sup>th</sup> May 2011, the team documented evidences of very rare and remarkable incident of an elephant birth in this corridor. At about 7:00 IST during the routine monitoring of the corridor the team sighted fleshy membrane like materials and high amount of blood stains in the sandy bed of Pannod creek, which is about 70 meters from nearest village hut. Precise examination revealed that the membrane like material was actually amniotic sac with remnants of umbilical cord. In the close vicinity of the incident spot the team recorded about 90 dung piles and foot pad impressions belonging to elephants of different age groups. It was estimated the herd was fairly large with about 25-30 individuals. The dwellers of the nearby huts, informed that the elephant herd entered the corridor at about 21:00 hrs IST of 5<sup>th</sup> May 2011 and stayed up to dawn of 6<sup>th</sup> May 2011 and made loud noises during their stay in the corridor. Remnants of amniotic sac and umbilical cord suggested that the loud sounds could be of pregnant elephant along with other elephants during the labor process.

The team track back the movement of the herd and found that the herd approached the corridor from compartment 4 of East Dhulwa block of Corbett Tiger Reserve and entered the Dhulwa 5 B compartment of Kosi Range which is the major part of the this corridor after crossing the NH 121. Foot prints also suggested, after the calving the whole herd again went back to Corbett Tiger Reserve following more or less the same route that followed to approach the corridor site.



**Figure-1**  
**The Study area, The Chilikiya-Kota (Dhangari-Sunderkhal) Corridor**



**Figure-2**  
**The author examining the remnants of amniotic sac and umbilical cord**



**Figure-3**  
**Elephant herd movement pattern on 5-6<sup>th</sup> May 2011**

## Conclusion

This type of incident is very rare in corridor area especially in close vicinity of human habitation. Generally elephant and most animals prefer less disturbed area for giving birth. Till date, there is no records of documentation of unique and rare phenomenon of elephant birth from any elephant corridor in India. Elephant birth and movement pattern of Elephant and Tiger emphasize the importance of this vital corridor. It is important to conserve and secure this corridor through rehabilitation of the human settlement from the corridor site to alternate site for better movement of Elephant and other important wildlife in the Corbett landscape specially between Corbett Tiger Reserve and Ramnagar Forest Division.

## References

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