

FUNDRAISER TO SECURE 96 ELEPHANT CORRIDORS

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The joint venture of NGOs is aiming to raise Rs. 187.16 crore for the elephant corridors.

At a time when a recent survey found seven elephant corridors in the country impaired, the Asian Elephant Alliance, an umbrella initiative by five NGOs, has come together to secure 96 out of the 101 existing corridors used by elephants across 12 States in India.

The joint venture is aiming at raising £20 million (Rs. 187.16 crore) to secure the 96 remaining elephant corridors, old and new, in the next ten years. The alliance joined hands to raise the mammoth sum as money was the main constraint in securing the land.

K. Ramkumar, manager and project head of the Wildlife Trust of India's (WTI) Elephant Corridor Securement Project-South India, told *The Hindu* that the process of securing the Tamil Nadu-Karnataka inter-State corridor called the Talamai-Chamarajnagar elephant corridor at Mudahalli is currently underway.

"Out of 101 elephant corridors identified by the WTI in its 2012-15 study, five of them — two in Meghalaya and one each in Assam, Kerala and Karnataka — have already been secured by the WTI with the help of conservation partners and the support of State governments. The new alliance is aiming to secure the 96 remaining elephant corridors in the next ten years by raising the money," he said.

NGOs Elephant Family, International Fund for Animal Welfare, IUCN Netherlands and World Land Trust have teamed up with WTI in the alliance.

"According to a recent survey, seven elephant corridors in Jharkhand, U.P., Assam, West Bengal, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand have already been impaired due to land use changes. At the same time, new elephant corridors have been identified. While 88 corridors were identified by WTI in its survey in 2005, the number rose to 101 in 2015," said Mr. Ramkumar.

He said that Elephant Corridor Consultative Workshops were conducted in all the States where the 101 corridors are located. The land will be handed over to the State governments after the securement.

"Almost all the land owners close to the elephant corridors are cooperating since they are severe human-elephant conflict zones. It took 11 years to secure the lands of the Thirunelli-Kudrakote corridor. WTI undertakes rehabilitation services for land owners," he said.

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