

Tea garden blocks wild elephant corridor in Udalguri



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The construction of power fencing around wild elephant habitats and corridors in and around tea gardens in [Udalguri](#) district has been decried by wildlife activists and various organizations. Recently, [Paneri](#) and [Bhutiachang](#) tea gardens under McLeod and Russel [group](#) have been erecting permanent power fencing in their respective tea gardens preventing movements of wild elephant herds numbering more than hundred in [Udalguri](#) district raised serious concern. Herds of wild

elephants have started arriving at various places of the plains of [Udalguri](#) district following age old traditional routes known [as](#) elephant corridors and shelters. Such an traditional elephant shelter is Gomari Bagan, located in between [Bhutiachang](#) and [Paneri](#) tea gardens under McLeod and Russel Ltd. near No.4 [Bhutiachang](#) village, where man and wild elephants have been living together for several decades without much conflict. The herds of wild elephants numbering more than hundred in a herd have been taking shelter in Gomari Bagan, a shady cool place full of Gomari trees. All the government and forest reserve lands had been encroached and forest cover destroyed by people leaving no room for wild elephants to take shelter, except tea gardens of [Udalguri](#) district. So wild elephants like tall tea garden grasslands locally known [as](#) Guatemala. They like these tall grasses [as](#) it provides them good cover for delivering babies. The "Elephants on The Line", programme [launched](#) in 2014-15 in [Udalguri](#) district to create awareness among people in order to minimize man -[elephant](#) conflict in the district. The programme was [launched](#) by a few wildlife activists of Assam namely-Mubina Akhtar, Jayanta Kumar [Das](#), Dr.KK Sarma, Dipen Boro, Dr.Pranjal Bezbarua, Lisa Mills (USA) etc. in association with Deputy Commissioner and DFO of [Udalguri](#) district. The programme members also involved tea garden managements operating in the district namely-McLeod Russel Ltd, [Goodricke](#) Tea, Tata Tea etc in the conservation of wild elephants and also to create awareness among villagers so [as](#) to minimize casualties of both man and wild elephants. Accordingly, tea garden managements were requested to support by providing free

passage,shelter,drinking water tanks or ponds and temporary habitats for wild elephants in respective gardens.They were also requested to hire at least one domestic Kunki elephant to protect houses of [workers](#) [as](#) well [as](#) the villagers.Most of the tea garden managements namely-[Nonaipara](#) and [Orangajuli](#) of [Goodricke India](#); [Bhutiachang](#) and [Paneri](#) under McLeod Russel Ltd;Majuli TE under Tata Amalgamated offered cooperation for the cause.The result was amazinly positive.[As](#) a result of the hard works of the members of "Elephants on The Line", death rate of wild elephants came down drastically to three only in 2017,while the numbers of death were 23 in 2014,21 in 2015,[8](#) in [2016](#) and only 3 in 2017 (till now). Unfortunately,the changing situation in 2017 has now posing problems for wild elephant herds.It is noticed that [Paneri](#) tea garden has already blocked entry of wild elephants by erecting power fence. [Bhutiachang](#) tea garden too is now constructing power fence there by blocking entry of wild elephants to Gomari Bagan.Thirty percent of construction has already been completed, forcing wild elephants to roam in the nearby villages,which is likely to increase conflict between man and elephants. [Wildlife](#) activist Rajen Boro of [Bhutiachang](#) told this correspondent that Gomari Bagan must not be fenced [as](#) loosing the age old traditional shelter,wild elephant might create havoc in nearby villages.

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