

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES FOR PREVENTING WILDLIFE OFFENCES IN U.T OF LAKSHADWEEP

Introduction:-

The killing, hunting, poaching and trading of scheduled marine wildlife species constitutes Non Bailable and Cognizable offence and is prohibited under the Wild Life Protection Act, 1972, which is most important for the ecosystem. It is highly sensitive and grievous nature having the involvement of large scale network of smugglers/illegal traders at national and international level. All the marine wildlife species which are listed under Schedules I to IV of Wild Life Protection Act. The ecological damage to the environment due to killing of these species and the ecological services of the poached animals cannot be ascertained and quantified, which is irrecoverably lost forever. All Marine Wildlife Species as listed in the various Schedules of the Wild Life Protection Act, 1972, should be given protection to the maximum extent in order to ensure proper handling and procedures are mandatory for preventing such Cognizable and Non Bailable wildlife offences and effective control/prevention of the wildlife offences, the following Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) is formulated.

1. **Title:** Standard Operating Procedures for Preventing Wildlife Offences in U.T. of Lakshadweep.
2. **Subject:** Protection of Marine Wildlife Habitat.
3. **Purpose:** To uphold and enforce the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 impartially, and to protect the Scheduled species (Annexure — A) under the Act. The poaching of marine wildlife species is a regular phenomenon in most of the Lakshadweep Islands. A mechanism of direct and continuous surveillance along with regular monitoring is essential to control such wildlife crimes. The regular fishing activities are also undertaken in wildlife established areas. It is highly difficult to differentiate between a genuine fishing activity and marine wildlife poaching unless it is seen from a close distance. It is impossible to stop fishing activity, as it is the life line of Islanders and legally permitted. Often sea Cucumbers are mixed with fish consignments, preserved/packed and transported in fish export vessel. As long as fishing is permitted in lagoons, poaching cannot be controlled without continuous and close monitoring. Further most of the uninhabited islands share its boundary with International water wherein vessels/ships of other countries mainly Srilanka, Maldives and China are frequently travelling as innocent passages. The chances of their visit to these Islands and poaching our important marine wildlife especially Sea Cucumbers cannot be ignored. The chances are open for our local fishing boats going up to the International water and transferring these poached marine wildlife species consignment to International vessels using satellite communication services. Often wildlife activities are transported through ships, flights and helicopter, private MSV's (Motorized Vehicles) and cargo barges etc. A proper guideline in the form of SOP is required to that, the same can be followed for effective protection and implementation of Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.
4. **Short summary:** This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) provides the basic, minimum steps which are required to be taken for preventing wildlife offences in U.T. of Lakshadweep Islands.



5. **Scope:** The SOP applies to Forest Officials of U T. of Lakshadweep Islands, to prevent illegal collection and trade, and reduce the opportunities for the commission of such Cognizable and Non-bailable Offences through preventive action and measures.
6. **Responsibilities:** The team of Forest Officials would be responsible for the protection of Marine Wildlife Habitat of the respective islands as per the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, under whose jurisdiction the area falls. The overall responsibility at the U.T level lies with the Chief Wildlife Warden.
7. **Detailed instructions for the operating procedures to be followed by the Authorized Officers/Officer in Charge of respective Islands for preventing wildlife offences as follows:-**
 - i. **Awareness:** - Conduct awareness programmes among local residents of all Islands and make them aware about the relevant laws and punishments for contravention of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.
 - ii. **Meeting:** - Conduct regular meeting with the Local Panchayats to involve them in the conservation process.
 - iii. **Information:** - Accumulate a set of reliable informers/sources to collect information about organized criminal networks and their activities to combat wildlife crimes effectively.
 - iv. **Collection of Intelligence:-**

Intelligence is information collected, collated, analyzed and disseminated, in an effort to anticipate, prevent or monitor criminal activity. Sporadic incidents of poaching / wildlife crimes have now grown into organized criminal activity having international ramifications. Collection of intelligence about such organized criminal networks, and their activities and collation of such information on a real time basis is the need of the hour to combat wildlife crimes effectively. Wildlife crimes do not affect the public at large and therefore, usually, chances are rare to get information about the wildlife offenders. Therefore, the law enforcement agencies should motivate the identified members of public, to pass information about such offenders. Hence, it is essential to develop a set of reliable informants/sources. Forest/Wildlife and Police officers, who are in regular contact with the local people can identify good sources and keep a record of such persons. These sources may often require cash incentives for their association. Regular meetings with field level officials of IB/Coast Guard/Navy etc should be held for information exchange.
 - v. **Reporting of Wildlife Offence:-** Any individual/agencies etc witness a suspected wildlife offence in action and if any Forest Officer gets that information from the concerned person, he shall immediately go ahead to the crime scene and also book such offences before the appropriate Courts as per jurisdiction.
 - vi. **Unauthorized Entry:-** Ensure the restriction of unauthorized entry of outsiders without permission in the name of various works in the Protected Areas and the antecedents of the engaged labourers may be verified and their profiles be maintained.
 - vii. **Uninterrupted Entry of Forest Officials:-**
 - a. All the public premises, restricted places such as Airport, Defense Establishments, Helipads, Jetties, Loading/Unloading places of cargos, all cabins including engine rooms in the ships, private manjus, any anchored ships/vessels to verify wildlife



consignment/articles. Section 50 of the Wildlife Protection Act permits such entry.

b. All Inhabited/Uninhabited Islands, premises of Govt. Offices/public places etc.

- viii. **Social Media:-** Search social media uploads especially from such probable areas should be scanned continuously to promptly identify any instances of illegal actions uploaded and also monitor social media sites for reporting such cases.
- ix. **Smart Patrolling:-** Ensure smart patrolling with GPS devices, increase the frequency of patrolling and surprise change of patrolling time.
- x. **Preventive Patrolling:-** Ensure preventive patrolling as and when required in view of seriousness of offences.
- xi. **Network:-** Strengthen the intelligence network around the respective Conservation Reserves /Protected Areas.
- xii. **Action:-** Promptly act for the conservation and protection as per the Provisions of the Act.
- xiii. **Monitoring:-** Identify/monitor movement of fishermen/fishing boats (both from Island and mainland), and to control, regulate and restrict them from illegal collection and trade of wildlife articles/trophies and uncured trophies.
- xiv. **Patrolling:** Conduct regular patrolling secretly, when it come to the notice through such complaints or otherwise, and where appropriate, apprehend offenders, and extend requisite assistance in the prosecution of offenders.
- xv. **Inspection:-**
 - a. Jetties:- All Passenger Boarding/Fish landing jetties shall be inspected/checked regularly in all Islands.
 - b. Boats/Manjus/Vehicles:- Ensure surveillance and checking of all Govt. and Private Vehicles/Boats regularly and boarding places of ship/vessel/cargo barges etc in all islands.
 - c. Airports/Helibase : Airport/Helibase, Baggages on board etc including Medical Evacuations in all Islands shall be checked/scanned regularly.
 - d. Transportation:- Prevent transportation through checking inside the ships/vessels (both Govt. & Pvt.) & loading and unloading of articles, baggages on board (loading & unloading) and ensure that, the passengers are also not carrying any Scheduled Species through hand bags/kits etc.
 - e. Public Place:- All public places shall be checked/scanned regularly.
- xvi. **Arrest:-** Ensure preventive arrests, if required. The Forest Officer shall ensure the arrest of the accused & medical examinations of those who committed the wildlife crime/offence and produce before the appropriate Court as per jurisdiction within 24 Hours as prescribed by Law.
- xvii. **Search & Seizure:-** Ensure that the search and seizure is made as per provisions of Section 50 of Wildlife (Protection Act),1972. The Forest Officer shall seize the property such as poached marine wildlife species/articles/trophies as mentioned in the Schedules of Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 and also vehicles/vessels/other equipments etc involved in the commission of the offence.
- xviii. **Crime Scene:-** Visit the scene of the offence/occurrence and take custody of the

offenders/suspects along with seizing of the articles and vehicles used for the purpose.

- xix. **Custody:-** Take the custody of offenders and hand over them along with the seized articles/vehicles etc to the appropriate Court for further actions within the stipulated time.
- xx. **Evidences/Proof:-** Collect and record various types of evidences/proofs i.e. oral, documentary etc and other matters relating to illegal collection & trade and disseminate the same to the Chief Wildlife Warden, besides timely acting.
- xxi. **Recording of offence:-** Record the details of the offence on time and also ensure proper handling, upkeep and maintenance of the record.
- xxii. **Follow up action:-** Accurately record all offences and take prompt follow-up action thereon.
- xxiii. **Filing/Registering of Case/WLOR/Complaint:-** The Authorised Officer of the respective island/s shall prepare Mahazar, Seizure Memo, Wildlife Offence Report etc and also photographs/video in the crime scene itself and afterwards register the case before the Hon'ble Court as per jurisdiction. The authorised officer shall ensure:-
 - a. Confession statement of the accused/suspects.
 - b. Status of site of the said offence - Protected Area/Conservation Reserve/ other area etc, along with a copy of Government notification.
 - c. Copy of the articles seized.
 - d. CD of photographs/video recording.
 - e. Copy of ownership papers of house/seized vehicle, identity proofs/cards etc.
 - f. Annexure containing list of documents and witnesses.
- xxiv. **Disposal:-** After production of seized articles before the appropriate courts, the Forest Officer shall take permission from the Hon'ble Court for disposing the perishable items as prescribed in the Sub Section 6 of Section 50 of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.
- xxv. **Investigation:-** All documents in original shall be handed over to the Investigating Officer for an effective investigation as prescribed.
- xxvi. **Support to Investigating Officer:-** Responsible for extending full support and assistance to the Investigating Officer for discharging his duties efficiently and properly.
- xxvii. **Intimation:-** All wildlife offences and its follow up actions/updates shall be intimated to the Chief Wildlife Warden.
- xxviii. **Confidentiality:-** All information related with this SOP and its follow up actions shall be kept Confidential and the sharing/dissemination/transformation in any mode without the approval of Chief Wildlife Warden will be viewed seriously. Appropriate actions also will be initiated against such persons for such violations/dereliction in duties.
- xxix. **Anti-Poaching Camps:-** Ensure about the establishment and up gradation of anti-poaching camps especially in Wildlife Sanctuaries, Conservation Reserves and Uninhabited Islands with sufficient staff for patrolling duties with suitable arms. The actions needed for Anti-poaching as follows:-
 - a. In-depth thorough checking of all the activities in uninhabited Islands on 24x7 basis and



illegal activities should not be left.

- b. Examine forward/backward linkages, transborder ramifications, cracking poacher-carrier-trader-consumer nexus/network.
- c. Close monitoring with the help of information technology/informer network on suspects.
- d. Intensive patrolling besides other anti-poaching operations should be done in sensitive areas.
- e. Ensure multi-disciplinary approach and cooperation in case of patrolling and intelligence sharing and also for joint patrolling in sensitive areas.
- f. Review of all operations required for preventing the crime.
- g. Ensure review and coordination meeting with all relevant authorities etc on monthly basis related with crime with all modern & scientific tools.
- h. Prepare database/history of each convicted/ criminals and suspects. Personal Profiles (PPs) of all accused should be prepared. In case of habitual offenders History Sheets (HSs) may be prepared for surveillance.
- i. A separate note on the modus - operandi adopted by the criminals in each poaching case may be recorded.
- j. Ensure appropriate resources to deal with poaching threats and investigation.

xxx. Role of Allied Departments:- The Forest Officer shall ensure prevention and detection measures in collaboration/coordination with the major inter departments such as Fisheries, Port, Police/Coastal Police etc as and when required subject to the emergent situations and also in view of seriousness of offences.

- a. **Coastal Police:** - The Forest Officer shall take assistance from the authorities of coastal police for anti-smuggling operations in all Islands and also strengthen infrastructure for patrolling and the surveillance of the coastal areas.
- b. **Fisheries:** - The Forest Officer shall ensure assistance from fisheries department for installation of all applicable devices in every maritime zone for the safety and protection of all Islands.
- c. **Port & Shipping:** - The Forest Officer shall ensure assistance from port department for extension of their support and co-operation on 24x7, for inspection of its boats and also Port Officials should inform any such violations of Act to the concerned Authorised Officer.
- d. **Coast Guard/Navy:** - The Forest Officer shall coordinate all matters relating to the protection of marine wildlife habitat in collaboration with coast guard/navy for the enforcement of applicable laws in jurisdictional waters. Ensure joint operations with the aim to prevent poaching of marine wildlife habitat.


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Annexure – A
List of Commonly Seen Scheduled Species in Lakshadweep

Schedule I – Part I Mammals

4-A Cetacean Spp. It is an order of marine mammals and all the marine mammals are included in this schedule.

Schedule I – Part II - Amphibians and Reptiles

In this group normally turtles are present

1. Green Turtle (*Chelonia mydas*)
2. Hawksbill Turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata unbriscata*)
3. Leathery Turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*)
4. Leathery Turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*)

Schedule I – Part II A – Fishes

1. Whale Shark (*Rhincodon typus*)
2. Shark & Ray
 - (i) *Anoxypristis cuspidata*
 - (ii) *Carcharhinus hemiodon*
 - (iii) *Glyphis gangeticus*
 - (iv) *Glyphis glyphis*
 - (v) *Himantura fluviatilis*
 - (vi) *Pristis microdon*
 - (vii) *Pristis zijsron*
 - (viii) *Rhynchobatus diddensis*
 - (ix) *Urogymnus asperrimus*
3. Sea Horse (All Sygnathidians)
4. Giant Grouper (*Epinephelus lanceolatus*)

Schedule I – Part IV A

Coelenterates

1. Reef building Coral (All *Scleractinians*)
2. Black Coral (All *Antipatharians*)
3. Orange Pipe Coral (*Tubipora Musica*)
4. Fire Coral (All *Millipora Species*)
5. Sea Fan (All *Gorgonians*)

Schedule I – Part IV B Mollusca

1. *Cassis cornuta*
2. *Charonia tritonis*
3. *Conus milneedwardsi*
4. *Cypraea cassis rufa*
5. *Hippopus hippopus*
6. *Nautilus pompilius*
7. *Tridacna Maxima*
8. *Tridacna squamosa*
9. *Tudicla spirillus*



Schedule I – Part IV C

Echinodermata


Sea Cucumber (All *Holothurians*)

Schedule III

Sponges (All *Calcareans*)

Schedule IV Mollusca

- (i) *Cyprea lamarina*.
- (ii) *Cypraea mapa*.
- (iii) *Cypraea talpa*.
- (iv) *Fasciolaria trapezium*.
- (v) *Harpulina arausiaca*.
- (vi) *Lambis chiragra*.
- (vii) *Lambis chiragra arthritica*.
- (viii) *Lambis crocea*.
- (ix) *Lambis millepeda*.
- (x) *Lambis scorpius*.
- (xi) *Lambis truncata*.
- (xii) *Placenta placenta*.
- (xiii) *Strombus plicatus siboldi*.
- (xiv) *Trochus niloticus*.
- (xv) *Turbo marmoratus*.


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