

## Book Review

**Sanjeev Kumar Chadha's**

***Jumbos on the Edge: The Future of Elephant Conservation in India***

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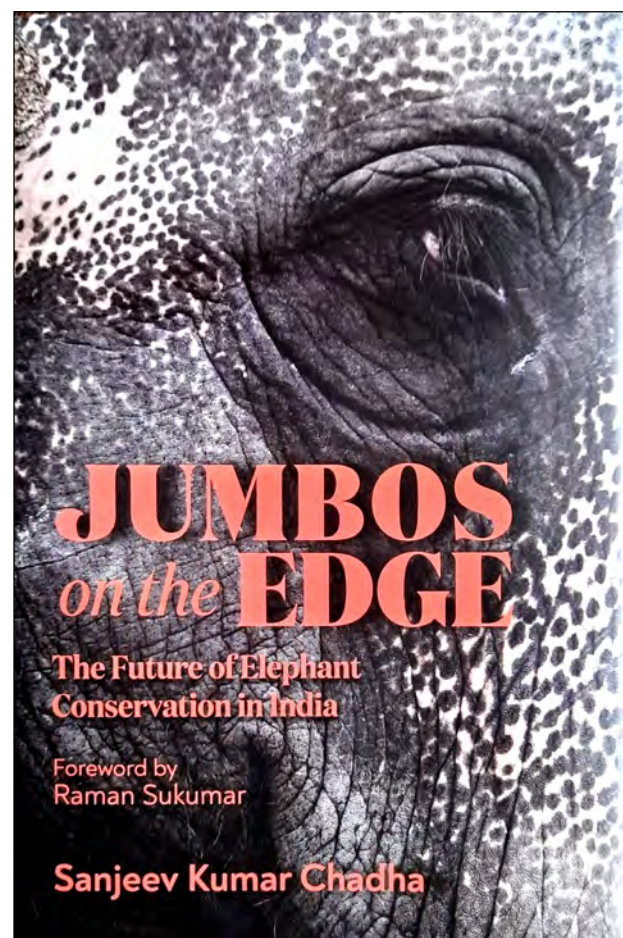
Dr. Sanjeev Chadha is an Indian Forest Officer with immensely vast experience working in the field in different capacities and at various levels in policy making in India. His book “*Jumbos on the Edge: The Future of Elephant Conservation in India*” is an important book that stresses upon the need to have appropriate mitigation measures in elephant landscapes that will lessen the incidence of human-elephant conflicts. In the long run, such measures will greatly benefit in-situ conservation of these majestic animals that once ruled the country with large numbers.

The book focuses on elephants in Odisha but the case studies are useful for every part of India that faces such similar challenges. Elephants in Odisha constitute 74% of the total elephant numbers of the eastern region of India, but are confined only to 30% of the state's geographical area. This makes clearly evident why elephant populations in Odisha are subjected to serious conservation challenges — both elephant related and habitat related. And this is exactly why this book is such a timely publication — these various complex issues are dealt upon in detail linking theory with field experiences as these issues are of immediate concern for the survival of elephants in the Indian Sub-continent.

Dr. Chadha has used his years of experience on the ground to explain how habitat issues like habitat fragmentation, deterioration of habitat (availability of quality food and water), rapid changes in landscapes (by the way of roads, rail networks, encroachments, mining, illicit felling, various projects, industrialisation, sharing of grazing grounds by domestic cattle, etc.) and elephant related issues like hunting, retaliatory killings, accidents, electrocution, deaths

due to human-elephant conflicts etc are affecting the populations of elephants adversely not just in Odisha but also in the state of Uttarakhand and other parts of India.

The author has also shared with the reader knowledge that he has access to due to his years in the forest service — this kind of viewpoint and with it the knowledge from the field and case studies make this book very useful for those in conservation and outside in other sectors like ecotourism, development and other stakeholders. He explains significant conservation issues of concern in the elephant reserves like Ma-



hanandi Elephant Reserve, Sambalpur Elephant Reserve, South Odisha Elephant Reserve etc and shares important information on elephant corridors in Odisha.

The most interesting and informative case study comes from Dhenkanal District in Odisha. Through this case study, the author tried to explain the mitigative measures to be adopted for lessening the impact of human-elephant conflicts, which is extremely useful for the forest officers working in the field and for policy makers.

While numerous threats to wild animals and their habitat remain, linear infrastructure development has emerged as the single largest threat to the demographic viability of the wild populations. Linear infrastructure tends to fragment natural landscapes severing habitat connectiv-

ity, which is vital for the demographic and genetic viability of several endangered species.

Keeping the above in view, I personally found the chapter on “Conflict Mitigation Strategies” of immense value. The author explains with photographs how to deal with different kinds of developmental projects that are severely affecting the habitat – be it crop rotation, crop yields, fencing, engineering changes to development projects and many more valuable lessons.

### **Citation**

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