

Experts raise alarm as water becomes scarce in forests

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Bhubaneswar: Experts have sounded an alarm after few animals were found suffering from the heat in the state in the past few days. On Sunday, a leopard was suffering from a heatstroke-like condition in Nuapada district, while an elephant died due of dehydration reportedly three days ago in Athagarh forest division.

Regional chief conservator of forests (Angul) M Yogajayanand said there were water bodies near the place where the elephant was found dead. The veterinary doctor opined that the elephant may have been suffering from dehydration, but there could other causes involved. "But it is not unlikely for animals like elephants to suffer from dehydration because of the large size of their body," he added.

"In case of elephants, if they don't get enough water close to the place that they roam in the forests, there are instances of them using their legs and trunks to scratch near the natural water body to get water. However, it is rare that elephant would stay in a place with scanty or no water. They will migrate to another habitat. Also, it is rare for animals to get dehydrated. If they feel thirsty, they will look for a water source. In some cases, the weak or diseased ones can't access the water and suffer from dehydration," wildlife campaigner Biswajit Mohanty said.

The leopard, on the other hand, which was suffering was rescued and revived by forest and veterinary officials on Sunday morning.

"The villagers noticed that the leopard was not its energetic self, and they informed us. We reached there with rescue materials, like a net and a cage, and informed a team of veterinary officials," assistant conservator of forests, Md Saleha said.

On Monday, the wildlife wing of the forest department wrote to all divisional forest officers to ensure that water bodies in the forests have water in them.

Experts said that most animals are suffering from heatstroke in this summer more because of water sources drying up in the forest. Since there was no torrential rain this year, the water in creeks and streams could not be refilled and since they are drying up since February-end. Even the water flowing through the small rivers passing through several forests is not enough to quench the animals' thirst, forest officials said.

The officials added that have water holes (small ponds) have been dug up in all the forests and the wildlife sanctuaries to retain water so that the animals can drink from there during summer.