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The Official Newsletter of Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve

Tadoba

D I A R I E S

Amey Navdeo Thakare



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**Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve
Conservation Foundation, Chandrapur**



SEASON OF WINGS

Dear Reader

As November sets in, the forest of Tadoba breathes in a new rhythm. The crisp morning air, misty lakes, and golden sunlight mark the arrival of winter- and with it, the great avian travellers from across the world. From the icy Tibetan Plateau and Central Asia, countless wings flutter southward, finding refuge in the welcoming waters of Irai, Tadoba Lake, Telia, and Kolsa. Bar-headed Geese, Northern Pintails, Woolly-necked and Painted Storks, and Greylag Geese fill the skies, transforming Tadoba into a living orchestra of sound and colour. This year, we are delighted by the first-ever sighting of the Brown-breasted Flycatcher and European Roller in Tadoba- a tiny yet historic moment for the reserve's growing bird list.

This season also marks Maharashtra's annual birding week, from 5th to 12th November, celebrating the legacies of Shri Maruti Chitampalli and Dr Salim Ali. These days remind us that birdwatching is not just a

hobby but a window into the health of our planet. Birds are nature's messengers- when they thrive, ecosystems thrive. Their presence signals clean water, healthy forests, and balance in the wild.

However, with their arrival come responsibilities. Vigilance against avian influenza, habitat loss, and pollution is crucial. Forest department, scientists, and local communities must work hand in hand to safeguard these winged guests. Citizen birdwatchers, especially young enthusiasts, play a vital role in documenting and protecting these visitors through careful observation.

This winter, as you lift your binoculars or simply look up at a passing flock, remember- each bird carries a story of endurance and harmony. In their flight lies a reminder that every being, no matter how small, keeps the forest alive.

Dr. Prabhu Nath Shukla (IFS)

Conservator of Forests & Field Director, TATR
Executive Director, TATR Conservation Foundation

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Official website of TATR : www.mytadoba.mahaforest.gov.in



Brown-breasted Flycatcher



European Roller

NEW FEATHERS IN TADOBBA'S CROWN

October 2025 marked a milestone in the natural history of the Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve with two first-ever bird sightings- the Brown-breasted Flycatcher (*Muscicapa muttui*) and the European Roller (*Coracias garrulus*). These discoveries highlight Tadoba's growing importance not only as a tiger territory but also as a sanctuary for diverse migratory and resident bird species. Each new record deepens our understanding of the region's ecological richness and reinforces Tadoba's role as a living, breathing classroom for nature enthusiasts and scientists alike.

On the cool morning of October 21, 2025, while birding along the Zari-Peth road with tourist guide Dharmrao Aatram and Satyapal Kannake from Zari, I spotted the elusive Brown-breasted Flycatcher, a first for both Tadoba and Chandrapur district. This small, shy bird, about 14 cm long, is known for its soft brown breast, greyish wings, and large black eyes. Primarily found in the Western Ghats and Sri

Lanka, it breeds in northeastern India, making its presence in central India extremely rare. Its secretive nature and quiet charm made this sighting both thrilling and scientifically significant.

Earlier that month, on October 1, 2025, while patrolling the Kolsa grasslands, I observed another first, the European Roller, a striking blue migratory bird that breeds in Europe and West Asia. Measuring about 30 cm, it feeds on insects, lizards, and small creatures, and its appearance in Tadoba marks a valuable addition to the reserve's bird diversity.

These discoveries remind us that Tadoba's forests are far more than a tiger stronghold. They are vibrant ecosystems that nurture life in all forms- from the mighty predator to the smallest winged visitor- each contributing to the intricate balance of nature.

Rundan Katkar
Forest Range Officer, Kolsa, TATR

Jane Goodall passes away

Renowned for her pioneering chimpanzee research and lifelong advocacy for wildlife, Jane Goodall died on October 1, 2025. Her legacy continues in the numerous conservation projects she inspired across Africa and beyond.



Wild bee extinction risk doubles

A recent study revealed that over the past ten years, the number of wild bee species at risk of extinction in Europe has more than doubled. Habitat loss, pesticide use, and climate change are primary culprits threatening pollinators.

Triple Investment in Forests

At a global summit in October 2025, the United Nations Environment Programme

(UNEP) issued a landmark press release calling for annual investment in forests to be tripled by 2030. The move aims to protect high-risk tropical forests that provide critical ecosystem services, such as water regulation, climate mitigation, and biodiversity.

Coral reefs in crisis

Scientists warn that coral reefs have crossed a catastrophic climate tipping point, entering widespread decline. Without sharp reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, reef ecosystems globally may never fully recover.



Ready for a jungle challenge?

Take this quiz and see how much you know about forests and wildlife!

- Which is the largest deer species found in Tadoba?
 - Spotted Deer
 - Barking Deer
 - Sambar Deer
 - Mouse Deer
- Why does the Indian Chameleon change its colour?
 - To glow in the dark
 - To communicate its mood and regulate body temperature
 - To scare away tigers
 - To store food
- Which bird is famous for its spectacular dance during the monsoon in Tadoba?
 - Peacock
 - Hornbill
 - Jungle Babbler
 - Owl
- What do Langurs often do to warn others of danger?
 - Hide under trees
 - Shake branches and call loudly
 - Throw fruits
 - Run silently
- Which reptile is the biggest in Tadoba?
 - Rock Python
 - Flying Snake
 - Monitor Lizard
 - Crocodile

KING OF THE NORTH

We set out on our morning safari through the Alizanza Gate in North Tadoba- once the proud domain of the mighty Chota Matka. Since his absence due to medical reasons, the territory had become a battleground, open to any dominant male willing to claim it. As we explored different areas of the zone, we encountered fellow gypsies who reported the movements of two massive males. After over an hour of searching, we finally spotted them -T-138 Mowgli and Collarwala -striding along the open Navegaon road, one shadowing the other with intense purpose.

Their silent pursuit soon erupted into chaos. Without warning, Mowgli charged at Collarwala from behind, and the long-awaited battle for Alizanza began. Dust swirled as the two clashed, roars echoing through the forest. The fight, though brief, was fierce- Collarwala delivered a powerful swipe to Mowgli's neck and



shoulders, forcing him to retreat. Victorious, Collarwala settled regally on the road, asserting his dominance.

Yet, as we exited the zone, Mowgli was seen scent-marking further ahead- a sign that this rivalry was far from over. The questions now linger: Who will wear the crown of the North Tadoba? Will Chota Matka's cubs survive his wrath?

Akshay Dani
Wildlife Enthusiast, Mumbai

FEARLESS IN THE FOREST

On a cool October morning in the Khutvanda core zone, our safari began with that familiar thrill, the promise of the unknown. About forty minutes in, our guide spotted fresh pugmarks, a silent sign that a tiger was near. Just a few turns later, our hearts leapt, four tigers lay resting in the bamboo thickets! A cub chewed on a deer's leg while the others dozed in lazy satisfaction. The guide identified them as the tigress T-115 Bijli and her sub-adult cubs.

As I clicked away, the forest suddenly hushed. One cub rose, alert, eyes fixed on something unseen. Then came the sharp cries of dholes. As we rushed to the spot, two wild dogs appeared on the track, one shouting defiantly, the other scanning like a sentry. Moments later, a cub



stepped out, calm yet commanding. The dholes retreated, vanishing into the woods, a fleeting glimpse of nature's timeless drama, raw and magnificent.

Dr. Atul Patel
Infectious Diseases Doctor, Ahmedabad

THE LESSER KNOWN KHAKI #08

MONSOON TOURISM @ ECO-TOURISM SITES is everyone's favourite...

WE DON'T ALLOW the loud music & alcohol in such places BUT ENCOURAGE tourists who come to experience NATURE...

Listen to the melodies of rain & birds &

You won't need any DRINK TO GET 'HIGH'!



Do you want to know what work the foresters do?

This series will take you to the world of forest warriors in Khaki.

Piyusha Jagtap (IFS)

YES to responsible eco-tourism...

BIG NO

to the loud music and hooliganism in the wild.

BAMBOO IS NOT A TREE!

Surprising but true- bamboo is actually a grass, not a tree! It grows incredibly fast and can reach full maturity in just 3 to 5 years. Unlike trees, bamboo doesn't need to be replanted. It regenerates naturally. It also releases 30% more oxygen and absorbs more carbon dioxide, making it one of the planet's best natural air purifiers.

Bamboo is naturally anti-bacterial and anti-fungal, requiring no pesticides or fertilizers, which makes it highly eco-friendly. Despite being light in weight, it's stronger than steel and extremely flexible, so much so that bamboo houses can sway safely during earthquakes without breaking!



Its deep roots prevent soil erosion and reduce rainwater runoff, protecting the land. For centuries, bamboo has also been valued in traditional medicine for its healing and tonic properties. Truly, bamboo is nature's wonder-strong, sustainable, and endlessly giving!

A RARE ENCOUNTER

It was the best day of my life. Before I could even begin my morning safari, I witnessed something extraordinary. At around 5:30 a.m., tigress T-127, popularly known as Choti Madhu, along with her three sub-adult cubs, crossed the road near the Dewada entry gate. I knew instantly that my guests were in for a memorable safari. We entered the forest at 6:00 a.m., the cool breeze carrying the sweet scent of teak leaves and damp soil. Just a few minutes later, at 6:05 a.m., I heard a strange, desperate call—one that didn't quite fit the usual sounds of dawn. My instinct told me it could be a hunt gone wrong. I suspected the tigress might have tried to attack a porcupine, so I decided to wait and watch, as did the other guides nearby.

To our utter surprise, instead of a porcupine, a Honey Badger walked onto the road. The forest fell silent. This nocturnal creature, rarely seen even at night, was now right before us in broad daylight! My guests could hardly believe their luck—and neither could I. But before we could fully take in the moment, one of Choti Madhu's sub-adult tigresses appeared, chasing the Honey Badger with playful yet fierce intent. The tigress swung her paw, but the little creature retaliated with unmatched aggression. What unfolded next was something none of us had ever seen before— a face-off between courage and power.

The Honey Badger, though much smaller in size, refused to back down. It charged, snarled, and



hissed, standing its ground against the mighty predator. The tigress managed to grab it by the back and drag it into the bushes, but the Badger twisted, trying to bite her in defence. Despite her strength, the tigress couldn't pierce its thick, rubbery skin. Moments later, the seemingly doomed Honey Badger broke free and bolted back onto the road— still alive and still defiant.

Then came the second sub-adult tigress. She pounced on the brave little creature, and another round of the fierce duel began. We thought this would surely be the end. But once again, against all odds, the Honey Badger escaped—bleeding slightly from the mouth but otherwise unharmed. It darted towards a hollow tree trunk and disappeared inside, while both tigresses stood there, bewildered, watching their prey vanish into safety.

Witnessing such a rare and dramatic encounter— a battle between ferocity and fearlessness— was truly the best sighting of my career as a nature guide.

Viraj Raut

Guide, Dewada Gate (Buffer)

HAVE A STORY TO TELL? A SKETCH TO SHARE?

We'd love to hear from you!

Send us your articles, illustrations, or drawings that capture your experience at Tadoba.

The best entries will be published in Tadoba Diaries with due credit.

And that's not all - you'll also receive a special souvenir from us! So don't wait!

📧 Share your work at: tadobadiaries2021@gmail.com



JUNGLE DETECTIVE

Do you want to be a Jungle Detective? Solve the following puzzles and check your knowledge.

GUESS WHO?

THE CLEVER CRAWLER

I slip through grass both fast and neat,
With forked red tongue and shining sheet.
My hiss can scare, but I don't chase,
I only strike when in a tight space.

No legs I have, yet I move with ease,
Through rocks and roots and fallen leaves.
I shed my skin and shine anew,
A shadow that slips where no one knew.

TRACK THE TRAIL

THE FOREST DIGGER'S PATH

Today, the forest floor was dotted with round, deep prints- wider at the front, claw marks clear in the damp soil. Beside them, a few overturned logs and torn-up ant hills hinted at someone busy at work. A faint trail of paw marks led to a patch of honeycomb scattered on the ground - sticky, golden clues to a midnight feast! The forest birds were already chattering about the night's visitor. Strong, shaggy, and fond of sweet treats, this wanderer loves the quiet hours when others sleep. Can you guess who left these marks?



MATCH-UP

Match each animal with its home in the forest!

Animals

1. Crocodile



2. Owl



3. Honeybee



4. Jackal



5. Langur



Homes

A. Hive

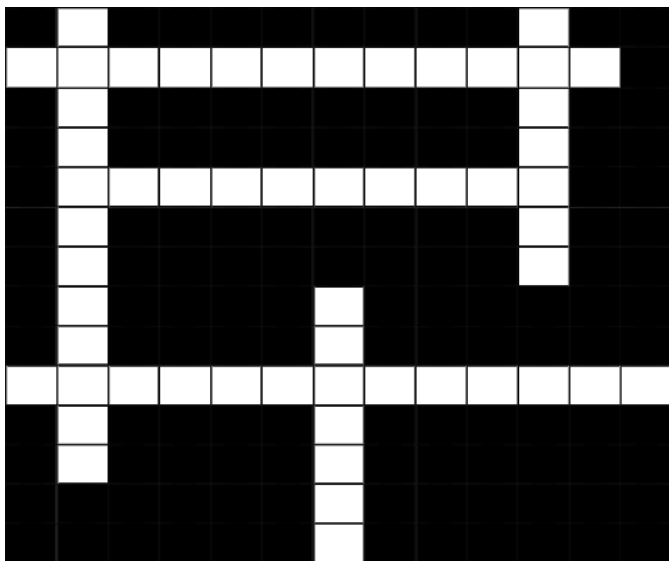
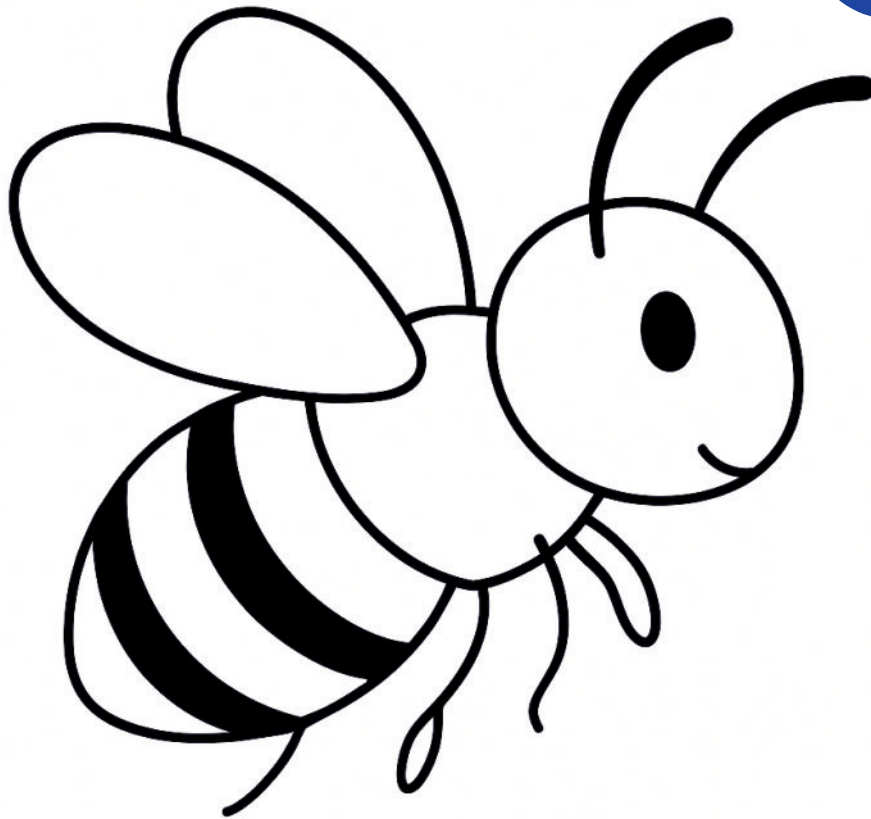
B. Tree tops

C. Riverbank

D. Den

E. Tree hollow

Bring this honeybee to life with colours!
Let your imagination run wild!



ACROSS:

1. This large drongo is known for copying the calls of other birds.
2. These small insects live in colonies and build tall mud mounds.
3. A reptile in Tadoba that can grow very large and is often seen basking on rocks

DOWN:

1. A colourful water bird with long legs, often seen wading in the lakes.
2. This insect glows at night and looks like a tiny lamp.
3. A big cat with a golden coat and black rosettes, smaller than a tiger.

Check page no. 14 for correct answer.

Wildlife Week Celebration



The beginning of Wildlife Week 2025 was celebrated with a series of activities on 2nd October, coinciding with the birth anniversaries of Mahatma Gandhi and Lal Bahadur Shastri. A special cleanliness campaign was carried out in and around TATR. Forest officers, guards, PRT members, EDC representatives, and local citizens collected plastic waste and litter, reinforcing Tadoba's commitment to eco-friendly practices and a cleaner environment.

Field Visit by ACF Batch



The ACF Batch from the Central Academy for State Forest Service (CASFOS), Coimbatore, visited the Kolara Range, Navegaon Beat, to study grassland and leguminous field management. The trainees received detailed information and guidance on the management practices of grassland ecosystems and leguminous plantations, emphasising their importance in sustaining wildlife and enhancing habitat quality. This field exposure provided the ACF trainees with valuable practical insights into habitat management techniques.

Awareness Programs



As part of Wildlife Week celebrations, special awareness programs were organised at Z.P. schools by various range offices in TATR. The events included a wildlife awareness rally, a quiz competition, and a student drawing competition, aimed at fostering interest and concern for forests and wildlife. Additionally, check dams were constructed in many beats, promoting water conservation and habitat improvement.

BIT-TATR Hackathon



A two-day BIT-TATR Hackathon on Human-Wildlife Coexistence was organised at the BIT Campus, Ballarpur. Young innovators developed creative solutions under two themes- Human Safety and Protecting Livelihoods- with five teams reaching the final round. Chief Guest Dr Prabhu Nath Shukla, Field Director, TATR, presided over the event, interacting closely with participants and encouraging them to refine their ideas. One winning team was selected from each theme.

TATR Artists at Silent Conversations



Local artists Maroti Tekam and Liladhar Atram represented the TATR at Silent Conversations 2025 in Delhi, a national art exhibition co-hosted by the Sankala Foundation and the NTCA, celebrating tribal art and India's conservation spirit. Both artists' paintings were sold and widely appreciated, showcasing the rich forest-inspired creativity of Tadoba. The artists brought together artists from tiger reserves nationwide, shared stories of nature, mythology, and coexistence.

Support to Frontline Staff



WWF-India extended financial support of ₹1,08,594 to Praful Wadgure, a dedicated member of the Rapid Rescue Unit (RRU), Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve (TATR), for injuries sustained in the line of duty. The cheque was handed over at Chandrapur in the presence of Dr. Prabhu Nath Shukl, Field Director, TATR, Ajinkya Bhatkar, Associate Coordinator, WWF-India and Ajay Marathe, RRT, TATR. This initiative reflects an unwavering commitment to supporting frontline forest staff, who risk their lives every day to protect wildlife and ensure effective rescue operations.

Let's celebrate the dedication and impact of our frontline staff who go above and beyond to protect our forests and wildlife. It is a token of appreciation for their outstanding service, vigilance, and commitment to conservation on the ground.

August 2025



Sunil Mukundaji Nikure
Forest Guard, Range: Kolsa (Core)

- Managed additional responsibilities of Pahami beat efficiently
- Regular patrolling and wildlife monitoring
- Collected 28.750 kg of fruit seeds
- Planted 88 saplings
- Maintained wildlife records diligently



D. A. Bopche
Forest Guard, Range: Khadsangi (Buffer)

- Protected forest and wildlife
- Completed assigned duties on time
- Patrolled 338.04 km using M-Stripes
- Supported subordinates in KRA data entry
- Conducted awareness to prevent human-wildlife conflict

September 2025



Audumbar Ankush Babar
Forest Guard, Range: Kolara (Core)

- Focused on grass species development in Navegaon
- Regular removal of non-palatable plants
- Documented new grass species and their traits
- Monitored tiger and wildlife movements
- Fulfilled responsibilities as beat guard effectively



Y. G. Masram
Forest Guard, Range: Mul (Buffer)

- Protected forest and wildlife
- Completed assigned duties on time
- Patrolled 326.205 km using M-Stripes
- Assisted subordinates with KRA data
- Conducted awareness to prevent human-wildlife conflict


 Wikimedia Commons

SLENDER CORAL SNAKE

The Slender Coral Snake (*Calliophis melanurus*) is one of Tadoba's rare and lesser-seen snakes. Despite being venomous, it is not considered dangerous to humans. This secretive snake grows up to 15 inches long and is named for its slender body and smooth, shiny scales. Its most striking feature is the bright coral-red tail, which it raises as a warning when threatened.

Habitat and Behaviour

It spends most of its time hidden under leaf litter in dense forest patches, making it a challenge to spot. The snake's small black eyes and sleek body help it move easily through the forest floor.

Breeding and Venom

Females lay 2-6 eggs at a time. Though venomous, there are no known human fatalities caused by this species - its bite usually causes mild swelling and itching.

A rare jewel of Tadoba's reptile world, the Slender Coral Snake reminds us that even the smallest creatures play vital roles in the forest ecosystem.

Chinmay Deshpande
Naturalist, Nagpur



EUPHORBIA

As you approach the Tadoba Visava Interpretation Centre, a tall, spiny plant on the left side of the road catches every visitor's eye. Many mistake it for a cactus, but it's actually a succulent belonging to the Euphorbia family. Interestingly, India has no native cactus species; all true cacti are native to the Americas. Euphorbia and cactus plants simply look alike due to convergent evolution, both adapting to survive in dry habitats.

Identification and Traits

Euphorbia species have thick, fleshy stems that store water and a milky white latex that protects them from herbivores. This latex, however, is toxic and can irritate skin or eyes.

Ecological and Practical Importance

There are over 2,000 Euphorbia species worldwide, with about 195 in India. Many are used as living fences, ornamental plants, and even in traditional medicine. Scientists are also studying their latex for potential biofuel applications.

Next time you pass by Visava, stop and admire this desert survivor!

Anirudh Chaoji
Senior Naturalist, Nagpur



COMMON MIME BUTTERFLY

The Common Mime (*Papilio clytia*) is one of Tadoba's most graceful and fascinating butterflies. A member of the swallowtail family, it is distributed throughout India. This medium-sized butterfly is often seen fluttering along forest paths, especially near waterbodies and flowering trees.

Identification and Behaviour

The Common Mime has two distinct forms — a black-and-white form that mimics the Common Crow butterfly and a dark brown form resembling the Blue Tiger. Both serve as clever disguises against predators. It glides elegantly with slow, gentle wingbeats and is often mistaken for the species it imitates.

Life Cycle and Habitat

It lays its eggs on trees such as *Cinnamomum* and *Litsea*, whose leaves feed the caterpillars. When it becomes a pupa, it resembles a piece of dry bark; hence, the Common Mime pupa is known as a master of camouflage. Common Mimes are active throughout the year in Tadoba, especially after the monsoon when flowers are abundant.

A true artist of adaptation, this butterfly adds colour and wonder to Tadoba's wild canvas.

Yogita N. D. Chhapekar
Biologist, Nagpur



Antony Crossy (Wikimedia Commons)

PIED KINGFISHER

The Pied Kingfisher (*Ceryle rudis*) is a striking black-and-white bird, often seen hovering gracefully over Tadoba's lakes and rivers before diving straight into the water to catch fish. Known for its sharp eyesight and unique hovering flight, it is one of the most skilled fishers among birds.

Physical Traits and Behaviour

Easily recognised by its black-and-white plumage and shaggy crest, the male has a double breast band, while the female has a single broken one. Pied Kingfishers are sociable and cooperative - often found in pairs or family groups, and sometimes roosting together in large numbers.

Hunting and Nesting

They feed mainly on fish, but also take crustaceans, insects, and frogs. Their precise dives account for light refraction in water — a rare talent! Nests are burrows dug into sandy riverbanks, where 3-6 eggs are laid and guarded by both parents.

Status

Common in Tadoba, this species is listed as Least Concern by the IUCN.

Rundan Katkar
Range Forest Officer, Kolsa, TATR

ANSWERS

1-C, 2-B, 3-A, 4-B, 5-D

Snake



Sloth Bear



1. Crocodile → C. Riverbank

2. Owl → E. Tree hollow

3. Honeybee → A. Hive

4. Jackal → D. Den

5. Langur → B. Tree tops

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STORY OF SURVIVAL & LOVE

There are days in the wild that etch themselves deep into memory, moments so raw and vivid that no photograph can truly contain them. I remember one such morning in the Kolsa range, a warm May sunrise when the forest had just begun to stir. The tigress T-14, also known as Kuani, walked gracefully ahead of our gypsy, her sub-adult cub padding close behind. Both suddenly turned their gaze in one direction, a sign that something intense was unfolding.

Moments later, we realised the gravity of the scene. The cub's sibling was hiding nearby, being chased, not by a rival predator, but by their own grandmother, the legendary T-4 Hirdinalah tigress! What followed was an hour-long drama that few get to witness: three generations of tigers entangled in a fierce confrontation where instincts outweighed emotion. The grandmother sought to kill, the daughter to defend, and survival ruled every heartbeat.

It was nature's theatre- breathtaking, brutal, and unapologetically real. Later, I learned that the young male cub tragically died in the winter of 2024, attacked by a sloth bear, while the Hirdinalah female herself was never seen again. Such is the circle of life in the wild, magnificent yet merciless.

For now, I hold onto this single frame- the mother and cub bathed in soft sunlight, their bond glowing through the wilderness. A reminder that in the forest, every story of survival is also a story of love.

Sanjay Deshpande
Wildlife Enthusiast
Sanjeevani Developers, Pune



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Read The Signs!

A majestic tiger crosses the Agarzari-Dewada road, reminding us that the wild always speaks- we just need to pause, observe, and listen to nature's signs.

Playtime!

The jungle has its own playground moments! Two mongooses put on a lively show, mock-fighting right on the forest track.



Wait & Watch!

Perched gracefully on a tree branch, an Asian Palm Civet enjoys a quiet moment, watching every movement below with curious eyes.