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The Official Newsletter of Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve

Tadoba

DIARIES

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

A NEW BEGINNING

Dear Reader

As the rains recede, a new season of exploration and tourism begins at Tadoba. From 1st October, the core areas of the reserve will reopen for visitors. This year's monsoon has been heavier than usual. While it has left some stretches of road bumpy, it has also filled our lakes and streams to the brim. Our teams are working hard to restore the tracks, even as the forests continue to echo with the sound of flowing water.

The monsoon is always a time of revival. We are especially encouraged to see fresh bamboo shoots coming up in areas where old bamboo had flowered and died. These tender seedlings are a promise of resilience, and in time they will restore the habitat to its full richness. Such cycles remind us that nature always finds a way to heal—if we give it the space and care it needs.

October also brings moments of reflection and celebration. Wildlife Week reminds us of our deep bond with nature and the urgent

need to conserve it. At the same time, Navratri, with its reverence for the divine feminine, strengthens our sense of duty towards Mother Earth. These festivals are not just cultural markers—they are reminders of our responsibility to protect and nurture life in all its forms.

As the forests turn lush and vibrant after the rains, we look forward to welcoming nature lovers back to Tadoba. The excitement of spotting tigers and other wildlife is always high, but we must also pause to remember that our presence comes with responsibility. Every step we take inside the reserve should be mindful of the fragile balance that sustains it.

We welcome you to this new season— with hope, with care, and with the promise of shared journeys into the wild.

Dr. Prabhu Nath Shukla (IFS)

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

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HIDDEN JEWELS OF TADOBBA

When the monsoon clouds roll over Tadoba and the first drops of rain kiss the forest floor, a quiet miracle unfolds. Tiny, colorful umbrellas suddenly spring up overnight, decorating the jungle with shapes and shades that often go unnoticed. These are mushrooms the hidden allies of Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve.

Most visitors come here hoping to witness the roar of a tiger or the grace of a deer. But if you look closely at the damp earth, fallen logs, or mossy rocks, you will discover another world, delicate *Marasmius* glowing like forest lanterns, sturdy bracket fungi layered on old tree trunks, and puffballs waiting to release their smoky spores into the air.

Though small and silent, mushrooms are among the forest's most powerful guardians. They recycle fallen leaves and trees into fertile soil,

form hidden partnerships with roots to nourish the trees, and serve as food for tiny creatures like ants and snails. Around the world they are valued for food and medicine, and here in Tadoba, local communities too recognize certain wild mushrooms that appear after the rains. For scientists, they are living signals. wherever mushrooms thrive, the forest breathes well.

So the next time you walk a Tadoba trail, pause and look down. In every fading leaf, every fallen branch, mushrooms are busy writing the story of renewal. They may not roar like the tiger or call like the peacock, but in their own quiet way, they keep the forest alive.

Muhammed Suhail N. A.
Research Intern, TATR

Brazil Leads with \$1 Billion Investment in Forest Fund

Brazil's President announced a landmark contribution of US\$1 billion to the Tropical Forests Forever Facility (TFFF), a global fund aimed at conserving endangered tropical forests. The country is the first to commit, hoping to inspire other nations. The TFFF plans to raise \$25 billion from governments and philanthropies, and an extra \$100 billion from private investors, using payments to countries that protect their tropical forest coverage.

Reuters

Mountain Gorillas in Uganda Benefit from Growing Tourism

In Bwindi Impenetrable National Park, Uganda, tourism is becoming a driving force for conservation. Foreign permit fees, around \$800, help fund conservation efforts, while community revenue sharing provides jobs and income to local people. As a result, many former poachers are now protectors of the forest and its

endangered mountain gorillas.
AP News



California's Redwoods Gain Protection Through Corporate Action

Apple has joined hands with The Conservation Fund to protect and restore coastal redwood forests in California. It's part of Apple's Restore Fund programme, aimed at conserving forests, supporting biodiversity, and helping reduce carbon emissions. Restoring these redwoods also helps protect many species that rely on them.

Thailand Rescues Baby Orangutans, Cracks Down on Wildlife Trafficking

Thai authorities rescued two baby orangutans from an

illegal wildlife trafficking operation in Bangkok and arrested a suspect charged with possessing protected wildlife. The orangutans, naturally found in Sumatra and Borneo, were being trafficked. Critically endangered according to the IUCN, orangutans are protected under CITES, which bans cross-border trade in endangered species. The rescued animals are now under the care of Thailand's Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation.



Ready for a jungle challenge?

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

- What is the national animal of India, also the pride of Tadoba?
 - Asiatic Lion
 - Tiger
 - Leopard
 - Snow Leopard
- Which small nocturnal animal in Tadoba is known for eating fruits and spreading seeds?
 - Palm Civet
 - Porcupine
 - Pangolin
 - Jackal
- What is the favourite food of the Indian Gaur?
 - Fish
 - Small insects
 - Fresh grass and shoots
 - Mangoes
- Which bird makes a loud "brain fever" call in the forest?
 - Koel
 - Common Hawk Cuckoo
 - Lapwing
 - Nightjar
- What do termites in Tadoba build that can be taller than a human?
 - Leaf piles
 - Stone nests
 - Bamboo towers
 - Mud mounds

HETEROCHROMIA: A RARE ENCOUNTER AT TADoba

I want to share an experience I never imagined- and one you might not have believed without proof. On 31st May 2024, during a safari in the Zari Peth buffer zone of Tadoba, I spotted a crested serpent eagle perched just seven to eight feet above the ground, its back turned to us. Hoping for a clear shot, I lifted my camera and waited. Slowly, the eagle turned its head, and what I saw sent chills down my spine. Its right eye was an icy blue! The left, however, was the usual deep yellow seen in these birds.

Later research revealed this condition is called heterochromia iridis- when each eye has a different colour. It occurs due to variations in the iris, sometimes influenced by hormonal changes, sexual maturity, or climate conditions. Though known in mammals like cats and huskies, and occasionally in owls, it is rarely reported in raptors such as the crested serpent eagle. Some studies even suggest it can be temporary, with eye colours shifting over time.

Curious about its rarity, I consulted friends and bird experts. None had ever seen such a case in



this species. Google offered little. Experts confirmed they'd seen blue eyes in owls but never in crested serpent eagles, nor could they recall any record of it.

The only conclusion was astonishing: the photographs I captured might be the first documentation of this phenomenon in India—a truly rare gift from the wild.

Akshay Suryawanshi
Naturalist, Pune

NIGHT FLIGHT OF THE OWL

The moon is high, and a baby owl is gliding silently over the Tadoba forest. It wants to return safely to its nest hidden in a tall Mahua tree. But the night is full of challenges! Can you help the owl find the safest path home without getting into trouble? Watch out for swooping bats, thorny branches, and a sly jungle cat waiting in the shadows.



THE LESSER KNOWN KHAKI #07

MONSOON PATROLLING on foot is necessary to keep vigil against poaching & illegal activities... Many times in the course of action you encounter wonders of nature! **FISH** climbing waterfalls to reach their breeding grounds is one such thing!!



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)

Monsoons are magical, they bring everything to life! Monsoon patrolling is a thrilling experience indeed! Amidst leech-bites and gushing waters, slippery rocks and pouring clouds, foresters keep moving! No wonder they match the struggle of every other components of the forest to survive and protect.

A JUNGLE ALARM

Do you know why a spotted deer raises its tail and stamps its foot?

In Tadoba's forests, the spotted deer, also known as chital, has a clever way of warning its friends about danger. When a deer senses a predator, like a tiger or leopard, it quickly raises its white, bushy tail. This white flash acts like a signal flag, instantly catching the attention of nearby deer. It's the deer's way of saying, "Be alert! Something is wrong!"

Additionally, the deer also stamps its foot on the ground. The sharp thud not only shows its nervousness but also alerts the herd with sound vibrations. With both activities, it also gives out a loud and sharp call, spreading the warning quickly.



This amazing behaviour shows how teamwork and silent signals help animals survive in the wild. Next time you see a chital flick its tail, remember- it might be sending out a vital jungle alarm!



A JACKPOT SIGHTING

I will never forget one particular safari that happened about three or four years ago, when the mighty tigress T-24, lovingly called Sonam ruled the Teliya region of Tadoba. That afternoon, I had guests with me, and we entered from the Moharli gate. As always, Teliya was the first place we headed. Every visitor's dream is to spot a tiger there. I had no idea, though, that we were about to hit a jackpot.

On the bank of Teliya Lake, a herd of spotted deer grazed peacefully. The scene was calm. Suddenly, a sharp alarm call rang out! In a flash, chaos broke loose. A pack of wild dogs, or dholes, had surrounded the herd. Deer scattered in every direction, desperate to escape. The dogs singled out a strong male deer and closed in from all sides. With nowhere else to run, the deer dashed into the lake. The pack chased it into the shallow water but stopped when the deer swam deeper. They paced on the edge for a while, then gave up and moved off in search of another prey. For a moment, it looked like the deer had won its battle.

But the forest had other plans. Just as the

deer was about to reach the far bank, there was a sudden splash. Out of nowhere, two crocodiles lunged from the depths and clamped onto the deer. It thrashed wildly, calling out in desperation, but the reptiles' grip was too strong. Slowly, the struggle ended, and silence returned.

And yet, the story wasn't finished. Hidden in the tall grasses all along was Sonam, the queen of Teliya. With the elegance only a tigress possesses, she leapt into the water and swam straight toward the crocodiles. Sensing the danger, they released the deer and slipped back into the depths. Sonam seized her prize, clamped it in her jaws, and swam to shore. She paused for a moment, scanning the area, then carried her hard-won meal into the grass, disappearing like a striped shadow.

That day, I witnessed an unforgettable jungle drama - a hunt within a hunt, where prey, predator, and the queen of Teliya all played their parts on the stage of the wild.

Sanjay Mankar

Guide, Moharli Gate, TATR (Core)

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?

BUZZING BUILDERS

I buzz around from bloom to bloom,
My home is like a waxy room.
We work all day, make something sweet,
A golden treat you love to eat.

Protect our hive, don't come too near,
Or you might feel a sting, I fear!
But plant by plant, we help things grow,
Without us, crops would droop, you know!

TRACK THE TRAIL

WHO WALKED THIS WAY?

This morning, we spotted a trail of tiny, dainty hoofprints scattered across the forest path. They looked like neat little halves of a heart, pressed gently into the mud. Some were grouped together, while others danced away into the tall grass. We followed the trail and found signs of nibbling on fresh leaves and scratch marks on a low branch—someone had just passed through, light on their feet and quick as a breeze. Can you guess who it was?



MATCH-UP

Match the clue with the animal that leaves it behind.

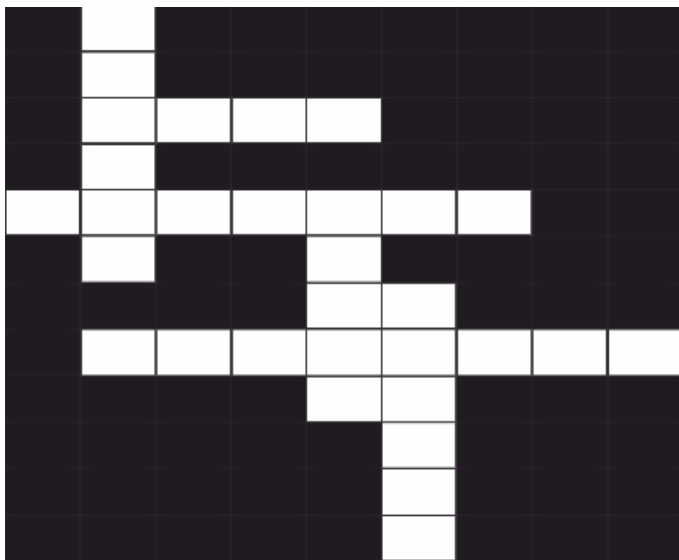
Clues

1. Loud alarm call
2. Scratch marks on tree
3. Large round dung balls
4. Pile of chewed bamboo
5. Burrow in the ground

Animals

- A. Gaur
- B. Sloth Bear
- C. Tiger
- D. Spotted Deer
- E. Elephant

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



ACROSS:

1. The largest herbivore species in Tadoba.
2. A bird that dances in the rain and spreads its colourful tail.
3. These buzzing insects make honey inside hives.

DOWN:

1. A reptile with a strong tail that waits silently in water to catch fish.
2. A small owl often heard calling at dusk in the forest.
3. The largest snake in Tadoba, known for swallowing big prey whole.

Check page no. 14 for correct answer.

Conflict Mitigation & Awareness



Human-Animal Conflict Mitigation and Awareness Initiative was undertaken for members of various Village Eco-Development Committees. EDC presidents, members, and secretaries participate in the initiative that focused on key aspects such as understanding the natural behaviour of carnivores like tigers and leopards, promoting awareness about their movements and instincts to help reduce conflict. Participants were guided on various precautionary measures and safety protocols in forest fringe areas. The session highlighted several important initiatives undertaken by the TATR administration to address human-wildlife conflict.

Biodiversity Data Collection & Documentation



TATR hosted a special workshop for the Forest Guards of Special Tiger Protection Force (STPF) at Moharli Hall. Miss. Divya Bharathi, Regional Manager, FDCM, along with three experienced Forest Guards and a Biologist from Melghat Tiger Reserve, shared their knowledge and hands-on experience on biodiversity data collection and documentation practices followed in Melghat, making monotonous patrolling more interesting and fruitful. Such knowledge-sharing platforms strengthen our frontline warriors and enrich conservation efforts.

Interaction on Research Projects



TATR officials recently had a very productive interaction with the Principal and Associate Professor of Janata College, Chandrapur. Dr Prabhu Nath Shukla, FD, TATR led the discussion. The group discussed various research projects being carried out in TATR and explored future collaboration opportunities.

IIFM Students Visit TATR



First-year MBA students from the Indian Institute of Forest Management (IIFM), Bhopal, visited TATR as part of their field work immersion. The visit, guided by Dr Prabhu Nath Shukla, FD, TATR, included a session with the Rapid Rescue Team. Dr Ravikant S. Khobragade, Veterinary Officer (Wildlife) and Head of the Rapid Rescue Team, presented on human-wildlife conflict and mitigation strategies. He discussed the team's responsibilities and innovative approaches to capturing wild carnivores during conflict situations.

Tadoba Forest Sports Meet 2025



The first-ever TATR-exclusive Sports Meet was held on 30-31 August 2025, bringing together over 200 staff members in the spirit of fitness, teamwork, and camaraderie. Five dynamic teams represented five divisions- Tadoba Roarers, Kolsa Cobras, Chandrapur Tuskers, Chimur Falcons and STPF Strikers. The winners in different categories were as follows: Tug-of-War (M/W)- Chandrapur Tuskers, Volleyball- STPF Strikers, Kabaddi- Tadoba Roarers, Overall Champions- STPF Strikers, Best Athletes- male- Akhil Jadhav (Forest Guard, STPF) and female- Ms Himani Dhanre (Forest Guard, STPF). Dr Prabhu Nath Shukla, FD, TATR, inaugurated the meet, and it was concluded with a motivating address by Shri M. Srinivasa Reddy, PCCF Conservation & Director, CFA, Chandrapur, highlighting the vital role of sports in building efficiency, discipline, and excellence.

Botanical Survey at Chaparala



A team from TATR recently walked through the dry deciduous forests of Chaparala Wildlife Sanctuary. Biodiversity experts and volunteers participated in the Chaparala Botanical Survey 2025. Together, they mapped the rich flora during the survey and documented their findings. Such initiatives help fuel the passion of nature enthusiasts for conservation.

International Vulture Awareness Day



On the occasion of International Vulture Awareness Day (6th September), TATR hosted an impactful awareness session at the Moharli Auditorium. Forest guards from all ranges in the core and buffer zones attended sessions conducted by Natasha Desai, Biologist, TATR, and Aniruddha Dhage, ACF, Core. The session spotlighted the alarming decline of vulture populations, the Jatayu Project in Tadoba and the concept of VSZ - Vulture Safe Zone.

Clean Tadoba, Beautiful Tadoba



Recently, a special marathon was organised from Moharli to Agarzari Gate. The event carried the message "Clean Tadoba, Beautiful Tadoba." Many participants joined with enthusiasm, spreading awareness about the importance of keeping the forest clean. Such efforts bring together people and nature, reminding us of our shared duty to protect Tadoba.


 Vivak Sharma


RED SAND BOA

The Red Sand Boa (*Eryx johnii*), called Mandul in the Marathi language, is one of the rare snakes found in the Tadoba landscape. Thick-bodied with a rounded tail tip, it often creates the illusion of having two heads—a reason behind many local myths. Its head is not broader than the neck, and its small eyes with vertical pupils give it a unique appearance.

Habitat and Habits

This nocturnal snake prefers dry, sandy areas and spends much of its time hidden underground. It is commonly active at night.

Diet

The Red Sand Boa feeds on frogs, lizards, and birds. It is also found eating other snakes.

Life Cycle

Around monsoon, i.e. in June, females give birth to 6–8 live young ones.

Conservation Note

The Red Sand Boa is completely non-venomous and harmless to humans. This snake is often killed due to myths and illegal trade. It is an essential part of Tadoba's ecosystem.

Chinmay Deshpande
Naturalist, Nagpur

BROKEN BONES

In Agarzari village near TATR, some homes have a fascinating tree with long, woody pods that, from afar, resemble Gulmohur. Locals call it Bhut Vruksh or Tetu. Its scientific name is *Oroxylum indicum*, but it is also known as the Broken Bones Tree because the fallen stalks around its base look like piles of broken limbs.

Features

This native Indian tree grows up to 15 metres tall. It is deciduous, with huge leaves on long stalks. Its seed pods, nearly 1.5 m long, hang like curved swords or wings, earning it another name— the "Tree of Damocles."

Flowers and Uses

The tree blooms at night, releasing a strong fragrance that attracts bats for pollination. Its seeds are flat with papery wings. Valued in traditional medicine, different parts of the tree are used for many remedies. In the Himalayas, people even hang seed garlands to ward off evil spirits.

Anirudh Chaoji
Senior Naturalist, Nagpur



CHOCOLATE PANSY

The Chocolate Pansy (*Junonia iphita*) is a common forest butterfly in Tadoba. Rich chocolate-brown in colour, its wings are shaped and patterned like a dry leaf. This leaf-like appearance helps it blend in with fallen leaves and escape hungry birds, so it is primarily found in forested areas.

Habitat and Range

Found across India, Myanmar and Indo-China, the Chocolate Pansy is tied to forests because its caterpillars feed on Acanthid shrubs (*Strobilanthes*), and the leaf camouflage works best among leaf litter.

Behaviour and Diet

Both males and females visit flowers, tree sap and overripe fruit. In good seasons hundreds may cluster on choice fruit or flowering bushes. It flies slowly and close to the ground, making it easy to observe.

Life Cycle and Forms

Seasonal variation makes summer individuals paler and monsoon ones darker. Two forms exist—one with two small white spots on the hindwing and one without.

Yogita N. D. Chhapekar
Biologist, Nagpur



WHITE-THROATED KINGFISHER

The White-throated Kingfisher (*Halcyon smyrnensis*) is one of the most colourful birds of Tadoba. With its bright blue wings and tail, chestnut head, and shining white throat patch, it is hard to miss. Both males and females look alike, making them a delight to spot.

Habitat and Range

Unlike other kingfishers, this bird is not always near water. It thrives in fields, gardens, marshes, forests, and even near villages, showing its incredible adaptability.

Behaviour and Diet

Usually seen alone or in pairs, it is very vocal with loud rattling calls. A skilled hunter, it feeds on insects, lizards, frogs, fish, crabs, and sometimes even small birds. Prey is caught from a perch and often beaten before being swallowed.

Nesting and Conservation

It nests in tunnels dug into earth banks, laying 4-7 eggs. Common in Tadoba, it is listed as Least Concern and plays a vital role in controlling pests.

Rundan Katkar
Range Forest Officer, Kolsa, TATR



Fearless in the Dark! A rare night-time glimpse of the fearless Honey Badger pair, wandering boldly through the forests of Tadoba, caught on a camera trap. Small in size but mighty in spirit, these nocturnal warriors remind us why they are legends of the forest.

ANSWERS

WILD WISDOM

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

GUESS WHO?

Honeybee



TRACK THE TRAIL



Spotted deer
hoofprint

MATCH-UP:

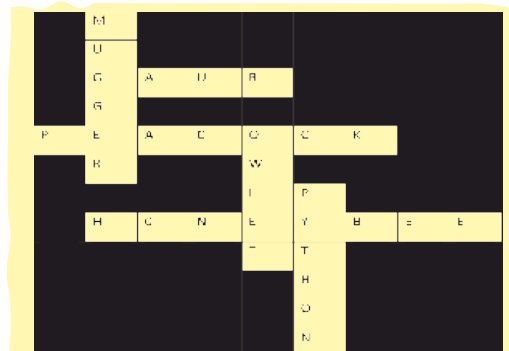
Clues

1. Loud alarm call
2. Scratch marks on tree
3. Large round dung balls
4. Pile of chewed bamboo
5. Burrow in the ground

Animals

- A. Gaur
- B. Sloth Bear
- C. Tiger
- D. Spotted Deer
- E. Elephant

JUNGLE JUMBLE:





TADOBA: THE MINE OF STRIPES & ROSETTES

It was a late, hot summer evening at Pandharpauri. Tigress T-7, popularly known as Choti Tara had already given us a full show, soaking endlessly in the waterhole. As most gypsies began to leave, we too thought of calling it a day. But then, a series of alarm calls broke the silence from the Navegaon road side. Something was stirring.

We drove ahead, curious, and reached a forest trail cutting across the main road. And there she was- the She Ghost! A female leopard, walking towards the road with quiet elegance. Dusk was settling in, and her rosetted coat merged perfectly with the dusty red track and tall yellowed grass. For a heartbeat, it felt as if the grass itself was moving, until her graceful form became clear.

In Tadoba, where tigers dominate, leopards live cautiously. Tigers don't just dislike them-they actively chase and even kill them. Leopards, too, pose a threat to tiger cubs, making this rivalry ancient and fierce. But that evening, the leopard seemed calm. She knew Choti Tara was still in the pool, and the resident male tiger was far away. Free of immediate danger, she walked in steady, confident strides.

She crossed right in front of our gypsy, then melted into the forest shadows. Just like a ghost-there one moment, gone the next-yet leaving behind an unforgettable impression.

A tiger head-on is spectacular, but a leopard head-on is rarer still. Once again, Tadoba proved itself a true mine- you keep digging and never know what you'll uncover. More often than not, it is gold in the form of stripes and silver in the form of rosettes, treasures that make every visitor richer with each trip into this magical forest.

Sanjay Deshpande
Wildlife Enthusiast
Sanjeevani Developers, Pune

**MY FOREST
MY MOM
MY HOME**



“When We Build Your Home in Pune,
We Also Care for Their Home in Tadoba!”



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