

Tadoba

DIARIES

The Official Newsletter of Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve





GUARDIANS OF THE GREEN

Dear Reader

The rains have returned to central India, and with them, Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve has donned its emerald cloak once more. Streams rush through the valleys, lakes brim to their edges, and the forest hums with renewed life. While the core remains closed to visitors during this season of plenty, the buffer zones are alive with the click of cameras and the whispers of awe. For many, a tiger stepping out against this lush green backdrop becomes the photograph of a lifetime, a story to revisit for years.

Yet, beyond the beauty that enchants visitors lies an invisible force—Tadoba's frontline staff. These quiet guardians walk the forest every single day, their patrols forming the heart of conservation. They move in teams of three to five, navigating thick jungles and muddy trails to ensure no harm comes to the land or its denizens. Poaching, tree-felling, grazing—threats are ever-present, but so is their vigilance. The health of the forest depends on their silent, steadfast footsteps.

Patrol duty is more than protection- it is also science in motion. Guards meticulously log

sightings, calls, pugmarks, and scat, all of which paint the larger picture of Tadoba's ecology. Human activity, too, is monitored: illegal intrusions, wood cutting or even hints of poaching. Animal mortality is noted with urgency, allowing quick intervention. To strengthen this work, the reserve employs MStrIPES, a GIS-based monitoring system that has, since 2016, transformed patrol efficiency. Each guard is expected to cover 125 kilometres every month, and many go well beyond, often under the most punishing conditions.

The monsoon makes their task herculean. Waist-deep water, thorny undergrowth, venomous snakes, prowling carnivores, and the unpredictability of wild terrain—all conspire to test their grit. But they march on, driven by an unshakable sense of duty. The next time you find yourself spellbound by Tadoba's grandeur, pause to remember these foot soldiers. It is their courage and commitment that allow this wilderness to remain wild, alive, and waiting for the generations yet to come.

Dr. Prabhu Nath Shukla (IFS)

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

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Editor: Dr. Prabhu Nath Shukla, CF & Field Director, TATR | Executive Editor: Anant Sonawane, Communications Officer, TATR.

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



A SPIKY SNACK

It was a hot afternoon in May, and we were on safari in the Zari Peth buffer zone. The day had already been amazing. We had just spent two whole hours watching the two sub-adult cubs of tigress K-Mark, resting barely ten feet away near a stream. As the strong, cool winds picked up, the brothers slowly moved uphill and melted into the forest.

On our way back to the gate, a sudden rustle in the bushes caught our attention. Curious, we stopped and peered through the leaves. To our surprise, it was one of the same cubs we had seen earlier. This time, he was busy wrestling with a strange-looking "toy." At first, we couldn't figure out what it was. But when we changed our angle, the truth shocked us- it was a porcupine!

With quick, powerful swipes of his paws, the young tiger had managed to pin it down. But the

porcupine wasn't giving up so easily. Its sharp quills bristled in defence, and in the tussle, some of them got stuck in the tiger's chest and legs. Clumsy but determined, the cub tried to pluck the quills out before finally managing to strip the spiky armour.

Then, with a triumphant crunch, he tucked into his unusual snack- even as the poor porcupine struggled in vain.

For me, it was a moment of pure wonder. A sight I had never imagined, etched forever in my memory. Tadoba never fails to surprise! Now I am eager to witness more aspects of a tiger's life and other exciting flora and fauna during my future visits to Tadoba!

Nishad Birnale

Student, Std. 7th
School of India, Bangalore

1. Asiatic Lion Conservation Gains Momentum in Gujarat

On World Lion Day, India launched a ₹180 crore eco-tourism and conservation initiative at Barda Wildlife Sanctuary—boosting the Asiatic lion habitat and population (now 891, up from 674 in 2020), demonstrating how focused investments can support big cat conservation.



U.S. Unveils Bold Plan to Fight New World Screwworm

The USDA announced a five-part strategy to fight the New World screwworm pest- using "Tick Riders," detector dogs, and a Texas facility to release sterile flies- protecting livestock, wildlife, and public health.

UN Plastic Pollution Treaty Talks Collapse Without Agreement

Global negotiations on a UN treaty to curb plastic pollution fell apart in Geneva. The collapse highlights deep divisions over chemical regulation and underscores the ongoing challenge of combating plastic's environmental threats.

Europe Endures Early Autumn Signs, Disrupting Wildlife

In the UK, berries ripened weeks early amid repeated heatwaves and drought in mid-August. Experts warn this shift disrupts food sources for birds- an alarming signal of climate stress on ecosystems. apnews.com



Ready for a jungle challenge?

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

- Which tree in Tadoba is famous for its sweet, intoxicating flowers used to make a local drink?
 - Bamboo
 - Mahua
 - Palash
 - Neem
- What special characteristics help the Sloth Bear find its favourite food- termites and ants?
 - Long claws and a powerful sense of smell
 - Bright eyes that shine in the dark
 - A forked tongue
 - Ability to fly short distances
- Which bird is often called the 'Tiger of the Sky' because of its powerful hunting skills?
 - Crested Serpent Eagle
 - Jungle Owlet
 - Indian Roller
 - Shikra
- Which animal leaves behind large round dung balls that roll across forest paths?
 - Gaur
 - Sambar Deer
 - Elephant
 - Wild Pig
- Tadoba Lake is home to which large water bird that dives under water to catch fish?
 - Painted Stork
 - Cormorant
 - Open-bill Stork
 - White-throated Kingfisher

Check page no. 14 for correct answers.

A ROYAL ENCOUNTER

On the scorching afternoon in May 2025, we entered Tadoba's buffer zone through the Madnapur gate, unsure if the safari would be worth braving the blistering heat. We had already been fortunate to see Bella and Mowgli on earlier drives, so our expectations were modest this time.

Our guide, a man of remarkable knowledge and passion, mentioned that Junabai and her cubs had been sighted recently. Almost as if the forest had heard him, she appeared walking gracefully with her two cubs in tow. The tender sight of the tigress leading her young ones across the dusty track was magical in itself. Yet, Tadoba had more in store for us.

Word soon spread that Veer, the young and mighty tiger, was nearby and moving toward a water body. We hurried to the spot, the sun beating down mercilessly. Minutes felt stretched into eternity. And then, he came. Emerging from the bamboo, Veer strode forward like a monarch inspecting his kingdom. Every step radiated strength and confidence.



He knelt to drink, then immersed himself fully in the pond, cooling off with effortless calm, completely undisturbed by our watchful eyes.

Watching him so close, regal yet serene, was a surreal experience. That single encounter made the heat, the dust, and the wait melt away. For me, this was Tadoba at its purest- wild, raw, and unforgettable.

Sudesh Inamdar

B.Tech Student, Hyderabad

WALK OF THE TORTOISE!

A little tortoise is slowly making its way to the cool water of Tadoba Lake. But the forest is full of surprises! Can you help the tortoise find the safest path to the lake without getting caught in trouble? Watch out for a hungry crocodile, a curious wild boar, and thick bamboo clumps blocking the way.



THE LESSER KNOWN **KHAKI** #06

We measure **TIGER** with its pug-marks!!! Tough tech advances like camera traps are in place, **SIGN SURVEY** still remains relevant to know



RATHER ESTIMATE

approximately the sex - size - pattern of movement of any large cat!

If not a **TIGER** seeing the **PUGMARKS** is ...

[[Piyusha Jagtap (IFS)]]

EQUALLY THRILLING!



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)

Tiger tracking is regular activity in the Tiger Reserves. Different signs left by the wild cats are used for this, pug-marks being common. Trust me, it is equally thrilling and sometimes far better than actually sighting a tiger! (Specially when you are on foot!)

MIMICRY ARTIST

Do you know who the most incredible mimicry artist in the forest is? It's the Greater Racket-tailed Drongo. It is known to mimic about 22 types of birds and can scare other birds by imitating the calls of predator birds.

The body of this drongo is glossy black with shades of blue and green. The blue extends from behind its reddish-brown eyes to about halfway down the back. The wings and the tuft on the top of the head are green with a hint of pale yellow on the very tips of the wings. This bird has two wire-like, 'racket'-tipped feathers that extend beyond the tail. They are placed along with other drongos in the family Dicruridae.



[[Wikipedia]]

The Greater Racket-tailed Drongo has a reputation for being aggressive and fearless. It will attack much larger birds, including raptors, especially when it is brooding chicks. It also indulges in kleptoparasitism, i.e. snatching food from smaller birds as well as mammal species.

THE FATAL BATTLE

I will never forget the evening of this year's Buddha Purnima. Like every year, the guests were given a rare privilege to spend the night on machans near waterholes, silently watching the wilderness unfold under the moonlight. I was assigned the Umrikhora waterhole along with a young couple. The forest welcomed us with an uncanny calm, no alarm calls, only the fading calls of birds heading home. But just as we crossed Ramdegi Temple at around 6pm, the stillness shattered. Out of nowhere, the majestic T126, popularly known as Chota Matka stepped onto the forest track. My guests gasped in awe, their eyes wide with excitement. None of us knew then that the night ahead would etch itself forever into our memories.

For nearly an hour, Chota Matka led us deeper into the jungle, walking calmly in front of our vehicle. Nearing Umrikhora, his sharp gaze caught sight of another tiger resting in the bushes, Brahma, a bold male who had intruded into his domain. The calm king turned into a furious warrior and charged without warning. Brahma rose with equal might, and in an instant, the jungle thundered with their ferocious roars. Mighty paws struck with bone-rattling blows, dust swirled, and the forest seemed to tremble with their rage. My guests clutched each other in fear, but I urged them to stay strong. We were witnessing nature's rawest truth- the battle for survival and supremacy.

The fighting tigers vanished behind the bushes. Their sound was chilling, primal, and



AI Generated

unrelenting. By the time we climbed the machan, the sun had set and the forest lay under silver moonlight. For hours, the air carried the haunting chorus of two titans locked in combat. Then, at around eight, silence fell. Out of the shadows limped Chota Matka, exhausted, but spirit unbroken. Slowly, he sat in the waterhole, cooling his wounds. The fate of Brahma was still a mystery.

That night, Chota Matka returned to the bushes thrice, as if making sure the intruder would never rise. In the morning, we descended from the machan, overwhelmed by what we had witnessed. Later, word spread- Chota Matka had slain the challenger to his throne. To have witnessed this battle of legends under the full moon of Buddha Purnima was not just luck. It was a once-in-a-lifetime glimpse into the unforgiving law of the wild, where kings are crowned not by ceremony, but by blood and courage.

Ranjit Hanwate

Guide, Nimdhela Gate, TATR (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 SILENT SLIDER

The Forest Glider
I hang around, but not to play,
I sleep all night and rest by day.
Upside-down I like to be,
High in trees, you might spot me!

My face is masked, I glide with grace,
From tree to tree, I race no race.
I'm not a bird, but I can fly-
With flaps that help me soar the sky!

TRACK THE TRAIL

WHO WALKED THIS WAY?

On a sunlit trail near a rocky stream, we found something unusual- a long, wavy drag mark in the dust, with pairs of clawed footprints on either side. It looked as if someone had slowly slithered through, its belly brushing the ground while its sharp toes left tiny crescent-shaped holes. We followed the trail until it disappeared into a hollow log. Nearby, we saw scratch marks and a few scattered eggshells. Someone had clearly been on an adventure!
Can you guess who it was?



MATCH-UP

Can you help these animals find their food?
Draw a line to match each animal with what it loves to eat!

Animals

1. Langur



2. Spotted Deer



3. Hornbill



4. Monitor Lizard



5. Pangolin



Food

A. Eggs

B. Ants & termites

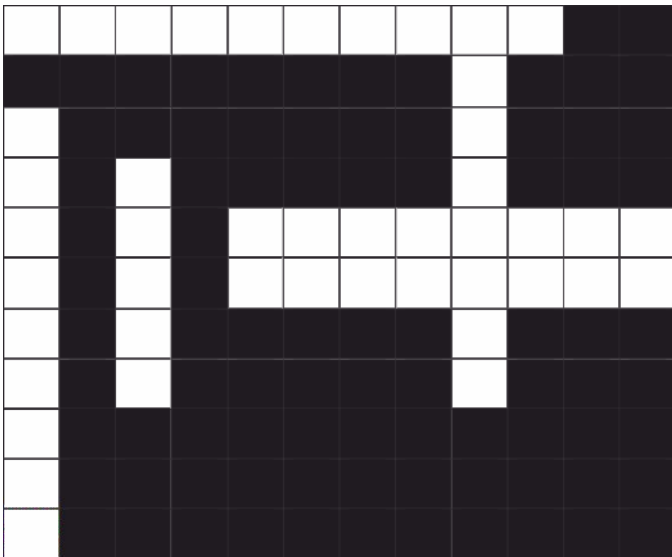
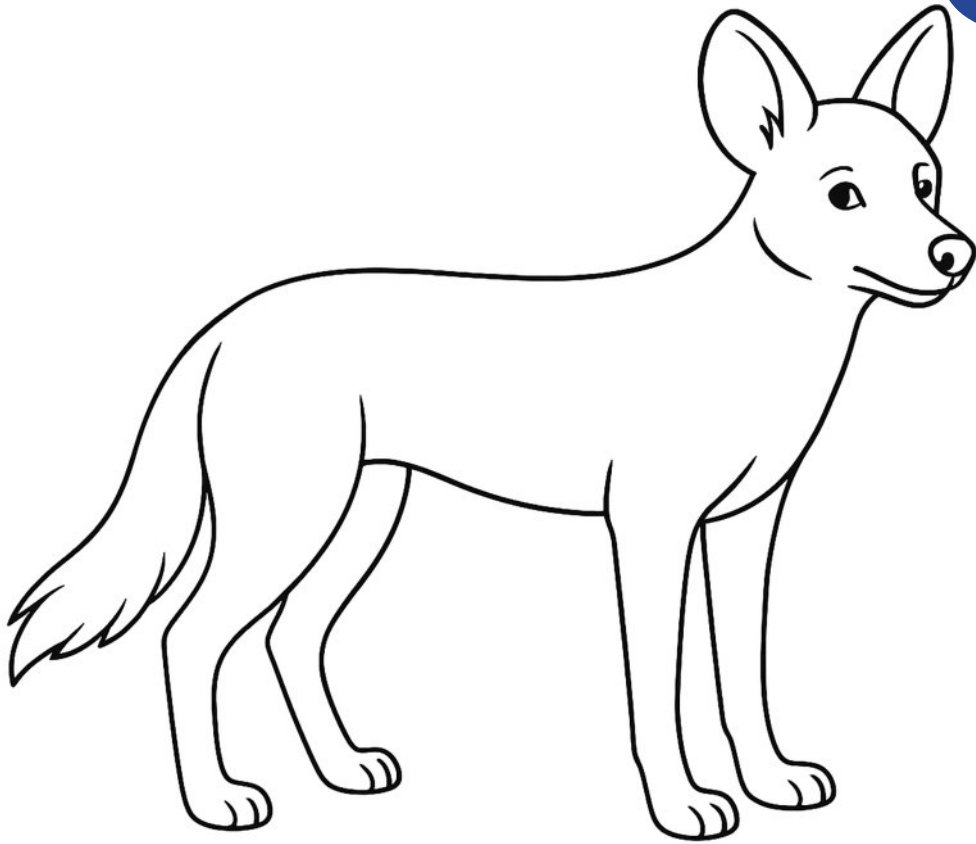
C. Leaves & fruits

D. Tender grass

E. Fruits

Check page no. 14 for correct answers.

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



ACROSS:

1. This cuckoo gives a loud "brain-fever" call during summer.
2. A bird with a heavy beak that loves to eat fruits and nests in tree holes.
3. A slow-moving animal that breaks termite mounds with its claws.

DOWN:

1. A colourful insect that flutters from flower to flower sipping nectar.
2. This striped animal is the pride of Tadoba and India's national animal.
3. This animal digs the soil with its snout and loves roots and tubers.

Check page no. 14 for correct answer.

Bird Conservation at Tadoba



The Central India Bird Academy (CIBA), Nagpur has successfully submitted the final report under the Memorandum of Agreement with the TATR Conservation Foundation. Key outcomes of this collaboration include- an updated checklist of bird species in TATR, identification of key birding hotspots across the reserve and capacity-building for frontline staff on bird conservation. This milestone reinforces our commitment to protecting avian biodiversity and supporting grassroots

Owl Awareness Programme



TATR, in collaboration with BNHS and bird sound expert Sumedh Waghmare, organised an engaging awareness session at Z.P. School, Bhamdoli in TATR Buffer Zone. From the haunting hoots to the soft calls of owls in Tadoba, students learned how these mysterious nocturnal birds play a vital role in our ecosystem. The session aimed to inspire young minds to appreciate and protect these guardians of the night.

Greening Moharli Together!



A tree plantation drive was conducted at Manika Mata Temple and Hanuman Mandir premises in Moharli. The event was a joint effort by EDC Moharli, Grampanchayat Moharli, ZP School Moharli, and TATR's Core and Buffer Moharli ranges, reflecting true community spirit for a greener tomorrow!

Rangers Inspiring Young Minds!



A special awareness session was held on World Ranger Day to introduce students to careers in wildlife conservation. Forest Guard Shiva Rokde shared real-life experiences, inspiring children to consider roles like Range Forest Officer (RFO). The event also included cap distribution and an interactive session on Swachh Tadoba and keeping our forests clean. Graced by RFO Vishal Vaidya, Gram Panchayat members, EDC President, and ZP Kolara School teachers, the program was a step towards building future forest guardians.

E-vehicle for Solid Waste Collection



At Satara village in Khadsangi Range, an electric vehicle (e-vehicle) for solid waste collection was inaugurated under the Zero Waste Tadoba Project. The e-vehicle was flagged off by Shri Anand Reddy (Deputy Director, Core) in the presence of village Sarpanch Shri Gajanan Gulade and members of the local Eco Development Committee, marking a significant step toward systematic and eco-friendly waste management in buffer villages.

International Tiger Day Celebration



At the Moharli Gate complex, nine two-wheelers were launched to enhance field mobility, monitoring, and patrolling efforts. The launch was presided over by Shri Manikanda Ramanujam (Chief Conservator of Forests, Chandrapur) and Shri Prabhu Nath Shukla (Field Director, TATR), in the presence of local staff, EDC members, tourist guides, and drivers. Additionally, a snake awareness generation session was conducted at the Moharli Auditorium by Shri Bandu Dhotre from Eco Pro.

Learning Beyond Borders – Pilibhit PRTs Visit TATR



A 20-member Primary Response Team (PRT) from Pilibhit Tiger Reserve, along with WWF India representatives, visited TATR for an exposure program on human-wildlife conflict mitigation. An interactive session at the Nature Education Centre, Agarzari, saw a vibrant exchange of ideas between Pilibhit's Baghmitras and TATR's PRT team, with a detailed presentation on field management and conflict resolution strategies. The team also visited Sitarampeth village to witness innovative interventions, such as artificial cameras, used to prevent local conflicts.

Team TATR in New Delhi



TATR participated in the Global Tiger Day event organized by the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), New Delhi. As part of the program, TATR showcased an eco-stall highlighting its community-based livelihood initiatives. The TATR team also presented a Coffee Table Book to Shri Bhupender Yadav, Hon'ble Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, and Chairman, NTCA.

 Wikimedia Commons


RUSSELL'S KUKRI

The Russell's Kukri (*Oligodon taeniolatus*) is an uncommon snake seen in and around Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve. It grows up to just 11 to 13 inches long, making it a small snake. Its head is oval but not broader than its neck. Look closely and you'll see round pupils in its eyes, a short tail, and a body covered with blotch-like markings edged in black, along with smooth, shiny scales.

Day and Night Explorer

This snake is active both during the day and at night! It's an excellent climber and sometimes found near human habitations, searching for food.

What it Eats

The Russell's Kukri enjoys feasting on small lizards, frog eggs, and even tiny frogs.

Life Cycle

In June, the female lays 3 to 7 eggs.

Completely Harmless

Although its name sounds similar to the venomous Russell's Viper, the Russell's Kukri is non-venomous and totally harmless to humans!

Chinmay Deshpande
Naturalist, Nagpur

 Wikimedia Commons


KHAJOOR

Unlike the tall date palms often seen in deserts, Tadoba's Phoenix acaulis is a dwarf variety, also called the stemless date palm. The word acaulis means "without a visible trunk," as its stem is underground or very short, giving it a shrub-like appearance. Its leaves are long, pointed, and feather-like, similar to other date palms.

Fruits and Uses

The tree bears small date-like fruits, though they are not edible. It is often used as a compact landscaping plant, especially in dry areas, due to its resilience in arid conditions.

Cultural and Medicinal Value

In Indian tradition, date palms are seen as symbols of fertility and abundance, linked with goddess Lakshmi. The leaves are used in ritual decorations during festivals. Ayurveda and folk medicine also reference khajoor for healing properties, connecting it with the Dhanvantari tradition, the god of medicine.

Anirudh Chaoji
Senior Naturalist, Nagpur



BLUE MORMON

Do you know the State Butterfly of Maharashtra? It is the Blue Mormon (*Papilio polymnestor*), a striking species admired by nature lovers.

Size and Appearance

Found mainly in South India and Sri Lanka, the Blue Mormon is India's second-largest butterfly, with a wingspan of 120-150 mm—almost as wide as a small bird. Its black wings are patterned with pale blue bands, creating a spectacular bird-like flight.

Life Cycle

The female lays eggs on tender citrus leaves. The caterpillar, with shiny blue bands, feeds on leaves before forming a pupa that camouflages with its host plant. In about 20-25 days, the dazzling adult emerges.

Ecological Role

The Blue Mormon visits flowers like Ixora and Pagoda, acting as a pollinator and bioindicator of ecosystem health.

A Symbol of Nature

More than a butterfly, it symbolises transformation, harmony, and the interdependence of nature.

Yogita N. D. Chhapekar
Biologist, Nagpur



COMMON KINGFISHER

The Common Kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*) may be called "common," but it is not so easy to spot. Out of the five kingfisher species in Tadoba, this is the smallest, measuring just 16-17 cm.

Brilliant Colours

Its upperparts shine bright blue to turquoise, while the underparts glow in orange-chestnut. Males have all-black bills, while females show a reddish base to the lower mandible. The bird's red feet add to its charm.

Habitat and Habits

It lives near clear, slow-moving waters—rivers, lakes, ponds, and canals. A flash of blue over water often signals its presence. Highly territorial, it gives a sharp "chee" or "tsreee" call.

Diet and Hunting

This tiny hunter dives headfirst to catch small fish, insects, and crustaceans.

Nesting and Survival

It nests in burrows along riverbanks, laying 5-7 eggs. Though listed as Least Concern, it remains vulnerable to pollution and habitat loss.

Rundan Katkar
Range Forest Officer, Kolsa, TATR



A SPECIAL APPEARANCE! A rare guest steps into frame- the shy Chousingha, the four-horned antelope. Camera traps help us glimpse what usually stays hidden in Tadoba's forests.

ANSWERS

WILD WISDOM

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

GUESS WHO?

Flying Squirrel



TRACK THE TRAIL



Monitor lizard

MATCH-UP:

Animals

1. Langur

2. Spotted Deer

3. Hornbill

4. Monitor Lizard

5. Pangolin

Food

A. Eggs

B. Ants & termites

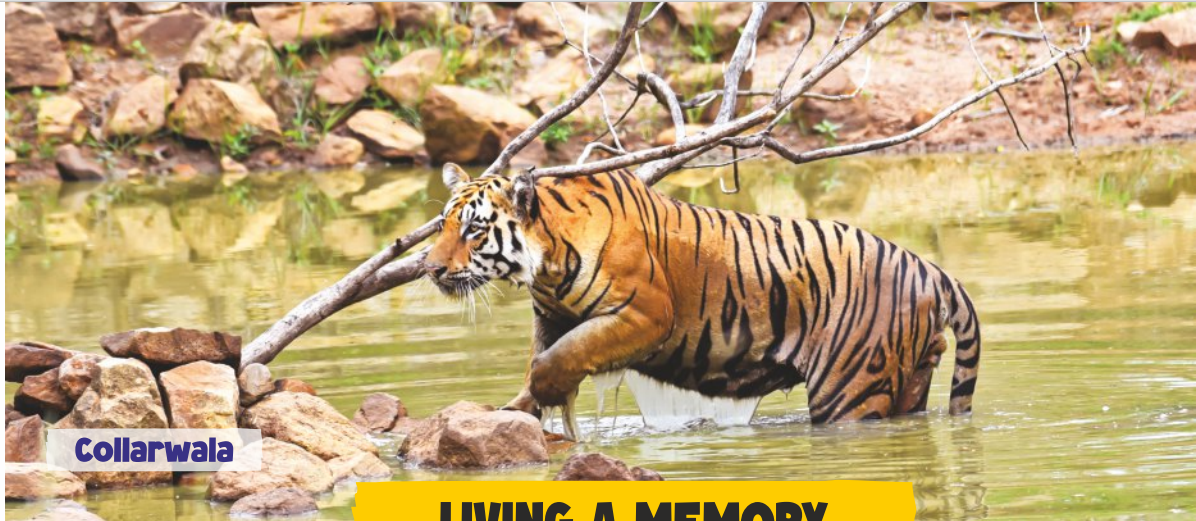
C. Leaves & fruits

D. Tender grass

E. Fruits

JUNGLE JUMBLE:

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Collarwala

LIVING A MEMORY

At the waterhole- 97, the forest was heavy with silence on a hot summer noon when I spotted a tiger. Stretched lazily in the cool water was a young male, enjoying his private pool. This spot is usually the favourite hangout of two or three males, especially T138, the legendary Mowgli, who has long claimed it as his special retreat. Naturally, my first thought was that it must be Mowgli himself.

But as the tiger lifted his head and looked at us, I realised something was different. His eyes were brighter, lacking the hardened stare that comes only with years of battles fought for survival. Our guide confirmed my suspicion: "Sir, yeh naya male hai, young hai... isse Collarwala kehte hain!"

I had photographed Mowgli at this very pool just two years ago. Now, it seemed a younger challenger was trying his luck, testing his claim to the waters while Mowgli expanded elsewhere. Yet the resemblance was uncanny- the poised neck at the sound of alarm calls, the rise from the water, the deliberate walk. For a fleeting moment, except for size, it was as if Mowgli himself stood before me.

It felt like déjà vu- living a memory again, but with a new actor stepping into the scene. This is what pulls me back to Tadoba again and again. Every sighting is fresh and unrepeatable, yet always connected with stories of the past. On these dusty red tracks under bamboo thickets, the forest whispers its timeless truth: life here is ever-changing, yet forever the same.

Sanjay Deshpande

Wildlife Enthusiast
Sanjeevani Developers, Pune

My Forest
My Kingdom
My Home

Mowgli

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



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📍 +91 7756081922



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Sanjeevani Deve 📍
www.sanjeevanideve.com 📍
020-79649951 | +91 98509 63387 📍





[Swagmit. Dandekar]

Colours of Tadoba!

A dazzling visitor, the Lime Butterfly dances gracefully among citrus leaves. With its bold colours and swift wings, it turns every lime or lemon tree into a stage for flight.

Book-Post

From,
Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve Conservation Foundation
Mul Road, Chandrapur, Maharashtra. 442401
Ph. 07172 - 251414

To, _____
