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Tadoba

DIARIES

The Official Newsletter of Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve



Karayan Malu

Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve Conservation Foundation, Chandrapur

TADOBA: SECURING INDIA'S TIGER LEGACY



Dear Reader,

Conservation succeeds when science, collaboration, and long-term vision come together. The recent birth of four cubs to tigress Zeenat in Similipal Tiger Reserve is a remarkable example of this principle in action. While the event marks the arrival of new life in the forests of Odisha, it also represents the successful outcome of one of India's most significant interstate tiger conservation initiatives. Zeenat, translocated from Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve to Similipal in 2024, has now become the symbol of how carefully planned wildlife management can strengthen the future of an entire tiger population.

The objective of the translocation was not to increase tiger numbers alone, but to improve the genetic diversity of Similipal's isolated tiger population. Healthy wildlife populations require the regular exchange of genes between unrelated individuals. Without such diversity, isolated populations become vulnerable to reduced reproductive success, inherited disorders, and lower resilience to disease and environmental change. By introducing female tigers from Tadoba into Similipal, the Odisha Forest Department, with the approval of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, initiated a scientifically designed conservation intervention. The birth of Zeenat's four cubs following her mating with a resident Similipal male confirms that this objective has now been successfully achieved. These cubs carry fresh genetic material that will strengthen the long-term viability of Similipal's tiger population.

The journey, however, was far from straightforward. Soon after her release, Zeenat dispersed nearly 250 kilometres across Odisha, Jharkhand and West Bengal before being safely recaptured through the coordinated efforts of multiple Forest Departments. Following a carefully managed acclimatisation period, she was released once again into the wild, where she established her territory and eventually

gave birth to four healthy cubs. Her story demonstrates that successful wildlife translocation is far more than the movement of an individual animal. It demands scientific planning, continuous monitoring, adaptive management, and seamless coordination among multiple agencies. Every stage of Zeenat's journey reflects the dedication of frontline staff, veterinarians, researchers and forest managers working together towards a common conservation goal.

For Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve, this achievement carries a special significance. Over the past two decades, Tadoba has emerged as one of India's most productive source populations of tigers. Its healthy breeding population and rich genetic diversity have naturally replenished neighbouring forest landscapes across Maharashtra, including Bor, Navegaon-Nagzira, Umred-Karhandla, Brahmapuri, Indravati and Kawal in Telangana through dispersal. Tigresses have been translocated to Navegaon-Nagzira and Sahyadri Tiger Reserves. Now, Tadoba is also contributing to scientifically planned interstate conservation initiatives, as demonstrated by Zeenat's successful translocation to Similipal. The birth of her four cubs is not merely the success of one tigress; it is evidence that the strong and genetically diverse tiger population of Tadoba is helping secure the future of tiger populations far beyond its own boundaries. As India moves towards landscape-level conservation, protected areas like Tadoba will play an increasingly important role in strengthening genetic connectivity, supporting population recovery, and ensuring that future generations inherit resilient and genetically healthy tiger populations. This is the true measure of conservation success—not merely protecting wildlife within a reserve, but enabling it to enrich forests across the nation.

Dr. Prabhu Nath Shukla (IFS)

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

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A RARE SIGHTING

I strongly believe that every forest has stories beyond its tigers; sometimes, the smallest sightings leave the biggest impressions. A recent visit to a resort situated near the Navegaon Gate of TATR reconfirmed my belief. I observed and documented a species not commonly reported from the Tadoba landscape, making this sighting particularly noteworthy. It was an Indian Spotted Creeper (*Salpornis spilonota*).

It is a small, inconspicuous bird belonging to the family Salpornithidae. It is characterised by its intricately spotted plumage, slender decurved bill, and distinctive habit of moving methodically along tree trunks and larger branches in search of insects concealed beneath the bark. Its cryptic colouration often makes it difficult to detect, even in suitable habitats.

The bird was observed actively foraging on the rough bark of mature trees. It exhibited its characteristic creeping behaviour, moving both upwards and sideways while probing crevices for prey. The surrounding habitat comprised dry deciduous vegetation interspersed with large old-growth trees, providing ideal microhabitats for the species.

While Tadoba is internationally renowned for its thriving tiger population, this observation serves as a reminder of the region's equally remarkable avian diversity. Records of lesser-known species such as the Indian Spotted Creeper contribute significantly to our understanding of the ecological richness of the Tadoba landscape.

This sighting may represent an important addition to the bird records of the Tadoba region and highlight the need for continued documentation of its rich fauna. Such observations by naturalists, guides, and birdwatchers play a valuable role in building baseline data for future research and conservation efforts and encourage others to look beyond the iconic megafauna to appreciate the hidden treasures of its forests.

Nikhil Chaukhe
Naturalist, Tiger Heaven Resort

A TIGER IN A TIME LOOP

The forests of Tadoba are known for creating unforgettable memories, but occasionally they present a scene so extraordinary that it feels almost unreal. On the afternoons of 23rd and 24th May 2026, my family and I witnessed one such remarkable experience. It was as though nature had decided to replay the same scene twice.

Same place. Same time. Same tigress. It felt less like a coincidence and more like stepping into a time loop deep inside the forests of Tadoba.

Over two consecutive days, I had the incredible opportunity to observe this sub-adult tigress, the offspring of T163, popularly known as Collarwali. At around 1 to 1.5 years old, she was still in her learning phase, slowly mastering the skills needed to survive independently in the wild.

On the first day, the young tigress moved cautiously through the forest track, alert and focused. Every step reflected the instincts of a growing predator sharpening its abilities through experience. Suddenly, her attention shifted toward a barking deer, hidden amidst the vegetation. She lowered herself close to the ground, every muscle tense, slowly attempting to stalk and ambush her prey. For a few seconds, the forest held its breath.



Then, in an instant, the deer sensed danger and escaped before the tigress could complete her attack. The hunt had failed.

The following day unfolded like a replay of the same scene. This time, her target was a sambar deer. The same patience, the same stealth, the same calculated movements. Once again, she attempted to stalk and launch an ambush attack. And once again, the prey escaped.

After the failed attempt, the young tigress showed no signs of frustration. She calmly walked to a nearby waterhole and settled into the cool water, escaping the harsh Tadoba summer heat.

Watching a tiger hunt is always thrilling, but witnessing near-identical behaviour repeated over two consecutive days felt extraordinarily rare.

Diwakar B. S.

Founder, Gaja Conservation Trust, Bangalore

THE BELARA SIBLINGS

Our adventure to Tadoba began long before sunrise. We left Nagpur at 3 a.m., picked up a few friends along the way, and reached the Madnapur Gate just as dawn was breaking. After completing the entry formalities, our guide and driver headed straight to a lake, where two sub-adult tigers had been sighted the previous evening.

Recent rains had transformed the landscape. The lake was overflowing, and parts of the safari track lay submerged. As we reached the spot, an unusual silence surrounded us. The forest seemed frozen in time. We waited patiently while several safari vehicles came, enquired about tiger movement, and moved on. We decided to stay put, hoping the jungle would reward our patience.

Then, without the slightest warning, the silence was broken. A beautiful sub-adult tigress emerged gracefully onto the waterlogged track. "Tiger! Tiger! Tiger!" someone shouted, and instantly every camera was in action. Her gleaming coat reflected the soft morning light as she walked confidently towards the water.

Moments later, her brother appeared. Hidden briefly



by the undergrowth, we could hear only the sound of splashing water before the siblings bounded into the open. What followed was pure magic. They chased, pounced and wrestled with each other, turning the flooded track into their playground.

For nearly half an hour, ours was the only safari vehicle witnessing this spectacular display. The playful siblings gradually came closer, splashing water and enjoying every moment of their carefree childhood. As we finally drove away, we realised we had witnessed something far more special than a tiger sighting. We had been given a rare glimpse into the playful world of two young tigers—a memory that will remain with us forever.

Rohit Moharil

Wildlife Enthusiast, Nagpur



WHY TIGERS LOVE WATER

If you have tried to bathe a house cat, you know it usually ends in a frantic battle of claws. Most felines, from your pet tabby to wild leopards, absolutely despise getting wet. They will carefully step around puddles to keep their paws dry.

But the tiger is a spectacular exception. On a sweltering summer afternoon in the forest, the world's largest cat doesn't just tolerate water; it actively seeks out the nearest lake or stream to take a long, relaxing bath.

Why does the tiger break the ultimate feline rule? The answer lies in the physics of survival and a biological concept called Thermoregulation.

When human beings get too hot, our bodies have a brilliant built-in air-conditioning system: we sweat. As sweat evaporates from our skin into the air, it pulls heat away from our bodies, rapidly cooling our core temperature.

Tigers do not have this luxury. Like domestic dogs and cats, tigers have only functional sweat glands on the soles of their paws. Imagine walking through the jungle in the middle of May, wearing a heavy, permanent fur coat, and sweating only through the soles of your feet. It simply isn't enough to cool down a massive animal.

To make matters worse, a tiger's sheer size works against it when the temperature rises. This brings us to a principle of physics called Thermal Inertia.

A smaller cat, like a leopard, has a high surface-area-to-volume ratio. This means they have a lot of skin exposed to the air relative to their overall body weight. Heat escapes their smaller bodies fairly quickly, allowing them to cool off simply by resting quietly in the shade of a tree.

A male Bengal tiger, however, is a massive, muscular powerhouse weighing over 200 kilograms. It has a large volume but relatively little surface area. Because of this tremendous bulk, a tiger's body acts like an insulated oven. Once a tiger gets hot, whether from the blazing midday sun or the explosive

physical exertion of a hunt, it stays hot. Its body traps heat aggressively.

Because they cannot sweat efficiently and their massive bodies retain heat, tigers must rely on their environment to survive the summer. They use water to physically lower their internal temperature.

By sinking into a waterhole up to their necks, they let the cool water draw heat from their bodies. The blood vessels near the surface of their skin cool down rapidly. As that chilled blood circulates back through their system, it acts exactly like liquid coolant in a car engine, safely lowering the tiger's internal core temperature.

If you spend enough time observing tigers on safari, you might notice a quirky habit: they almost always back into the water, preferring to keep their hindquarters submerged while their front half stays dry. This isn't just a random preference; it is a tactical choice.

First, it maximises cooling efficiency. The tiger's hindquarters and massive back legs contain major blood vessels, including the femoral artery. Submerging this vascular network cools a massive volume of blood very quickly, functioning like a highly efficient radiator.

Second, it is about survival. A tiger's head is packed with delicate sensory equipment, including eyes, ears, and highly tuned whiskers. Water in the ears or soaked whiskers temporarily dull their senses. By sitting like a human in a bathtub, with its head high and facing the shore, the tiger keeps its "radar" dry and fully operational. This allows it to cool off while remaining fully alert, ready to spot an approaching rival or a potential meal.

So, the next time you see a photograph of a tiger looking incredibly peaceful in a forest pool, remember the science at play. It isn't just taking a leisurely dip; it is performing vital biological maintenance to beat the heat.

Shaillendra Singh Deora
Wildlife Biologist, TATR



A SMALL POND! A BIG DIFFERENCE! Captured on a camera trap, a sambar family quenches its thirst at a small artificial waterhole created by the Forest Department in Moharli Buffer, highlighting the vital role of water augmentation in sustaining wildlife during the harsh summer months.

THE WORLD'S MOST EXPENSIVE COFFEE COMES FROM A CIVET!

The Asian Palm Civet, also known as the Toddy Cat, has an unusual connection to one of the world's most expensive coffees-Kopi Luwak. The civet feeds on ripe coffee cherries, but the coffee beans inside the fruit remain undigested. As the beans pass through its digestive system, natural enzymes subtly alter their chemical composition. Once excreted, the beans are collected, thoroughly cleaned, roasted and brewed into a coffee prized for its unique flavour.

Traditionally, Kopi Luwak was made only from beans collected from the droppings of wild civets. However, growing demand has led to the unethical practice of keeping civets in captivity and force-feeding them coffee cherries. Today, conservationists encourage consumers to avoid such products and support only ethically sourced or wild-collected coffee.

The humble civet reminds us that even the smallest inhabitants of our forests can have fascinating stories-and an unexpected place in human culture.

Did you know?

Despite its name, the Palm Civet is not a cat. It belongs to the family Viverridae, making it more closely related to genets and mongooses than to domestic cats.



A MOTHER'S ULTIMATE SACRIFICE

The jungle has a unique way of teaching lessons. Some lessons come through a beautiful tiger sighting, some through a breathtaking landscape, and some through moments so powerful that they remain etched in memory forever. I have been working as a Nature Guide at the Navegaon Buffer Gate of Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve for the past two years. During this period, I have witnessed countless wildlife encounters, but one incident in particular taught me a lesson about motherhood and survival that I will never forget.

It was a typical summer morning in Tadoba. The forest was already warming as our safari vehicle entered the jungle. Like most visitors, the tourists in my vehicle were excited and eager to see a tiger. Within minutes of entering the forest, the familiar question came from the back seat. "Will we see a tiger today?" I smiled and replied, "Let's hope the jungle is kind to us."

We decided to explore the lower part of the forest, particularly the area frequented by a tigress popularly known as Nayantara. As we approached her territory, a strong scent filled the air. Years of guiding had taught me to recognise that smell instantly—it was the scent of a recent kill.

My excitement grew. Somewhere nearby, a tiger was likely resting. We slowed down and began scanning the forest carefully. Our patience was rewarded sooner than expected. Emerging gracefully from the vegetation, Nayantara appeared on our left. She walked confidently along the forest track, occasionally glancing into the woods. The tourists were thrilled. Cameras clicked continuously as everyone enjoyed a magnificent sighting.

After a few minutes, Nayantara moved towards the core area and disappeared into the forest.

Convinced that our safari had already been successful, we drove further and stopped near Magar Taka. A large Mahua tree provided welcome shade, and we decided to spend a few quiet moments there.

Directly in front of us sat a langur mother with her tiny infant. The little one clung tightly to her body while she sat peacefully. It was a calm and beautiful



Deep Kathikar

scene, one of those simple moments that often go unnoticed in the excitement.

Then everything changed. Suddenly, alarm calls erupted from different parts of the forest. The peaceful atmosphere vanished in an instant. Every animal seemed alert.

Before we could fully understand what was happening, a tiger charged out of the vegetation. The attack happened so quickly that it felt unreal. The langur mother immediately understood the danger. In a split second, she made a decision that still gives me goosebumps when I think about it.

Instead of trying to save herself, she focused on her baby. With all her strength, she flung the infant high onto a tree branch, far above the reach of the predator. Having secured her baby's chance of survival, she had no opportunity to escape herself.

The attacking tiger was Nayantara. Within moments, the hunt was over. As Nayantara carried her prey away towards Magar Taka, our attention shifted to the infant monkey. It remained frozen on the branch, trembling with fear. Even from a distance, the shock of the moment was evident.

The forest slowly returned to silence. That day, the jungle taught us two unforgettable lessons. First, a mother's love is universal. Whether human or wild, a mother will do everything in her power to protect her child. And second, nature operates on a delicate balance where one creature's death often becomes another creature's means of survival.

Mohit Meshram

Guide, Navegaon Gate, TATR (Buffer)

Contribute to 'Tadoba Diaries'

Are you a forest department staff, tourist, guide, driver, working with a resort, managing a home stay or a community member from TATR vicinity? Do you want to join our effort to spread awareness on forest and wildlife conservation through 'Tadoba Diaries'? Please share your interesting photographs (not less than 4 MB) and experiences (not more than 250 words) on tadobadiaries2021@gmail.com. Your photograph/experience must be related to TATR only. The best content will be published with due credit.



COMMANDER BUTTERFLY

With its striking reddish-brown wings adorned by a bold white band and black markings, the Commander Butterfly (*Moduza procris*) is one of the most eye-catching butterflies found in Tadoba. Commonly seen in moist deciduous forests, it also thrives in gardens and wooded landscapes. While its beauty is captivating, its remarkable survival strategies make this tiny insect one of nature's most ingenious architects.

A Clever Survivor

The female Commander lays her tiny, spiny eggs singly on the tip of a leaf. Within four days, a caterpillar emerges and immediately begins feeding. But instead of relying solely on camouflage, it adopts an extraordinary defence strategy. Using silk and its own droppings, the caterpillar builds a narrow "frass chain" extending from the leaf. It rests at the end of this structure, making it difficult for predators such as ants to reach it. It also creates decoy caterpillars from leaf fragments and silk, confusing predators and increasing its chances of survival.

Master of Disguise

Before transforming into an adult, the caterpillar forms a pupa that closely resembles a dried, rolled-up leaf. This excellent camouflage helps it remain unnoticed until a beautiful butterfly emerges about a week later. Even the underside of the adult's wings, with its pale bluish-grey shades, provides effective camouflage when the butterfly is resting.

The Commander Butterfly reminds us that survival in nature is not always about strength. Sometimes, intelligence, innovation and adaptation are the greatest weapons of all.

- Yogita N. D. Chhapekar
Biologist, Nagpur



Wikipedia Common

BAKAIN NEEM

When you enter the Agarzari Campsite during spring, you may be welcomed by the sweet fragrance of delicate lilac blossoms hanging in clusters from a graceful tree. At first glance, it resembles the familiar Neem, but a closer look reveals a different identity. Meet the Bakain Neem (*Melia azedarach*), also known as Persian Lilac—a fast-growing relative of the true Neem that adds colour and fragrance to the forest landscape.

Beauty with a Purpose

Unlike the true Neem (*Azadirachta indica*), which produces small white flowers, Bakain bears attractive lilac-purple blooms that make it stand out during the flowering season. Its round, bead-like fruits often persist on the tree long after the leaves have fallen and have traditionally been used to make rosaries and decorative ornaments. Though it grows faster than Neem, Bakain is generally shorter-lived.

Ecological & Traditional Importance

Bakain plays an important role in both nature and human communities. Compounds present in its leaves and seeds possess insect-repelling properties, making it a natural alternative to chemical pesticides. The tree also enriches the soil by adding organic matter and helps reduce soil erosion. In traditional medicine, various parts of the tree, including its bark, leaves, and roots, have been used to help treat fever, inflammation, and other ailments. Its durable wood is valued for making furniture and utility items.

While beneficial in many ways, Bakain's seeds and fruits contain toxic compounds and should never be consumed without proper guidance from an expert.

- Anirudh Chaoji
Senior Naturalist, Nagpur



SPLIT GILL

Hidden on fallen logs and decaying branches after the monsoon rains, the Split Gill Fungus (*Schizophyllum commune*) is one of the most fascinating yet overlooked organisms found in forest ecosystems. Though small in size, this remarkable fungus possesses an extraordinary ability that has earned it scientific attention across the world.

Nature's Survivor

The Split Gill Fungus derives its name from the unique gill-like structures found beneath its fan-shaped cap. Unlike most mushrooms, these delicate folds are split down the middle and can close during dry conditions to conserve moisture. When humidity returns, the folds reopen, allowing the fungus to continue growing and reproducing. Its whitish to grey cap is covered with fine hairs, giving it a soft, fuzzy appearance. Often growing in overlapping clusters, it can be seen decorating dead wood like tiny shelves arranged by nature itself.

The Forest Recycler

Despite its delicate appearance, the Split Gill Fungus is one of the most widespread fungi on Earth and is found across a variety of habitats. It primarily grows on dead and decaying wood, although it may occasionally appear on weakened living trees. As a saprotrophic fungus, it plays a vital ecological role by breaking down wood and recycling nutrients back into the soil. This natural decomposition process supports forest regeneration and helps maintain ecosystem health. Scientists are also fascinated by its extraordinary genetic diversity, making it one of the most extensively studied fungi in the world.

- Muhammed Suhail N A
Wildlife Biologist, TATR



BROWN BOOBOOK

Hidden beneath the dense forest canopy during the day and active only after dusk, the Brown Boobook (*Ninox scutulata*), also known as the Brown Hawk-Owl, is one of the rarest owls recorded in Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve. With its large yellow eyes, long tail, and hawk-like appearance, this elusive nocturnal bird often goes unnoticed despite its striking features.

A Hawk in Owl's Clothing

The Brown Boobook measures around 27–33 centimetres in length and is easily recognised by its dark brown plumage, barred tail, and buffish-white underparts marked with brown streaks. Unlike many owls, it has a relatively inconspicuous facial disc, giving it a resemblance to a small hawk. A distinctive white patch above the bill further helps in identification. During daylight hours, it remains concealed under thick foliage, relying on camouflage to avoid detection.

Master of the Night

As darkness falls, the Brown Boobook emerges to hunt. Its diet includes beetles, moths, grasshoppers, frogs, lizards, bats, small mammals, and even small birds. Equipped with excellent night vision and sharp hearing, it silently patrols forests, wooded landscapes, plantations, and gardens in search of prey. Its soft and repetitive “boo-book” or “kuk-kuk” calls often reveal its presence long before the bird is seen.

Although classified as “Least Concern” by the IUCN, sightings of the Brown Boobook remain uncommon in Tadoba, making every encounter with this fascinating owl a special experience for birdwatchers and nature enthusiasts.

- Rundan Katkar
Range Forest Officer, Kolasa, TATR

Driving Towards Green Safaris



Shri Nitin Gadkari, Hon. Union Minister, Road Transport and Highways visited Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve and held discussions with Dr. Prabhu Nath Shukla, Field Director, on strengthening sustainable eco-tourism. Emphasising cleaner and quieter safaris, he directed the transition of all tourism vehicles to electric vehicles (EVs) and assured financial support through loan facilities for vehicle owners.

International Sickle Cell Day



On the occasion of International Sickle Cell Day, TATR facilitated a Sickle Cell Screening and Women's Mental Health Awareness Camp at Madnapur village in the buffer zone. The camp proved highly informative and beneficial for people from three surrounding villages who participated enthusiastically. A medical team from Chimur Health Centre conducted the sessions in an interactive and engaging manner.

World Environment Day



On World Environment Day, the field staff and employees of TATR, came together in a heartfelt gesture, each planting one tree across the forest premises in the spirit of Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam. The event was attended by Dr Prabhu Nath Shukla, Field Director, TATR. This initiative strengthened the commitment towards conservation and sustainable forestry.

Celebrations at Karwa Range



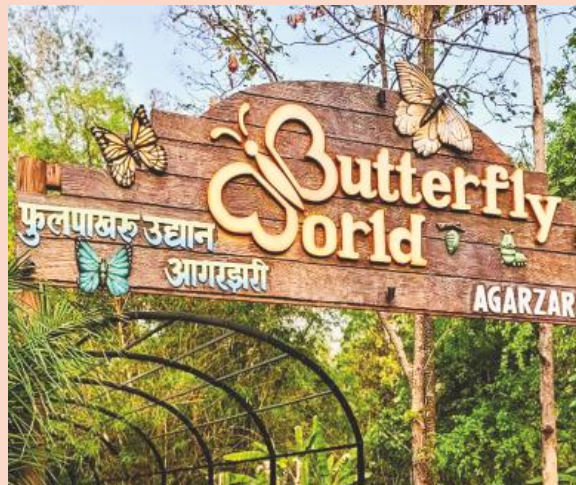
The staff at the Karwa Range celebrated the birth of four cubs by a tigress, not from Tadoba, but from Simlipal. A tigress named Zeenat was translocated from Karwa Range to Simlipal Tiger Reserve, Odisha, in November 2024 to strengthen the gene pool of tigers there. The birth of her cubs marked a great success of the special program initiated in the Karwa range.

Zero Waste Tadoba



Over 1,140 kg of plastic waste was removed across Bhamdeli, Kolara & Khutwanda villages under the Zero Waste Tadoba initiative. This powerful, community-driven cleanliness campaign targets microplastics and riverbank litter, aiming to create a cleaner, greener, and plastic-free Tadoba through community participation. Forest staff, guides, drivers and villagers participate in this initiative every week.

New Wings to Butterfly Garden



Raina Nanaiah, a wildlife photographer and naturalist from Bengaluru, donated generously through the Ashish Parmar Foundation to develop various facilities at the Butterfly Garden in Agarzari. Facilities like solar-powered irrigation, CCTV, uniforms for women guides, a butterfly nursery, etc., are created through this donation.

World Otter Day



On the occasion of World Otter Day, a special programme featured the screening of the acclaimed documentary Waterdogs of Moyar, highlighting the ecological importance and conservation challenges of otters in riverine ecosystems. An informative presentation and interactive session were also conducted, focusing on otter ecology, habitat conservation, threats to freshwater ecosystems, and the role of frontline staff in safeguarding aquatic biodiversity.

STAR OF THE MONTH MAY 2026

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.



Rakesh Janardan Gedam
Round Officer, Range: Kolara (Core)

- Regular foot patrolling and waterhole checking in Jamni.
- Created a watchtower in Chaiti to control forest fires.
- Ensured water supply to special saplings in Chaiti.
- Handled court cases in Jamni.



B. R. Balki
Forest Guard, Range: Khadsangi (Buffer)

- Protected forests and wildlife
- 502.80 Km patrolling as per M-Stripe
- Public awareness to avoid man-wildlife conflict
- Completed all assigned tasks in time



TAR ROAD – THE STORYBOOK OF TADOBA

Very few tiger reserves in India have a tar road passing through their core area, and Tadoba is one of them. Beginning at Moharli Gate and ending near the iconic Tadoba Lake, this road is far more than a means of travel- it is a living storybook that has witnessed centuries of history and countless wildlife encounters.

A decade ago, a State Transport bus regularly travelled along this road to Chimur during the monsoon when tourism remained closed. I often envied its driver, who experienced the wilderness of Tadoba every single day. It was not unusual for the bus to halt as tigers casually walked along the road, claiming it as part of their kingdom. Standing silently along this route are the mysterious Tadoba Pillars-centuries-old brick structures whose purpose remains unknown. Though many have weathered the test of time, they continue to whisper stories of the dynasties that once ruled these forests.

The road itself passes through an ever-changing landscape. Dense bamboo forests gradually give way to mixed woodlands, waterholes and majestic trees. Every stretch has its own character, attracting different wildlife through the seasons. Over the years, legendary tigresses like Madhuri, Sonam, Lara, Roma, Collarwali and Maya, along with powerful males such as Waghdoh, Bajrang and Chhota Dadhial, have ruled different sections of this road. For visitors, every bend promises an unforgettable encounter.

One of my most cherished memories dates back nearly two decades. While returning from Kolsa after fieldwork one night, our vehicle encountered a huge male tiger walking confidently down the middle of the tar road. We quietly followed him, hoping he would step aside. Suddenly, I looked behind and, in the moonlight, spotted a tigress walking silently behind our vehicle. We had unknowingly found ourselves between a mating



pair. In the darkness of the forest, the thrill was matched only by the tension. Thankfully, the male eventually disappeared into the bamboo, allowing us to drive on. Even after witnessing countless tiger sightings over the years- including many unforgettable moments with Maya- that night remains etched in my memory forever.

The beauty of the Tar Road changes with every season. During winter, lush greenery carpets the forest. In early summer, blooming Palash and Amaltas paint the landscape in brilliant shades of red and yellow, while fresh foliage of Mahua, Jamun, Tendu and Behada transforms the surroundings into a vibrant canvas. Even beyond Moharli Gate, where the road continues through the buffer, wildlife sightings remain common, offering a remarkable example of coexistence as villagers, tourists and wild animals share the same landscape with mutual respect.

If roads could speak, I am certain the Tar Road of Tadoba would be the finest storyteller of them all. Every safari writes a new chapter, every season adds a fresh page, and every journey leaves behind a memory. It is not merely a road connecting destinations-it is the very heart of Tadoba's wilderness, inviting every traveller to return and discover another story waiting just around the next bend.

Sanjay Deshpande
Wildlife Enthusiast, Pune

THE LESSER KNOWN KHAKI #16

It's not just the land we try to paint green! Seas are no exception!!! **MANGROVES** are the wonders of nature that stabilize the coasts, create a protective barrier during storms and provide habitat for many many **MARINE & ESTUARINE** creatures...



Piyusha Jagtap (IFS)

LESSER KNOWN KHAKI

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)

Protecting Protectors...



Ready for a jungle challenge?

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

1. Which animal is the State Animal of Maharashtra?

- A) Indian Leopard B) Indian Giant Squirrel
C) Bengal Tiger D) Sloth Bear

2. Which bird is the State Bird of Maharashtra?

- A) Indian Peafowl
B) Great Hornbill
C) Yellow-footed Green Pigeon (Hariyal)
D) Indian Paradise Flycatcher

3. Which tree is the State Tree of Maharashtra?

- A) Banyan
B) Clustered Apple
C) Jamun
D) Mango

4. Which flower is the State Flower of Maharashtra?

- A) Lotus
B) Jarul
C) Sunflower
D) Hibiscus

5. Which fruit is the State Fruit of Maharashtra?

- A) Alphonso Mango
B) Guava
C) Custard Apple
D) Orange

JUNGLE DETECTIVE

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

GUESS WHO?

THE SILENT STRIPES

Rust-red coat and ears so wide,
In forest packs I swiftly glide.
With sharp teamwork and endless chase,
Few prey escape my hunting pace.

My whistles echo through the trees,
I move with silence, speed, and ease.
A clever wild canine running free,
Can you guess who I might be?

TRACK THE TRAIL

Who Walked This Way?

Large padded pugmarks appear silently beside the waterhole.
No hoofprints nearby continue beyond this point.
The forest feels tense, and alarm calls echo from afar.
A tail brushed lightly through the dry grass.
Every step carried patience, power, and stealth.
Somewhere close, golden eyes watched the jungle breathe.



MATCH-UP

WHO EATS WHAT?

Match each animal with its favourite food!

Animals

1. Sloth Bear



2. Spotted Deer



3. Tiger



4. Peacock



5. Wild Dog



Foods

A. Insects & Seeds

B. Deer & Boar

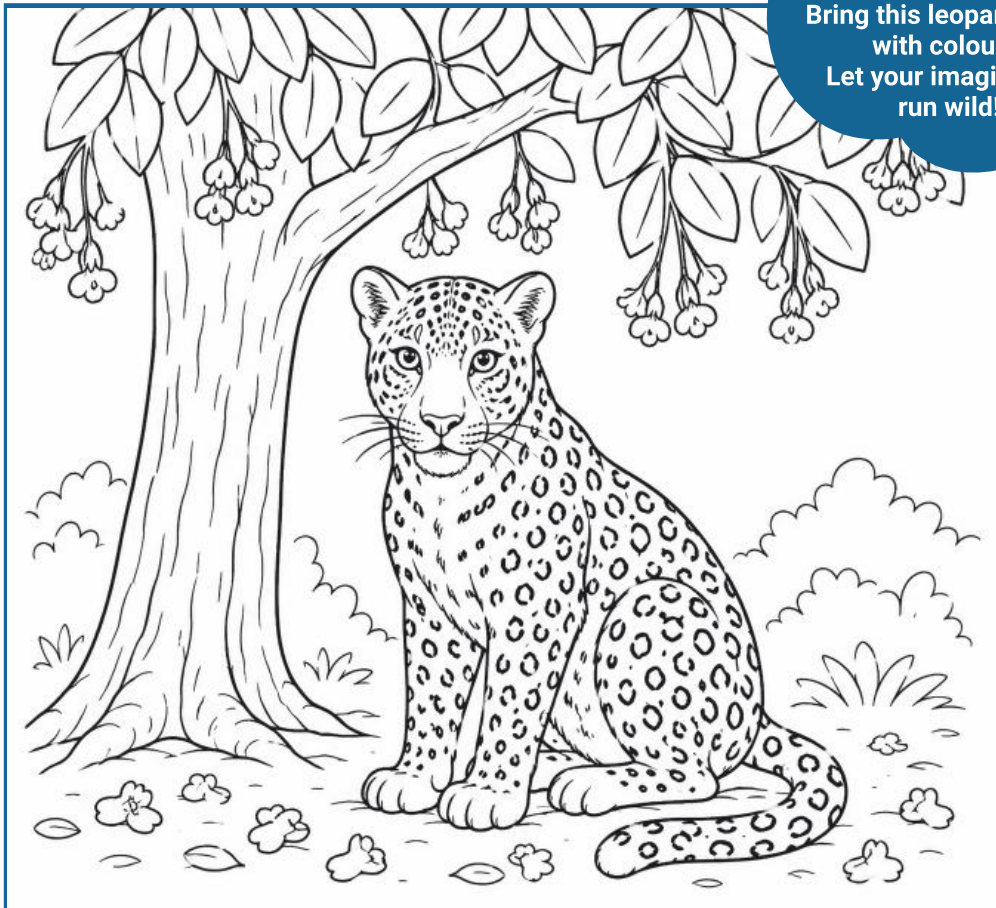
C. Termites & Honey

D. Tender Grass

E. Sambar Deer

Check page no. 15 for correct answers.

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



WILD WISDOM

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

GUESS WHO?

Wild Dog (Dhole)



TRACK THE TRAIL



Tiger

MATCH-UP:

Animals

1. Sloth Bear

2. Spotted Deer

3. Tiger

4. Peacock

5. Wild Dog

Food

A. Insects & Seeds

B. Deer & Boar

C. Termites & Honey

D. Tender Grass

E. Sambar Deer

The Next Generation!

One queen. Four cubs. Endless hope. Every healthy litter born in the wild is a reminder that conservation works when forests, water, and wildlife are protected together.

Deep Kathikar

The Silent Sentinel!

Along the silent forest trail, a lone black bear walks confidently through the emerald wilderness, unaware of the world beyond the trees. The winding path, damp earth, and tangled branches create a raw portrait of nature's untamed beauty. Every step speaks of survival, freedom, and the quiet rhythm that rules the wild landscape at dusk.

Anand Shah