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The Official Newsletter of Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve

Tadoba

DIARIES

Jeswin Kingsly

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Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve
Conservation Foundation, Chandrapur

A RAY OF HOPE

Dear Reader

On behalf of the entire Tadoba family, I wish you a very happy New Year 2025. I am particularly pleased to share that Tadoba Diaries has completed four meaningful years of publication, and this edition marks our 50th issue. This journey would not have been possible without your continued encouragement and engagement. I extend my sincere gratitude to our content contributors, tourists, frontline staff, photographers, and well-wishers who have helped us present accurate information, compelling narratives, and striking visuals, carefully curated from a rich pool of professional and amateur submissions. We assure you that we will continue to enhance the quality and relevance of this publication in the year ahead.

The year gone by has been significant for conservation. Two young tigresses were successfully translocated to the Sahyadri Tiger Reserve, marking the revival of tiger presence there and reinforcing translocation as a vital conservation tool for strengthening genetic diversity. We also witnessed the historic chital translocation from Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve to Navegaon-Nagzira Tiger Reserve. The operation, conducted using newly constructed African-style Boma enclosures at Jamni Meadows and specialised transport vehicles with CCTV monitoring, reflects our

growing capacity for science-led wildlife management.

Ecologically, 2025 was encouraging. The reserve received adequate monsoon rainfall, contributing to habitat health. Notably, it was also one of our best years for fire protection, with hardly any major forest fire incidents—a result of vigilant planning and coordinated field efforts.

However, challenges remain. The greater TATR landscape, particularly Chandrapur district, has witnessed a serious rise in human-wildlife conflict, with over 40 human lives lost in 2025, the majority due to tiger attacks. In response, the Forest Department has intensified awareness programmes, strengthened village-level Primary Response Teams, improved rapid response mechanisms, and proactively identified and managed problem animals. Tadoba continues to lead in deploying Artificial Intelligence-based early warning systems to alert communities about the presence of large carnivores near human habitations.

As we move forward with a ray of hope, we seek your continued trust and support in the new year. Together, we can confront challenges responsibly and safeguard our forests and wildlife for generations to come.

Dr. Prabhu Nath Shukla (IFS)

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

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HEARTTHROB OF AGARZARI

For the past three years, I have been tracking the tigress Sundari, not as a casual observer, but with patience, persistence, and deep respect towards her boundaries. This journey reached a defining moment when she brought her three tiny cubs into the tourism zone for the very first time, a magical moment that unfolded in my presence. Moments like these are never accidental; they are earned through countless hours of observation, calculation, and silent waiting, I would say.

From the day I learned that Sundari had given birth, every safari thereafter was dedicated exclusively to documenting her movements. Tracking a big cat is not about luck; it is about reading signs, understanding their territory, anticipating behaviour, and accepting long stretches of uncertainty. Wildlife, especially big cats, does not offer easy rewards. It is a constant game of hide-and-seek, where the forest always holds the upper hand.

A resident of the Chora jungle, Sundari travelled far beyond her core area in search of a mate and has since established her supremacy in the Agarzari buffer zone. Despite her naturally shy temperament, she has asserted her dominance with quiet confidence and today stands as the undisputed heartthrob of Agarzari. Observing this transition, from a discreet tigress to a powerful, territorial mother, has been a privilege.

As she gradually grows bolder, Sundari may begin bringing her cubs out more often in the coming days. Each appearance will remain a reminder that the true wildlife experiences are built on time, patience, and respect- not shortcuts. In the world of big cats, nothing is guaranteed, and that is precisely what makes every genuine sighting priceless.

Praveen Pai
Naturalist

Tropical Forest Restoration to Save Jaguars

In Mexico's Pacific region, conservation groups are restoring and connecting nearly 1,900 acres of critical jaguar habitat to counter fragmentation caused by agriculture and development. With more than 100 camera traps detecting jaguars, including cubs, this landscape-scale effort combines community involvement in monitoring, livestock management, and coexistence planning to secure forested corridors for this iconic big cat.



Interpol Seizes 30,000 Live Animals in Global Crackdown

Interpol's recent international operation targeting illegal wildlife and forestry crime resulted in the seizure of nearly 30,000 live animals across multiple continents. The coordinated action against trafficking

networks highlights the scale of wildlife crime and the need for multi-country collaboration to protect threatened species and forest ecosystems.

Report Links Forests Directly to Human Health

A new WWF report has documented compelling scientific evidence that healthy forests are essential to human health, showing how forest loss increases disease risk, undermines water and air quality, and weakens climate resilience. The findings argue that conserving and restoring forests is indispensable for protecting biological and human health alike.

Rare Flat-Headed Cat Rediscovered in Thailand

After nearly three decades without a confirmed sighting, the extremely rare flat-headed cat - once thought possibly extinct in Thailand - has been rediscovered in the forested wetlands of the Princess Sirindhorn Wildlife Sanctuary. Camera traps captured images of multiple individuals, including a female with a cub, confirming ongoing breeding in this secretive wild cat population. Conservationists say the find underscores the importance of protecting wetland ecosystems.



Ready for a jungle challenge?

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

- Which large predator apart from the tiger is commonly found in Tadoba?
 - Wolf
 - Leopard
 - Lion
 - Cheetah
- What is a group of wild dogs called?
 - Pack
 - Flock
 - Herd
 - Colony
- Which Tadoba bird nests in tree holes and has a large yellow beak?
 - Parakeet
 - Kingfisher
 - Hornbill
 - Owl
- Why do spotted deer often stay close to langurs?
 - They like fruits
 - Langurs warn them of danger
 - They play together
 - They share sleeping places
- Which is the most common bamboo species in Tadoba?
 - Dendrocalamus strictus
 - Bambusa vulgaris
 - Bamboo palm
 - Giant bamboo

SECRETS OF THE FOREST

May 2025. I was on a safari at Zhari Gate, hoping to catch my first glimpse of a tiger in the wild. Just minutes in, I saw a line of jeeps gathered by the river. We also stopped. And there it was! A tiger resting lazily on an old wall, its paws as soft as a pillow resting on a rock. The more time we waited in the same spot, the more tigers came. Our driver said, "These tigers are sub-adults just separated from their parents." Those three sub-adults left the old wall after some time.

After a moment of roaming the forest for a needle in a haystack, we heard a deer yelping and howling in the distance, and then we saw three sub-adults carrying a male spotted deer. I took pictures of the tigers with their first-ever prize without their parents that day.

On another safari, I saw an eagle swoop down,



grab a giant monitor lizard, and stand on a branch of a dried tree. Throughout that ride, we saw no tigers, but just then, a sloth bear crossed our path. After the safari, on the way back, our taxi's light spotted a speedy leopard crossing the road. It was truly an incredible sight.

My Tadoba visit taught me that the jungle has its own secrets and surprises, and it shares them only with people who wait patiently. As I left, I felt a strange pull in my heart, like the forest was whispering, "Come back someday." And I know I will!

Nirvan Aiyanna

Std. 5, Gems Modern Academy, Kochi, Kerala

MAGICAL TADOB

Over an hour into the ride through the Khutwanda gate, and we caught a glimpse of T158, a tigress lovingly called Babli, walking gracefully through the tall grass. The sighting was distant, yet thrilling—a perfect teaser that left us yearning for more.

The afternoon safari at Moharli gate turned out to be nothing short of magical. Within the first hour, we spotted two one-year-old cubs playing in a waterbody, completely carefree and utterly adorable. Moments later, their mother T163, popularly known as Collarwali emerged from across the bushes, walking in with royal confidence, completely oblivious to our presence. One more cub trailed behind her as she joined the little ones. What followed felt straight out of a National Geographic film—three cubs playing as their mighty mother kept a watchful eye. Watching them, I couldn't help but marvel at how the maternal instinct remains the same across all species. Collarwali, fierce



yet nurturing, was every bit the devoted mother.

On our way back, we were blessed with yet another sighting—the tigress C3, walking with purpose, responding to the call of a sloth bear. It was the perfect finale to an already unforgettable day.

Tadoba's magic isn't just in its tigers. It's in the deep green forests, the rich vegetation, herbs that cover the forest floor, the flavours of local food, and the vibrant traditional art. It has so much to offer, and we couldn't have been prouder to showcase our homeland to our dearest friends.

Vaidehi Parimal

Hyderabad

THE LESSER KNOWN KHAKI #10



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)

They don't have space @home... Have space for them in your heart...
ADOPT an ANIMAL... and not just the charismatic species but also those **LESS KNOWN!**

THE MOST HUNTED ANIMAL

The Indian Pangolin is the world's most trafficked mammal, yet many people have never heard of it! Locally known as 'Khavlya Manjar', its name Pangolin comes from a word meaning 'one who rolls up.' This is because when a pangolin feels scared, it curls into a tight, armoured ball that even a tiger cannot bite through. They are the only mammals covered in hard scales made of keratin- the same stuff as your fingernails.

These scaly anteaters are like nature's vacuum cleaners. A single pangolin can eat over 70 million ants and termites a year using a sticky tongue that is longer than its own body! By digging for food, they help air reach the soil and



Bikram Bhattacharya

keep forests healthy. Regrettably, they are hunted because some people mistakenly believe their scales are medicinal. These shy, nocturnal creatures are vital to our environment, so the next time you hear about a pangolin, remember- they aren't just unique; they are Earth's essential pest controllers!

A LIFER IN TADOBA

As a safari guide, I enter the jungle far more often than most people. Over the years, I have been fortunate to sight tigers regularly and even the elusive black leopard on multiple occasions. Yet, despite these extraordinary encounters, one recent sighting thrilled me in a way no large carnivore ever has.

I often tell my guests that a safari is not only about chasing tigers or leopards. The true joy of the forest lies in slowing down and absorbing its many layers. A small insect crawling on the forest floor or a butterfly fluttering past can bring immense happiness if one learns to observe carefully. While I share this philosophy with visitors, I also practise it myself with sincerity and discipline.

On a pleasant October evening last year, I was guiding a group of guests from Mumbai. To my delight, they were genuinely interested in understanding the forest rather than rushing from one alarm call to another. This allowed me to introduce them to Tadoba's rich birdlife and colourful butterflies. They listened keenly and enjoyed every moment. During our conversation, I mentioned that Tadoba is home to the Blue Mormon, the state butterfly of Maharashtra. Ironically, despite years of guiding and countless safaris, I had never managed to sight one.

As we moved along a dusty forest road, I noticed a scat lying in the middle. On examining it closely, I identified it as that of a wild dog, probably two or three days old. While explaining how such signs help us read animal movement, a large butterfly suddenly flew past



AI Generated

us. Its size caught my attention immediately. For a brief moment, I wondered- could this be the Blue Mormon? I was unsure and knew that only patience would give us the answer. Without hesitation, my guests agreed to wait quietly.

A few minutes later, our patience was rewarded. The butterfly returned and settled on the scat. There was no doubt anymore- it was the Blue Mormon. For me, it was a lifer, a sighting I had waited years for. The excitement I felt at that moment is difficult to describe.

Butterflies are often seen feeding on the scat of carnivores. They do this to obtain essential minerals, particularly sodium and other nitrogen-rich compounds that are not easily available in flower nectar. Carnivore feces are relatively rich in these minerals. This behaviour is known as mud-puddling or scat-feeding and is commonly observed in male butterflies. The minerals they collect are later transferred to females during mating, improving egg production and egg quality.

That day, both my guests and I left the forest deeply satisfied. It reminded us that the jungle always rewards those who wait, watch, and respect its smallest wonders as much as its greatest icons.

Pramod Konkate

Guide, Pangdi 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 SHIMMERING DIVER

By Tadoba's lakes I flash and gleam,
In hues of blue that brightly beam.
I sit so still, then swoop with grace,
To catch my meal in a perfect chase.

My tiny frame, my beak so neat,
No fish can hide from my quick feat.
A flash of colour- blink, I'm gone!
Who am I by the lakeside drawn?

TRACK THE TRAIL

THE TINY BUILDER'S TRAIL

At first glance, it looked like fine cracks in the earth- but closer inspection showed hundreds of tiny footprints!

Little paths crisscrossed around small mounds of mud- the bustling city of tireless workers.

Bits of leaves and sand grains moved as if by magic, powered by teamwork and rhythm.

A whole colony leaving trails of purpose and strength.



MATCH-UP

Match each animal with its home in the forest!

Forest Friend

1. Langur



2. Drongo



3. Termite



4. Vulture



5. Honeybee



Role

A. Clean up carcasses

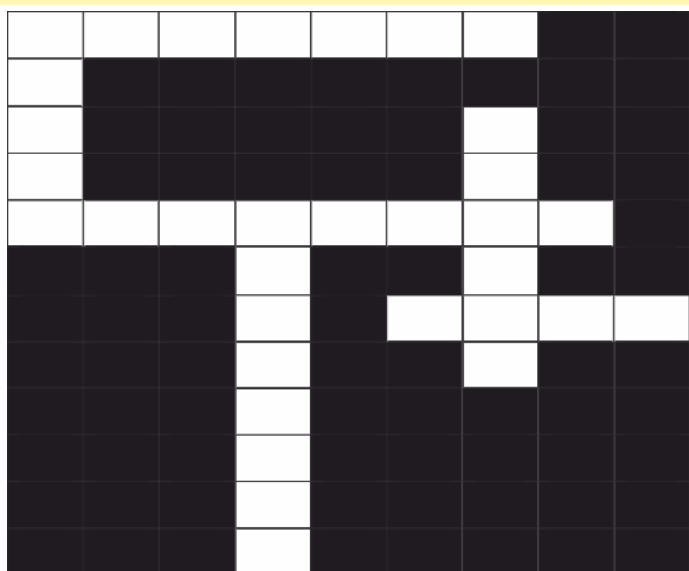
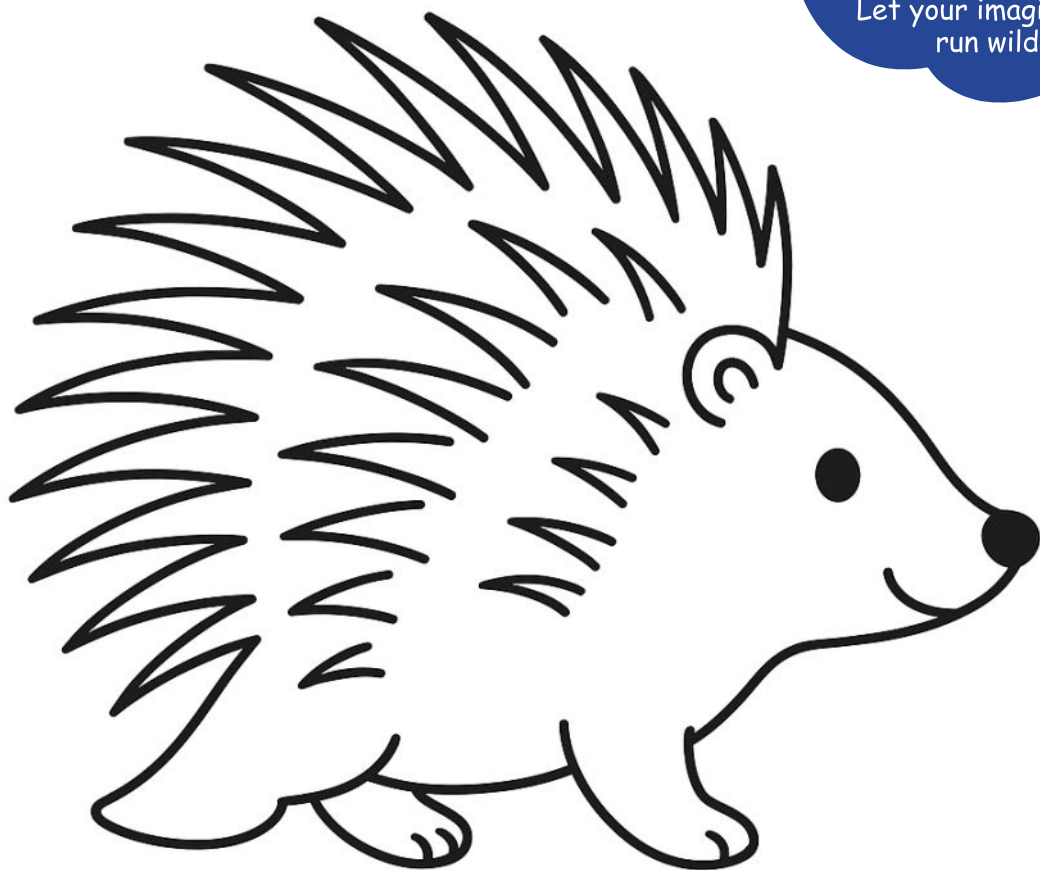
B. Mocks predators' calls

C. Warns others of danger

D. Helps in pollination

E. Recycle dead wood

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



ACROSS:

1. A brightly coloured, tiny bird that loves honey and nectar.
2. The largest land mammal in Indian forests.
3. This hairy mammal loves termites and Mahua fruits.

DOWN:

1. This reptile slides silently and helps control rodents.
2. This common bird has a green body and a red beak.
3. This animal's loud whooping calls echo through Tadoba.

Check page no. 14 for correct answer.

TATR Shines at TOFTigers Awards



At the 8th TOFTigers Wildlife Tourism Awards, Ms. Shahnaz Baig (Moharli Core Gate) won the award for Best Wildlife Guide (West India). Mr. Shahin Sheikh (Pagdandi Resort) was named Best Naturalist. Svasara and Vriksh Resorts received awards for outstanding hospitality. The event was held at Bikaner House, New Delhi.

WWF-India Provides Elephant Collars



WWF-India supplied two radio collars to the Maharashtra Forest Department for monitoring wild elephants entering TATR's buffer zone. Mr Sanket Bhale handed over the collars and technical support to Chief Wildlife Warden Mr Shrinivas Reddy. WWF officials and retired DFO Mr. Girish Vashishtha were present.

Zero Waste: School Waste Segregation



Under the Zero Waste Tadoba initiative, Zilla Parishad School students in Kukadheti learned solid waste segregation through fun games. The team conducted an engaging session in Shioni village, TATR Buffer zone. Early education on waste segregation helps build responsible habits and supports a sustainable future.

Chala Mazha Tadobala



The 'Chala Mazha Tadobala' initiative saw 14 schools from 11 villages in the Palasgaon Buffer Range participate. A total of 370 students and 23 teachers registered, showing strong local interest in conservation and Tadoba heritage.

Tadoba Sports Tournament



TATR hosted Kabaddi, Volleyball, and Tug-of-War matches across 105 villages with 2,210 players from six forest ranges. 174 committee-level matches were held. Finals on December 17 saw Moharli win Kabaddi, Chandrapur take Volleyball and Tug-of-War titles. Villagers, Gypsy drivers, and guides actively participated.

Sachin's Tadoba Connection



Legendary cricketer Sachin Tendulkar shared on Facebook and Instagram that he keeps returning to Tadoba, feeling a deep connection he can't explain. During his recent visit to TATR, he stated that he will continue to return until he understands the place's message.

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.

November 2025



Hasin Madhukar Mohurle
Forest Guard, Range: Karwa (Core)

- Additional responsibility of beat Jhiganat-2
- Completed KRA targets, habitat development and protection work.
- Completed non-palatable plants eradication target



V. P. Bhimanwar
Forest Guard, Range: Chandrapur (Buffer)

- Patrolled 230.886 km in 26 days
- Supported subordinates in KRA data entry
- Completed KRA targets

Hon. Forest Minister Visits Tadoba



The Hon. Minister for Forests, Maharashtra State, Shri Ganesh Subhadra Ramchandra Naik, paid a goodwill visit to TATR. A 'Bahadoli Jamun' (*Syzygium*) sapling was planted at his hands in the premises of the Kolara Nature Tourism Gate. The Hon. Minister enjoyed a tiger safari. Appreciating the facilities provided to tourists, he suggested that similar complexes should be developed at other forest tourism sites across the state.


 (Ravi Sharma)

BRAHMINY WORM SNAKE

The Brahminy Worm Snake (*Ramphotyphlops braminus*) is a small, harmless, non-venomous snake commonly found in and around Tadoba. It grows to a maximum length of about 8 inches and looks a lot like a shiny earthworm. Its head is almost the same size as its body, with a rounded snout, smooth tiny scales, and very small eyes that appear like black dots. If you look carefully, you may even spot its tiny flickering tongue.

Where It Lives

This secretive snake spends most of its life underground. It is often found in loose soil, termite mounds, leaf litter, and sometimes even in gardens or near human habitations. Because it stays hidden, people rarely notice it.

What It Eats

The Brahminy Worm Snake feeds mainly on ants, ant eggs, and other very small insects. By doing so, it plays a quiet but important role in the ecosystem.

Life Cycle and Behaviour

Interestingly, no males of this species have been recorded. Females can lay fertile eggs without mating, a rare process called parthenogenesis. Gentle and non-aggressive, this tiny snake is completely harmless and prefers to stay out of sight, going about its underground life unnoticed.

Chinmay Deshpande
Naturalist, Nagpur



CLUSTER FIG

The Umbar tree (*Ficus glomerata*), also known as Gular or Cluster Fig, is a large fig tree found across India along riverbanks, forest edges, and village commons. This tree holds deep cultural and religious importance and is traditionally linked to Lord Dattatreya. Because of this sacred association, Umbar trees have often been protected, even when other trees were cut. It is also connected with fertility, prosperity, and traditional ceremonies.

What Makes It Special

One of the most fascinating features of the Umbar tree is its fruit. The figs grow in dense clusters directly from the trunk and large branches. Each fig begins as a closed structure with flowers hidden inside. Tiny fig wasps enter the fig, pollinate the flowers, and help the fruit develop. Every fig species, including Umbar, Banyan, and Peepal, has its own specific wasp partner.

Life Cycle and Relationship with Insects

Inside the fig, the wasp lays eggs and pollinates the flowers at the same time. The young wasps grow and mate, and the females leave to repeat the cycle in another fig, thereby continuing this unique partnership.

Anirudh Chaoji
Senior Naturalist, Nagpur



TAWNY COSTER BUTTERFLY

The Tawny Coster Butterfly (*Acraea terpsichore*), also known as *Acraea violae*, is a bright and easily recognisable butterfly commonly seen around Tadoba and across much of India. Its wings are orange to tawny brown with bold black spots, making it stand out as it floats gently through the air. Its slow, gliding flight makes it easy to observe, even for first-time nature watchers.

Where It Lives

This butterfly is often found in open areas such as grasslands, forest edges, gardens, roadsides, and fields. It prefers places with plenty of sunlight and flowering plants.

What It Eats

Adult Tawny Costers feed on nectar from flowers. As caterpillars, they mainly feed on passion vine plants (*Passiflora* species).

Life Cycle and Behaviour

The Tawny Coster goes through four stages: egg, caterpillar, pupa, and adult. The caterpillars are spiny and brightly coloured, which helps keep predators away. The butterfly is unpalatable due to chemicals from its host plants, and its bright colours act as a warning. Active through most of the year, it also plays an important role as a pollinator, adding both beauty and balance to the ecosystem.

Yogita N. D. Chhapekar
Biologist, Nagpur



BROWN FISH OWL

The Brown Fish Owl (*Ketupa zeylonensis*) is one of the largest owls found in India and the second largest owl recorded in Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve. This powerful bird has a strong build, broad wings, and noticeable ear tufts that give it a fierce look. Its feathers are rufous brown with dark streaks, helping it blend well with trees near water. Its large golden-yellow eyes are adapted for hunting in low light.

Where It Lives

The Brown Fish Owl is closely linked to water. It is usually found near rivers, lakes, forest streams, wetlands, and reservoirs. It may also live near village outskirts or plantations, as long as water bodies are nearby.

What It Eats

As its name suggests, this owl mainly feeds on fish. It also eats frogs, crabs, insects, reptiles, small mammals, and birds.

Life Cycle and Behaviour

Mostly active at night, the Brown Fish Owl hunts by sitting quietly near water and swooping down to catch prey with its long, strong legs. It nests in tree hollows, cliffs, or old structures. The species is listed as Least Concern, and its population is stable in Tadoba.

Rundan Katkar
Range Forest Officer, Kolsa, TATR



Powerful Prowl! Deep in the heart of the midnight forest, this stunning leopard was caught in a quiet, powerful prowling by our hidden camera trap. Every spot tells a story of survival in the wild, captured perfectly on a cold winter night.

ANSWERS

WILD WISDOM

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

GUESS WHO?

Common Blue
Kingfisher



TRACK THE TRAIL



Ant

MATCH-UP:

- | Forest Friends | Role |
|----------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Langur | A. Clean up carcasses |
| 2. Drongo | B. Mocks predators' calls |
| 3. Termite | C. Warns others of danger |
| 4. Vulture | D. Helps in pollination |
| 5. Honeybee | E. Recycle dead wood |

JUNGLE JUMBLE:

S	U	N	B	I	R	D		
N								
A						M		
K						O		
E	L	E	P	H	A	N	T	
			A			K		
			R		B	E	A	R
			A			Y		
			K					
			E					
			E					
			T					

THE WINTER CLASSROOM OF TADOBA

Winters are often considered the best time to visit the Tadoba region. You may not be assured of a tiger sighting, something that summer often promises, but the forest reveals itself in far richer ways. The landscape is alive, layered and complete, and learning to track a tiger without actually seeing it becomes the most rewarding experience of all.

In the buffer areas of Tadoba, dense vegetation and tall, thick grass dominate the winter months. At times, both you and the tiger move through the same space without being aware of each other. Visibility is so limited that a tiger may suddenly emerge from the thickest cover, surprising not just the tourists, but itself as well. These moments are rare, intense and unforgettable.

Unlike the core areas, the buffers have a comparatively lower prey base. Alarm calls are often absent, removing the usual guides that signal a tiger's presence. Even if deer or peacocks are nearby, the density of yellow-green grass and the tiger's perfect camouflage make detection almost impossible. The forest demands a different skill set here. You stop. You wait. You listen.

Sometimes, all that reveals a tiger is sound—the faint crushing of grass or dry leaves under a mighty paw. When a fully grown tiger, weighing over 250 kilograms, moves silently through cover, the forest breathes differently.

A tiger possesses exceptional eyesight and can see clearly through grass and bushes. When it suddenly encounters a gypsy head-on, the expression of surprise on the tiger's face mirrors the joy and disbelief on the faces of those fortunate enough to witness the moment.

Sanjay Deshpande
Wildlife Enthusiast
Sanjeevani Developers, Pune

**MY FOREST
MY MOOD
MY HOME**



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



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PERFECT DUO!

Nature's perfect duo, blending with the wild Indian Scope Owls shot at Bellara gate of TATR.

LEISURE TIME!

A giant lizard basking on a rock.