

The official Newsletter of Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve



Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve Conservation Foundation, Chandrapur

Re 20%

Forest Protection During Festive Season

Dear Reader,

ussehra, Diwali, Dhanteras, Bhaiduj.... it's the festival season in India, celebrated in various ways in different cultures across the country. The long holidays this season also present an opportunity for people to take holidays - and increasingly, many visit national parks and sanctuaries to make the best use of their time and put their photography equipment to good use. As you may be aware, Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve is one of the most popular parks for the sighting of tigers and other wildlife. So, the reserve saw a huge rush of wildlife enthusiasts from across India, and the world, to celebrate Diwali, the festival of lights. Diwali is perhaps India's most significant festival and is traditionally celebrated with family and friends. It is a matter of pride for us that tourists come with their families and friends to mark this festival in the lap of nature, in Tadoba.

I would like our visitors to consider what goes to protect Tadoba and its tigers, especially during Diwali and other festivals for it has been seen, not just in Tadoba, but across our forests and Protected Areas that forest and wildlife crime including poaching tend to increase during festivals. Our wildlife, therefore, is all the more vulnerable during this season and we simply cannot afford to let our guard down or allow even the slightest slack in vigilance.

What this means is that our frontline forest staff must work even harder than usual and step-up wildlife monitoring and protection.

India's forests, especially Protected Areas, have a network of forest check posts and protection huts that are manned 24x7, 365 days a year by frontline forest staff, which includes range officers, foresters, guards, and also temporary workers usually drawn from local communities. They work against all odds- through scorching summers, wet monsoons, and bitter winters, countering various threats to wildlife.

Tadoba has more than 60 strategically placed protection camps spread across the tiger reserve. Each camp is manned by three to five community members and a forest guard, who are entrusted with the responsibility to protect more than 1,000 hectares of forest. They must monitor and protect the wildlife within their area. These frontline workers are our eyes and ears in the forest who first alert us to any crime or suspicious incidents in their jurisdiction. Simply put, they are our first line of defence in wildlife protection. Their contribution to conserving wildlife is largely unsung and cannot be undermined. The protection camps are usually in remote areas; and in this work is no let-up, a responsibility that cannot be given a break whatever be the season and occasion.

While the job is tough all year round, it is particularly poignant this time of the year. When most of us revel in celebrations with our loved ones, they must maintain their lonely vigil to keep our wildlife, and forests safe. Staying in remote places away from their families they work through festivals, just as the soldiers protecting our borders do to enable us peace and joyful celebrations.

My humble request is that when you visit the land of the tiger, spare a thought also for those who keep our forests and wildlife safe, safeguarding our natural heritage for generations to come. We, at Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve, take great pride in the dedication of our frontline staff, and we hope that you share our sentiments. Your gratitude would go a long way to motivate our staff to protect Tadoba's diverse wildlife.

Dr. Jitendra Ramgaokar

Field Director, TATR and Executive Director, TATR Conservation Foundation



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ASTOUNDING SUCCESS ### TADOBA

was extremely fortunate to trek and roam in Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve (TATR) forests in Chandrapur, Maharashtra, along with two of my true forest lover friends (Shiv Pal Singh & Maneesh Mittal) in search of the experience it offers. As per folklore of the local Gond tribe, Taru, their respected village headman came across a mighty tiger at a lake near his village. A fierce battle ensued. While the outcome of the battle is debated, the man became a legend, a shrine was built in his honour on the lakeside and Tadoba got its name from his name. While Tadoba got its name from Taru, Andhari refers to the Andhari river, which flows through the forests. The forests surrounding the Tadoba shrine have one of the highest tiger densities and the tigers here bow their heads in the shrine for the protection given by Taru's people.

In 1931, the shooting of all animals was prohibited. The area got further protection with 45 Sq km surrounding Tadoba Lake getting the status of a sanctuary in 1935. It was further strengthened in 1955 with Tadoba getting the status as India's first national park along with Kanha. The Andhari Wildlife Sanctuary was established and added to the national park in 1986. The Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve (TATR), now spans over 1,727 sq km including a buffer of 1,104 sq km.

While tigers are charismatic, the forest as a whole, including all creatures great and small, makes this tiger reserve tick. Its habitat covers the southern tropical dry

deciduous jungle, its grasslands and water bodies, bamboo groves, and a keystone plant in this landscape that affords food, safe harbour, and ambush cover for various species. A stunning variety of insect and bird life can be found here. Prey species such as wild boars, sambar, and chital, as well as predators such as jungle cats and wild dogs, leopards, mugger crocodiles, and mighty tigers, are found in abundance. This Tiger Reserve is now regarded as one of the world's most sought-after tiger destinations. The area is home to a large stable population of over 80 tigers in the reserve and 200 in the larger landscape.

The astounding success of Tadoba is attributed to the effective institutional delivery of a coherent ecosystem that synchronizes the efforts of all the stakeholders, foot soldiers, managers of the Reserve, scientists, field biologists, corridor managers, NGOs, etc. We were happy to meet the passionate field biologist Prajakta Hushangabadkar who is doing impressive work in the Tadoba landscape, especially in the field of prey preference of tigers through DNA analysis of its scat.

Salute to all the unsung heroes who have toiled day and night in the landscape and continue to remain committed to meeting the challenges ahead.

Ashish Tiwari

Secretary.

Department of Environment, Forest & Climate Change, Government of Uttar Pradesh



BALOO - The Bear

Baloo the bear; happily marches into the Jungle; Consciously sniffing earth and feasting over the termite mounds;

Dusty and untidy, he may look strange, Balancing on his hind legs, he never loses the gage...

Shaggy, dusty, and with unkempt hair, the misanthropic Baloo taught young Mowgli the laws of the jungle. Walt Disney's Jungle Book film, which featured the popular song 'The Bare Necessities' sung by Baloo, made the stories even more popular.

India is home to four of the eight species of bears found worldwide, making it one of the only two countries with such diversity, the other being China. The sloth bear, the Asiatic black bear, the Himalayan brown bear, and the Malayan sun bear are found in India. These bears can be found in 26 of India's 28 states. But a few years back, the sloth bear was also used in the roadside entertainment trade where the nomadic community of Kalandars was involved in capturing young wild cubs, separating them from their mothers and training them to become street dancers. Various organizations fought for their freedom. This year India also celebrated its first Sloth Bear Day.

The sloth bear has made its home in the forests of Tadoba. It tends to wander alone, usually at dawn and dusk, grunting and snorting around in search of insects and fresh fruits. It predominantly feeds on termites and ants, by employing a well-evolved method to dig them out. It uses its long, curved claws for penetrating nest mounds. It blows away excess dirt and then noisily sucks out the insects through a gap in its front teeth. To do so, it closes its nostrils and uses its lips like a vacuum nozzle. Sloth bears are also known to scale trees to knock down honeycombs. Sloth bears are engineers in central highlands as they play a major role in seed dispersal and help to sustain floral diversity.

Prajakta Hushangabadkar
 Wildlife Biologist, TATR

BAMBOO - The Provider

Bamboo, the fastest-growing grass, is the provider for the people where it grows. It plays a very important role in the lives of the local communities. Tadoba is blessed with a large green cover of Bamboo. The variety Dendrocalamus strictus, is one of the important reasons for Tadoba's wildlife success story. Herbivores like the Indian gaur voraciously feed on the bamboo, and the tigers love gaurs! However, after its life of around 40 years the bamboo is flowering and dying in many areas of Tadoba, including the Core zone. Bamboo poses a huge problem during the summer season in its dried state. Burning bamboo explodes, often throwing splinters beyond the fire lines. Thus, the flowering of bamboo poses a great challenge for Tadoba management.

Similarly, every 48 to 50 years, a dangerous cyclic phenomenon, referred by the locals as Mautam plagues the North Eastern states of Mizoram, Arunachal, Manipur, and Nagaland. Mautam or 'bamboo death' begins with the gregarious flowering of the bamboo species of Melocanna baccifera, followed by large-scale seeding, and eventual death of the plant.

The innocuous seeding of bamboo results in the mass multiplication of rats, as a response to the abundant food supply of bamboo seeds. The trouble really begins when these rats, after exhausting the bamboo seed, turn to crops and granaries, causing devastating famines. This disaster in the past had affected the region's political history. As if lessons from 1862, 1911 famines were not learned, the then Government dismissed the oncoming 1958-59 Mautam as superstition. History repeated and many lives were lost. As a reaction, a militant group called the Mizo National Front (MNF) was formed which fought a bitter separatist struggle till 1986. However, almost two years before the next Mautam in 2006, the administration and the Army made arrangements to prevent any repeat of the disaster.

Anirudh Chaoji
 Senior Naturalist

Hide-and-Seek

was on a safari with my group and was photographing a tiger mother with her three sub-adults. I clicked a few good images. As my heart always longs for more, we set off toward another end of the park, to track an elusive male tiger who was popularly known as Dadhiyal.

On the way, a lorry working on a road construction worker was traveling ahead of us. The lorry driver called us towards him and told us "A leopard is sitting there with a sloth bear kill." Wow! All of us were extremely excited at the thought of watching a leopard enjoying its meal. We immediately rushed to the spot. But alas! As soon as we reached there, the leopard ran away! It allowed us to catch

only a glimpse of its tail. A big disappointment indeedl Photographing any big cat with its kill is a dream for any photographer or wildlife lover and we sadly missed it.

We decided to take a second chance. Hence in the evening round, we headed to the same spot. This time we were lucky to spot this huge male leopard resting on the soft grass by the side of the road. His tummy was visibly full after feasting on the kill of a wild boar. Thankfully this time he allowed me to click his photographs to my satisfaction.

The hide-and-seek with this beautiful leopard added an unforgettable experience to my Tadoba memories!

 Amal George Tourist, Banglore

SAYE

Leopard



Wild Dogs

have been working as a safari guide since 1995 and have witnessed a number of extraordinary incidents in the forests of TATR. However, this incident is among the top ones in my once-in-a-lifetime experiences.

I was on a morning safari with my guests in October 2018. We entered the Navegaon gate. The forest was calm. There were no alarm calls. After half an hour, as our Gypsy was slowly moving on a dusty road, I saw something moving on the road at a distance. From its small size, I thought it would be a mongoose. However, when we reached a little closer, I was surprised and happy at the same time. It was a tiny leopard cub! Hardly one month old! It was playing happily in the middle of the road. What a beautiful sight it was! My guests were very excited and glad to see the cub. Eventually, we realized that the cub's mother- a female leopard was sitting in the grass nearby and was watching her cub. As soon as she noticed our presence, she took the cub with her and disappeared into the bushes.

We moved ahead. We had hardly crossed a ten-meter

distance and we saw two wild dogs feasting on a kill. They had killed a sub-adult blue bull. While we were enjoying the sighting, the female leopard again came on the road with her cub and started marching toward us. I realized that this was a tense but very interesting moment. A mother leopard with her young cub at one end of the road and two ferocious wild dogs with a kill on the other! As the leopard saw the wild dogs, the first thing she did instinctively was to ensure the safety of her cub. She picked up the cub in her mouth, quickly climbed up a nearby tree, put the cub on a strong branch at a safe height, and climbed down immediately. Now she was ready to take on the wild dogs. As she ran towards the wild dogs, they left the kill and retreated for a moment. But attacked back aggressively from two sides the very next moment. The mother leopard was young and strong. She fought with vigour. After a 15-20 minute fight successfully chased the wild dogs away and snatched the kill.

> Ramrao Nehare Guide, Navegaon Gate











TADOBA TIGER... TRANQUILLITY...

am sure there is hardly anybody who does not feel any connection with nature. The word 'Nature' originally derived from the Latin 'Natura' referring to all animals, birds, plants, and trees not made by humans. As we human beings are simply a by-product of nature, our role is to appreciate this beauty without creating any disturbances while exploring it which we call 'trails' or 'Safaris'.

Recently we had an amazing and thrilling experience in the jungle safari at Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve. I had the most enjoyable company of my colleagues and friends in the television-film industry- Dhairyasheel Gholap of the Ajay Devgan starrer 'Tanhaji' and Omprakash Shinde, known for his work on the TV serial 'KhulataKali Khulena'. Our trip was planned by our dear friend Dr. Kapil Joshi who has experience in nature tourism.

I am really happy that we decided to take time out from our busy shooting schedules and visited Tadoba. Since July itself we started dreaming of Tadoba and our excitement increased as our travel dates arrived. After a long gap of time and bad memories of the pandemic, we were on our way to soak into the beauty and tranquillity of nature. When we reached Kolara, we received a warm welcome from Mr. Vinayak and Mrs. Anjali Joshi at the beautifully crafted Gondwana Jungle Stay.

The next four days were filled with excitement and happiness. We had a total of five safaris in different zones of TATR and each zone presented us with different shades of nature. It was our first visit to Tadoba and every moment of our safari was extremely exciting. All three of us were

mesmerized to see the natural beauty of Tadoba including the wildlife from such a close distance! We saw many animals and birds for the first time in our lives and we knew nothing about them. But we convery our thanks to our very knowledgeable and passionate safari guides and drivers who explained everything patiently. Also, we were lucky to have Kapil with us, who showed us every tiny creature that came across and explained its importance. Be it a Giant Wood Spider or a Eurasian Thick-knee, we were in awe of each and every creation of nature. And the icing on the cake was the sighting of tigress Bijali and tiger Rudra!

All of us are in the film industry and visit a lot of scenic locations for shoots. Yet we hardly get to explore those locations due to tight schedules. But at Tadoba, we could explore the forest and get close to nature at our leisure. Ask Omprakash what he liked the most and he says, "Breath-taking scenery, beautiful terrains and silent assassin yet magnificent creature of the forest...Tiger!" Dhairyasheel explains how he enjoyed every moment at Tadoba, "It Felt like [being] on the sets of Lord of the Rings! Especially Alizanza and Belara zones were simply unforgettable. I would insist all my actor friends take a break from their busy and hectic schedules and visit Tadoba at least once."

I don't know about others, but the three of us are definitely coming back to Tadoba very soon! Till then we have these memories to cherish!

> - Sharvari Lohakare Actress



he ecological importance of grasses is immense because they control soil erosion, and maintain and conserve soil moisture and soil microclimate. Grasses are also important in maintaining herbivore and carnivore habitats, and bird nesting habitats. Already blessed with a rich variety of grasses, the Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve has now developed a seed plot and added a new success story to its glory. This plot will not act as a nursery to produce native palatable grass varieties for the reserve.

There was a staff colony inside the Tadoba range. The colony spread across 1.36-hectare land was shifted out of the core area. The fenced land is adjacent to the Tadoba lake and comes under the territory of the most famous tigress of Tadoba- T-12, popularly known as Maya. In January 2021, Nandkishor Kale, Deputy Director, TATR (Core) came forward with the idea of developing a Grasses Seed Plot on this land. Dr. Jitendra Ramgaokar, Field Director, TATR approved and supported the idea. Mahesh Khore, ACF, TATR (Core), and a team under Satish Shende, RFO, Tadoba Range took on the responsibility to implement the project. My job was to guide the frontline staff.

The following species of grasses were selected for this grasses seed plot:

- 1. Ran Bajra (Setaria pumillo)
- 2. Ghonyad Gawat (Themeda quadrivalvis)
- 3. Kusali Gawat (Heteropogon contortus)
- 4. Ber Gawat (Ischamemum Indicum)
- 5. Vaidya Gawat (Bothriochloa pertusa)
- 6. Durva Gawat (Cynodon dactylon)
- 7. Moshan Grass (Iselima laxum)

- 8. Lahan Marvel (Dicanthium annulatum)
- 9. Mothi Marvel (Dicanthium caricosum)
- 10. Dongari Grass (Chrysopogon aciculatus)
- & 12. Wild Leguminous plants- which are good nitrogen fixators and increase fodder value and nitrogen content of the soft.

These specific verities were selected because they are soft grasses (Dicanthuim. Cynodon. Setaria. Bothriochloa. Ischemum, Iselima) and course grasses (Themeda, Heteropohon). Soft grasses are more palatable and have a good utility index.

Fortunately, the land was already fenced. Hence we did not have to worry about the protection of the seeds and saplings from herbivorous animals. As a next step, we added black and red soil with silt, loam, and clay to the existing soil. A total of 300 tractor trollies of these materials were used for soil filling. We prepared a layout of 12 plots on paper first and then did the actual demarcation at the site.

Then started the real fieldwork. The seeds of the grasses were collected from the forest from November 2021 to February 2022. Seeds broadcasting was done between 25th May to 10th June 2022. RFO Shende and his team continuously observed and monitored the germination of the seeds. Finally, the consistent efforts of the staff fructified in the form of a good germplasm plot in the Protected Area and good ecological restoration of the 1.36-hectare land. Lam sure this will help the dispersal of grasses seeds and the natural enrichment of grassland in the Tadoba lake area in the coming years.

- Prof. Gajanan Muratkar

Grasses Expert Head, Dept. of Environmental Science, Arts, Science & Commerce College, Chikhaldara, Amravati









THE BEST RIDE! Sloth bears carry their cubs on their back for the first seven to nine months of the cubs' lives mainly to protect them from potential predators including tigers. For cubs, what could be a better ride? Two little cubs seen here are enjoying such an incredible ride on their mother's back during the dark hours of the night. The image is captured on a camera trap installed by the forest department.

GO KAYAKING

o you think wildlife safari is the only activity at TATR that takes you closer to nature? Well, there are a lot of other activities that come under our Eco-Tourism initiative. Most importantly, all of them are managed by the local communities!

One of the most enjoyable activities at Tadoba is Kayak Boating. You decide the pace, course, and thrill! Come to Moharli or Kolara to watch birds, enjoy sun-rise, and sunsets, or just have a fun kayak boat ride. There are a total of 15 kayaking boats at these two locations. Village youths who are trained to manage the activity welcome you and take care of your safety while you enjoy kayaking.



Location: Junona Gate (Maoharli Zone) and Gondmohali-Belara Gate (Kolara Zone)

Ride Duration: One hour | On Spot Booking Contact: Kayaking Manager- 7057700632

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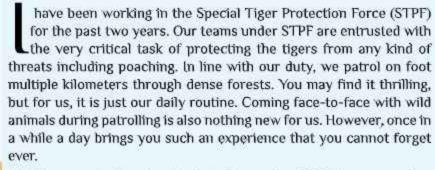
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FACING THE TIGER



This happened a few days back, in September 2022. I was on a foot patrol along with other seven STPF guards. We were walking through Ramdegi area of TATR buffer. The forest was cool and cahn. There were no alarm calls. Of course, that did not guarantee of the absence of a big cat or any other predators. We were alert and walking carefully through the forest. After a while, we reached a nullah. We were walking on the road parallel to the nullah. What we did not realize was that a tiger was sitting in the nullah! As soon as we reached the nullah, we heard a roar and the tiger suddenly emerged out of the nullah! All of us were stunned to see a full-grown male tiger in front of us! It was T-126, popularly known as Chhota Matka. It was clear that he had not liked our presence there. But now we had no choice, but to face him.

The tiger came out of the nullah and started running toward us. All of us froze on spot seeing a tiger charging at us! Yet we did not lose our courage and quickly assembled ourselves together. While our minds were numbed with the sudden charge, we all knew that sticking together was our only chance of survival. The trick worked! The tiger stopped charging at us and started staring at us angrily. He was hardly ten feet away from us.

Looking at him, I remembered an unfortunate incident that happened in Palasgoan last year. My STPF team was trying to drive away a tigress that has come too close to the village. The tigress attacked one of my colleagues in STPF Gajalwar and injured him severely. Remembering that incident, I was just hoping that Chhota Matka doesn't cross the line.

The tiger kept on staring at us for four to five minutes. Those were the most difficult moments to pass. We did not make any sound. We just stood there silently. Finally, the tiger calmed down. He turned and disappeared into the bushes. We waited for a few seconds, changed our direction, and left the spot silently.

Arvind Bore
 Forest Guard, STPF, TATR

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.



THE ACHIEVERS (SEPT 2022)

he forest guards are the frontline soldiers of the forest department. They patrol on foot through the dense forest and protect the wildlife. Their patrolling performance is monitored and measured through MSTrlPES- a Patrol-based Wildlife Monitoring GIS Database system. It is a stand-alone application designed to assist wildlife protection, monitoring, and management

at the tiger reserve level. The monthly foot patrolling target set for all the forest guards in TATR Core and Buffer is a minimum of 125 km. Many of them not only achieve the target but also cross it with their dedication and hard work. Let's celebrate the achievement of these performers.

We are happy to announce the top two achievers in September 2022.



Forest Guard - G. M. Hingankar
Beat - Khadasangi-2
Round - Khadasangi
Range - Khadasangi
Division - TATR Buffer
Duration - 22 days
Target - 125 km
Actual Patrolling - 250.127 km

Forest Guard - P. R. Kosurkar
Beat - Bhanuskhindi
Round - Sonegaon
Range - Tadoba Core
Division - TATR Core
Duration - 15 days
Target - 125 km
Actual Patrolling - 190.88 km



WILDLIFE WEEK CELEBRATION

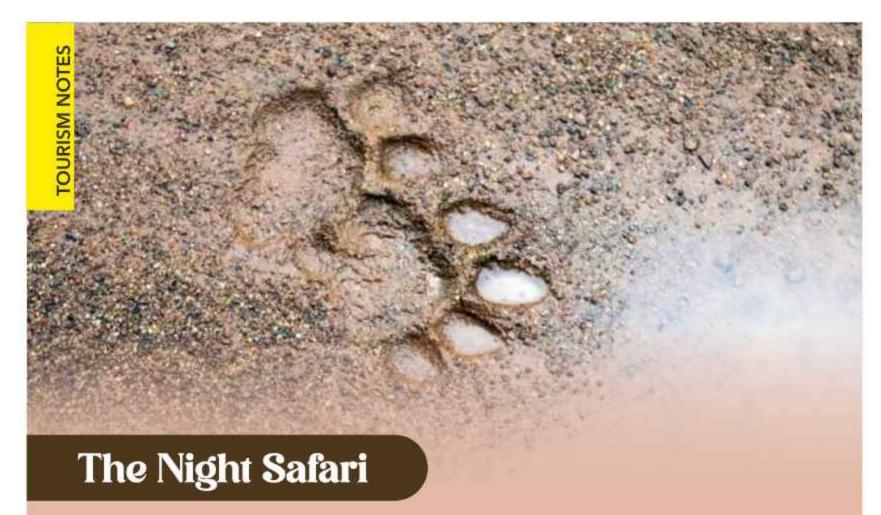
ational Wildlife Week was celebrated at TATR from the 2nd to the 8th of October. The officers and staff of the forest department, various NGOs, members of the communities and tourism industry, and students participated in various activities organized during the week to spread awareness about wildlife conservation.

Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) organized a meeting of local governing members at Agarzari. Sarpanchs, Police Patils, Presidents of Eco-Development Committees (EDCs), and members of Gram Panchayats from Khutavanda, Viloda, Ghosari, Kinhala, Kokewada, Sonegaon. Katwal, and Arjuni were present in this meeting. They were briefed about various issues in tiger conservation and various livelihood options in the villages in the buffer zone.

BNHS also organized a special exhibition on the Collection



of Forest Produce in select schools in the buffer zone of TATR. It was inaugurated by Dr. Jitendra Ramgokar, Field Director, TATR. The exhibition included a total of 21 standees highlighting the types of forest produce in Chandrapur district, the uses and methods of collection, its economics, its effects on wildlife, and human-wildlife conflict. Assistant Director Sanjay Karkare, Jagdish Dharne, and Mahesh Moharle explained all the points to the students. Within Wildlife Week, this exhibition reached more than 3,000 students and 140 teachers. Very soon the same exhibition will be taken to fifty schools in the Chandrapur district.



he words 'night safari' instantly aroused excitement. I told my wife we should definitely book it. However, it was not until our driver took us from our campsite to the gate that I realized that 'night safari' meant we would be sitting in the dark, in an open-top gypsy, hoping several species of extremely dangerous beasts came by. Enough to say, I was nervous.

We arrived at the gate a little early, I think just so we could appreciate how dark and noisy the jungle became at night. My nerves were increasing. So with some trepidation, we climbed into the gypsy and entered the buffer zone. It may be my imagination, but it certainly seemed that this was the point the thunder and lightning began. Now Gypsies make quite a bit of noise, but when the thunder clapped, we could not hear; and when the lightning flashed, it would throw monstrous shadows all over the jungle track. We were all a little nervous.

But suddenly we turned a corner, and the sky was alight with stars. I stared up, forgetting where I was, and just admired them. I am from a city so I have rarely seen a sky not polluted by unnatural light, but even I thought these stars looked a little odd. Then one moved. And another. And I could see all of them were moving and flashing. The tree and the air above us all were filled with fireflies. It was astoundingly beautiful!

At that point, I began to ignore my fear and appreciate the beauty of this place and the luck I had to experience it. Though there was thunder and lightning, I noticed it was not over us and we could not feel a drop of rain. Not only this, but ahead we could see that the moon was full and had an incredible shade of red.

For the next four hours, I was in heaven as we chased tiger prints and the warning calls of deer around the buffer zone. At one point missing the young male by mere minutes; seeing its paw prints atop the tyre marks on the track we had only just driven down.

The best parts of the experience were the moments when our driver and guide would stop and turn off the engine and lights. Not for a moment did I feel any fear, just fascination with the environment as our guide would quietly whisper what made each noise.

In the end, the paw prints were the closest we got to spot any of the majestic inhabitants of Tadoba that night. But I can happily say it is still one of the most incredible experiences of my life.

Thank you Tadoba! You are beautiful!!

- Terry Buss Tourist UK



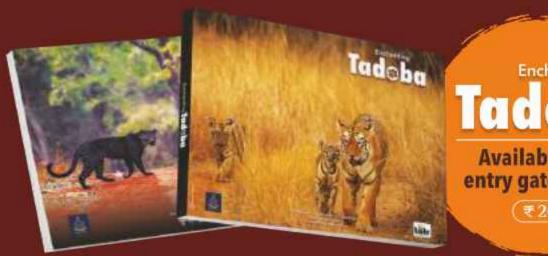
AERIAL VIEWI

A Monitor Lizard taking an aerial view of the jungle from the branch of a tree. Photographed at Agarzhari Zone of TATR.



Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve its very own

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