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Tadoba

DIARIES

The official Newsletter of Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve

SWETHAKUMAR RANGARAO BOBBILI

Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve Conservation Foundation, Chandrapur

A New Season Begins....



Dear Reader,

After a wetter than normal rainy season, the closed zones of the park will be opened for tourism from 1st October. The rains have taken its toll on the roads of the park which is going to make your trip rather bumpy on a few stretches. The TATR Management will make all efforts to restore the roads that were, and in some cases, are still inundated. The higher rainfall is reflected in the overflowing water bodies and the streams that are still in full flow.

Monsoons is also a season of renewal and regeneration. One thing we are especially happy to share with our guests is that we are witnessing good regeneration of bamboo in areas that have seen large-scale flowering and death of bamboo after flowering. We hope that the new numerous seedlings of bamboo are established in due course of time and restore the habitat to its full glory.

This has also been a period of reflection, of looking back and evaluating the management practices of the park, especially in the last 4 years. A quadrennial evaluation exercise for the effectiveness of management of tiger reserves in the country was recently conducted for Tadoba Andhari Tiger reserve during 18-20 September 2022 by a team of experts nominated by the National Tiger Conservation Authority. Four rounds of the exercise have been completed since 2006. The Management Effective Evaluation or MEE exercise as it is called has attained a great deal of credibility both within the government and non-government agencies, due to its objective criteria and evidence-based robust methodology.

The methodology not only highlights the strengths and weaknesses of the management but also identifies key issues and actionable points which is then expedited at every level of the government structure for achieving the objectives of the tiger reserve management in a holistic manner. The evaluation team appreciated the new initiatives of the park management in terms of relocation of villages to create inviolate areas, restoration of degraded areas, development of grasslands and efforts made for scientific wildlife monitoring. The unique eco-tourism model based on partnership with communities practised in the buffer also comes in for praise from the evaluators.

At the same time, it was pointed out that we need to move towards improving interpretation facilities, taking measures for climate adaptability, and conducting an economic analysis of ecosystem services and the carbon sequestration potential of the forest. We would like to share that we are on course to take strong and effective measures to work in the highlighted areas and improve Tadoba Tiger Reserve Management to global standards of effective long-term conservation of typical bio-diversity of the area.

Dr. Jitendra Ramgaokar

Field Director, TATR
and Executive Director, TATR Conservation Foundation

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MAHARASHTRA LEADS THE NATION

in providing support to victims of man animal conflict

It is a well-known fact that the communities living in and around our national parks and sanctuaries bear the brunt of the abundance of wildlife. They suffer losses to their standing crops which is often their main source of livelihood. Livestock depredation by tigers and leopards affects their supplementary source of income. Sometimes, in unfortunate and tragic incidences community members become victims of attack by wildlife and lose their precious life. The Government of Maharashtra has a well-established process to compensate the loss to property. While loss of life cannot be compensated, the Maharashtra government provides for the prompt provision of ex-gratia to the families of victims or those injured by wildlife attacks. The swiftness and quantum of this assistance helps in building goodwill for the wildlife and the wildlife management authorities. In a major decision by the state cabinet, under the leadership of Hon Shri. Sudhir Mungantiwar, Minister, Forests, Cultural Affairs and Fisheries, Government of Maharashtra, the quantum of assistance has been increased to the highest in the country. Now these rates stand as follows:

- A. In case of death of a person in wildlife attack: ₹ 20,00,000/-
- B. In cases of permanent disability: ₹ 5,00,000/-
- C. In case of serious injury: ₹ 1,25,000/-
- D. Minor injury: ₹ 20,000/-

In addition to this, the rates for compensation for loss of livestock has also been increased up to 75% of the market price or ₹ 70,000/-

Protecting The Protectors

Forest officers especially frontline workers are responsible for patrolling the wilderness and protect the forests and wildlife in all seasons from various natural and man-made threats. Sometimes, they even lay down their life for the cause of conservation of our natural heritage. In recognition of the difficulties and challenges of working in forests, the Government of Maharashtra, has declared that they shall be treated on par with the other forces such as police who protect the country from security threats. The state government recently announced that the family of the forest staff who lay down their life/get killed in the line of duty shall be paid ex-gratia of ₹ 25 lakhs and their kin shall be provided employment on compassionate grounds on priority. In case, there is no heir to be provided employment, his/her family shall be paid the salary of the staff till retirement assuming him/her to be in service. In case any forest staff gets injured and becomes permanently disabled, he shall be paid ex-gratia of up to ₹ 3,60,000/- and all the expenses of the treatment shall be borne by the government.



- Hon. Shri. Sudhir Mungantiwar
Minister, Forests, Cultural Affairs and Fisheries
Government of Maharashtra



Ghost of Forest

As Sun sets in the sky; he slips into the deep forest,
Dogs howl and monkeys climb the thin branch;
Trees shade few leaves; as he perches high,
Spotty the leopard drifts off; while dreaming about the safe land.

Have you ever seen a leopard in its natural empire? The leopard is one of the most beautiful, efficient, and clever predators. Undoubtedly, it is the most immaculate of all cats, a powerful, intelligent, daring animal with great adaptability to its surroundings. A sizable population of leopards in Sanjay Gandhi National Park, which is in the middle of densely populated Mumbai city, is the best example of how adaptive leopards are.

The leopards are light-coloured with distinctive dark spots. While taking a closer look at those spots, one will notice that they are not actually spots, but clusters of black, yellow, and tan markings called 'rosettes' - resembling the shape of a rose. These patterns are unique to each leopard, like a human fingerprint. This pattern combined with the yellow, brown, and tan colours helps the leopard blend into the surrounding habitat, making it the perfect coat to stalk prey without getting detected.

Then there is the melanistic leopard as called by scientists and researchers, sometimes referred to as a black panther by the general public. Its skin may look like a soothing coat that twinkles in the sunrays, but if you look closely in clear light, the typical leopard rosette patterns can be seen.

I remember sighting a female leopard behind the tree. As soon she was assured about her safety with our non-disturbing behaviour, she came out of the bushes, sat on the road, cleaned her paw, and calmly laid her tail on the road. Then she stretched her legs and laid down on the ground not very far from us! I couldn't believe that this was happening in Tadoba, where sightings of leopards are not as common as tigers.

- Prajakta Hushangabadkar
Wildlife Biologist, TATR



Bitter Cure

During childhood, a question that troubled me was, how did the dhobi not confuse our clothes with other people's? This was the first time I heard of the Marking Nut tree, also called the Dhobi Nut tree. In Maharashtra, it is known as the Bibba tree. The locals usually avoid this tree as the grey bark exudes an irritant secretion on incising which causes a severe rash.

The liquid that oozes out from the Bibba seed does not dissolve in water and hence has been used by dhobis, to mark clothes. One caution however is that before applying it must be mixed with lime water as a fixator.

In its botanical name, *Semecarpus anacardium*, the Greek word anacardium means the black nut located outside the reddish-orange fruit. If you have seen a cashew fruit, you will recall the unique arrangement of the seed. Like cashew, Bibba fruit too is edible. The black nut housing the edible seed produces a severe allergic reaction if eaten or even if its juice comes in contact with our skin.

The fruit itself has been highly valued in Ayurveda, being effective in a wide range of medical problems like skin diseases, piles, leukoderma, cough, asthma, etc. However, it can be used only after extensive purification to control its inbuilt irritant property. In Ayurveda, there is a concept of Vishopayogiya, which prescribes the use of Visha dravya (poisonous substance) like that in Bibba, in the treatment of ailments, where all other drugs have failed. Strong chemicals like varnish too are extracted from Bibba.

- Anirudh Chaoji
Senior Naturalist

A NIGHT AT LOG HUT

It is always a pleasure to explore Tadoba during day time, but as soon as the light fades, the twinkling stars have something unknown and thrilling to show us. The forest speaks much more at night than in sunup. I experienced it when my elder daughter Astha and I decided to do a 'Log Hut Stay' on 7th June 2022.

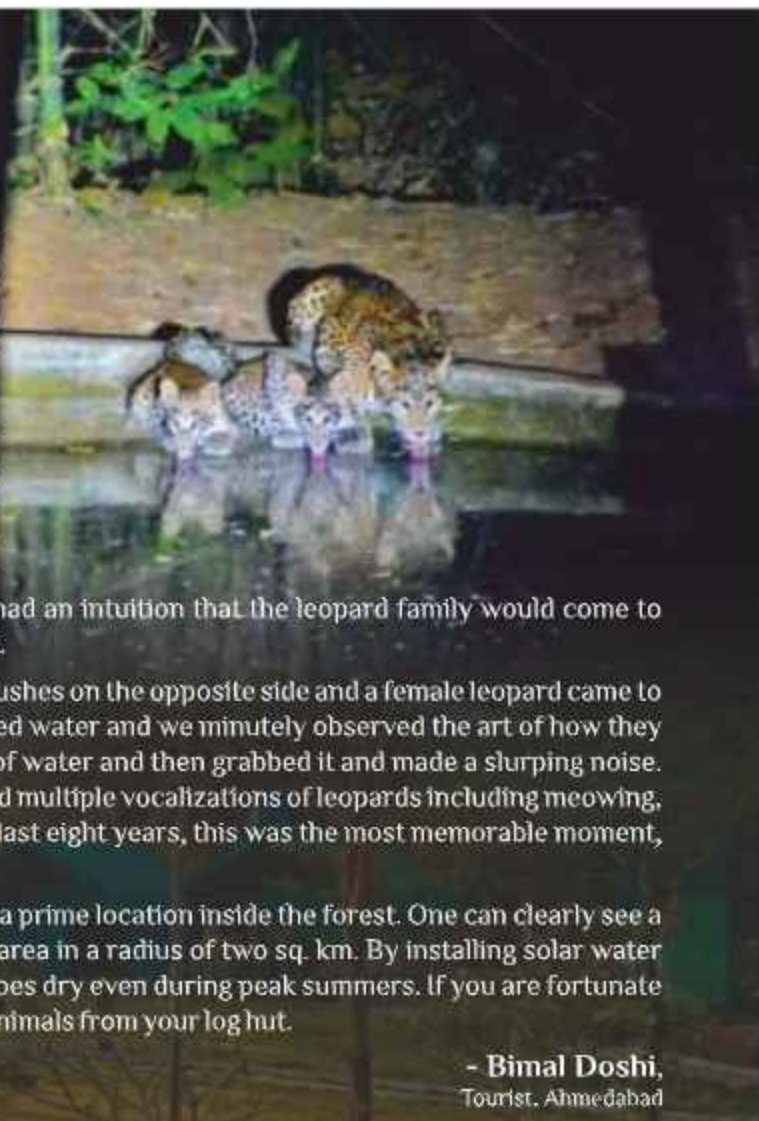
My wife Heena and my younger daughter Swara were on their evening safari in Junona gate whereas Astha and I were at the Log Hut. All four of us met at the log hut stay point at 6 pm. My wife told me that there were alarm calls of barking deer near a waterhole. They could get a glimpse of a leopardess and her two tiny cubs.

However, they had to leave as their safari time came to an end. I had an intuition that the leopard family would come to quench its thirst. All we had to do was to sit and wait for the moment.

At around 7.30 pm, a barking deer belled and disappeared into the bushes on the opposite side and a female leopard came to the waterhole. Gradually her two cubs joined her. The family swirled water and we minutely observed the art of how they consumed water. The leopardess used its tongue to pull a column of water and then grabbed it and made a slurping noise. We enjoyed observing them for twenty minutes! That night we heard multiple vocalizations of leopards including meowing, grunting, and hissing. After more than 100+ safaris in TATR in the last eight years, this was the most memorable moment, which I enjoyed the most!

I would highly recommend the log hut stay at TATR. It is situated at a prime location inside the forest. One can clearly see a waterhole from the hut and there is no other water source in that area in a radius of two sq. km. By installing solar water pumps, TATR management has ensured that the waterhole never goes dry even during peak summers. If you are fortunate enough, you can witness the rare beauty of jungles, and nocturnal animals from your log hut.

- Bimal Doshi,
Tourist, Ahmedabad



RAREST OF THE RARE

I had the best sighting of life this June, just before the core forest closed for tourists during the monsoon. I had six guests with me for the morning safari. They had enjoyed tiger sightings in all previous four safaris and were looking forward to making the best out of this fifth safari. During the safari, we got to know that the Queen of Pandhapauni T- 12, popularly known as Maya was sitting in the water so we turned our vehicle toward Pandhapauni. On the way, one of my guests noticed some movement inside the bushes.

He told me, "Madam, I think something is walking there." I asked the driver to reverse the vehicle and checked what it was. I almost shouted with joy, "It's a Pangolin!" It was scratching the soil with its nail looking for insects. Though it was far away, we could see it through the bushes. I explained to my guests how rare it was and they were extremely happy to sight it, though they could not get pictures.

Now the big question was- should we go for the confirmed sighting of Maya or take a remote chance for the Pangolin? I told my guests that it could be their luckiest day if they get to click the Pangolin in broad daylight. Thankfully they agreed to wait, while all other vehicles went towards Pandhapauni. We kept on reversing our vehicle as Pangolin moved on, hoping it would come out of the bushes. An hour passed by. Another hour too did not bring us any luck. Finally, after waiting for two and half hours, the Pangolin obliged us! It came out on the road. It was only five feet away from us! My guests were so excited and happy that after a while they stopped taking photographs and simply observed the rare beauty. I was on cloud nine! This was the first time I saw a Pangolin during the day, that too so closely and for almost ten minutes!

I must thank my guests for keeping faith in me and agreeing to wait patiently for such a long time. On our way back, I told them about Tadoba Diaries, helped them buy a copy, and suggested sharing a photograph with the Editorial Board. They did it and our Pangolin starred on the cover page of the August Issue!

- Shahanaz Baig
Guide, Moharli Gate



BILGRAM BHATTACHARJEE



ROLE OF COMMUNITIES IN CONSERVATION

India's first inter-state tiger relocation project, which took place in Satkosia Tiger Reserve in Orissa, ran into trouble within weeks of initiation. The relocation of the tigers from Kanha & Bandhavgarh was followed by severe protests and violence from the villagers living in the buffer area of Satkosia Tiger Reserve. Forest department officials were attacked and their offices were burnt down as the villagers feared the big cats would endanger their livelihoods, lives, and livestock. Within months of the translocation, Mahavir (the tigress from Kanha in her prime age) was found dead. A field inspection report by the NTCA stated that Mahavir's death was due to poisoning. Soon, Sundari (the second tigress from Bandhavgarh) allegedly attacked a villager and the administration failed to negotiate with the agitated people. The tigress was captured & brought back to Madhya Pradesh. Subsequently, this project was suspended by NTCA.

According to my understanding of the ground realities, the major reason which contributed to the failure of the project was the lack of communication and trust-building between the forest department and the villagers before the relocation. These are the people who are expected to live with the tigers in their backyard. Without their consent, it is immature to launch and almost impossible to enforce tiger conservation in a country like India.

Panna, on the other hand, is now world-renowned for the successful reintroduction of tigers. As a part of the reintroduction plan, the Madhya Pradesh Forest Department had actively engaged with the local communities and negotiated with the Pardhi community members (erstwhile hunters) to refrain from any poaching activities, and to support the Forest Department in its endeavour which would be beneficial for the people of

Panna too. This implementation of this project had a key synergiser that was key to its success - the slogan "Jan Samarthan se Bagh Samrakshan" which meant 'protecting the Tigers with the support of the people.' The ingenuity of the then Field Director, Shri. Rangaiah Srinivas Murthy, invoked the support of the local people as they joined hands with the Forest Department to make the reintroduction a successful mission. Today, with 75+ tigers in Panna, not only have the forests been protected, but locals have also benefited from the vast number of jobs created due to tourism and other associated industries.

There are many such examples across our country that showcase the role of communities as important stakeholders in conservation. They are the ones who bear the brunt of sharing space with the tiger either through the loss of a loved one or crop-raiding by herbivores or losing their cattle to a tiger or a leopard as they continue living in the buffer areas of a Tiger reserve. Depending on the level of engagement of local communities in the process of





wildlife conservation, they can either be termed as protectors of a forest or a threat. Thus, engaging communities in conservation is not an option and should be treated as the first step toward any management plan for a habitat or a species.

Last Wilderness Foundation has joined hands with Madhya Pradesh Forest Department to work with local communities to promote human-wildlife co-existence around the Tiger Reserves. Initiatives like Walk with the Pardhis in Panna, Baiga Jewellery in Kanha, Tribal dance & Village tourism in Bandhavgarh have been carefully curated not only as an Experiential Tourism Activity for tourists to interact and listen to stories from the indigenous people but also to channelize the traditional knowledge & skills of the locals to provide sustainable alternate livelihoods. Some communities are deprived of basic facilities of quality education and medical health.

Providing these facilities to the local people will not only improve their living conditions but will also keep them away from the forests as they can now look for jobs and run small businesses.

During my recent trip to Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve in Maharashtra, I visited quite a few villages that were already engaged in sustainable livelihoods options such as bamboo handicrafts, nature guides, home-stays, agarbatti making (incense sticks), etc. If each of us could take up at least one local activity during every trip, it would contribute to the local economy and in turn, would help in protecting the forests. So the next time you are in a Tiger Reserve, ask your tour operator or guide for a local activity that allows you to meet the indigenous people of that landscape and listen to some interesting experiences from them.

- Vidya Venkatesh

Director, Last Wilderness Foundation





King on a Stroll! You may not believe it, but this beautiful image is captured by a camera trap installed in TATR. Sometimes all the elements in nature conspire to create a beautiful image like the one above, in which a tiger is seen enjoying his walk on a misty morning.

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.



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SUDHENDRA SONAWANE



ROSHAN KATKAR

MEETING A GENTLE MAN

After clearing the exam and completing the training in 2016-17, my first posting as Forest Guard was in the Tadoba range of TATR. A young girl who had absolutely no connection with the forest was to now work in a tiger reserve! I was so afraid that I cried on day one of my duty. Gradually, I got used to life in the forest. In fact, I was in love with the forest, the wildlife, and especially the tiger. While on duty, I have come face to face with a tiger many times. However, two occasions were so scary that I will never forget those encounters.

It was in the summer of 2019 and I was assigned the task of tourism control. A male tiger T-126, popularly known as Chhota Matka was sitting in a lake. Tourist vehicles were lined up on the road and tourists were enjoying the sighting. As a part of my duty, I was checking the tourist vehicles, camera fees receipts, etc. Suddenly, Matka got up from the water and started walking toward me. Before he could reach me, I quickly got into the gypsy I was checking. The tiger came and stood exactly at the spot where I was standing. From hardly one and a half to two feet distance he was staring at me. That was the first time I had an eye to eye contact with a tiger! My heart froze! He could have clawed at me without even moving from his place. The gypsy driver showed a presence of mind and moved the vehicle forward. The tiger followed us. Now he was at the back of the vehicle. He looked for me under the vehicle. When he could not find me, he went back and sat in the water. I was so shocked that I had no courage to get out of

the gypsy. The same tourist gypsy took me to my vehicle. That day when I got back home, I did not talk to anyone. I had my dinner silently and went to bed.

Incidentally, my second memorable encounter happened with the same tiger. I was travelling through the jungle on a scooter. My assistant was driving the scooter. We did not notice that Chhota Matka was sitting at the side of the road. Stunned by our unexpected arrival, he got up and started running toward us. My assistant panicked and he put an urgent break. The scooter slipped and both of us fell down! It is likely that this chain of sudden movements confused the tiger. He stopped and retreated a bit. We took the opportunity, picked up the scooter, and started it. However, as soon as he heard the sound of the scooter, Matka again started walking toward us. We left the scooter and climbed up a nearby Machan. The tiger stood there for some time watching us and then went into the bushes. We got down from the Machan only after ensuring that Matka had gone far enough.

Though both the above-mentioned incidents were scary, they introduced me to the 'gentle man' in the tiger. He did not attack me though it was easily possible for him both times. Because of his gentle gesture, my love and respect for tigers increased during my posting at Tadoba.

- Sheetal Kudmetha

Forest Guard, Pombhurna, Central Chanda



BIRDING MACHANS

You must have seen a variety of birds during your safaris in TATR. However, you might have missed the opportunity to observe them while looking for the big cats. No need to get disappointed! We have made a special provision for bird lovers to watch these feathered friends with leisure. Get your binoculars and camera, get on to the camouflaged machan with your bird-watching partner and enjoy the variety and beauty of Tadoba's bird life.

Location: Moharli and Sitarampeth

Fees: Rs. 1,500 including guide fees for two guests per machan

Booking : Activity Manager- 9730853324



WILDLIFE AMBASSADORS' MEET

Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) organized the Wildlife Ambassadors' meet in Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve on the 16th and 17th of September 2022. A total of 50 ambassadors and 25 teachers from 25 schools participated in the meeting. This initiative was supported by Axis Bank Foundation, Born Free Foundation- UK, and Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve.

BNHS conducts nature conservation education programs in 50 schools in the Chandrapur district. In 25 of these schools, we have appointed 50 Wildlife Ambassadors- two students per school- a boy and a girl. All these schools are surrounded by the forest and most of the villagers are dependent on the forest resources for their sustenance. The selected ambassadors will act as classroom monitors

and will be involved in spreading the message of conservation to the villages. For this, they need to learn more about the subject through reading and speaking with experts. They will then share this information with their schoolmates, family members, and the villagers.

Sanjay Karkare, Assistant Director, BNHS explained to the students the concept of the ambassador, his or her duty, and his work in the community. Sampada Karkare presented a slide show on resource collection and man-animal conflict in the Chandrapur district. A nature game was conducted by Saurabh Dande and Amey Paranjape. The camps were arranged with support from Jagdish Dharne, Charan Shende, and Mahesh Moharle of BNHS.



Leopard vs Cheetah

Did you know ?

The Asiatic Cheetah (*Acinonyx jubatus venaticus*), also known as Iranian Cheetah is a critically endangered Cheetah subspecies surviving today only in Iran. India was once home to Asiatic Cheetahs, but was declared extinct in India in 1952.



- Leopards are stocky and strong with much bigger muscles around the shoulder and neck.
- Tail much more tubular in shape.
- Have rosette-shaped spots.
- Tear marks absent in leopard's face.
- Bigger front feet than back feet due to their large head and neck, necessary for lifting carcasses.
- Have retractable claws because leopards use their claws only when necessary, such as while climbing trees, jumping on the prey or fighting.
- Hunts at speed of 60 km/hr. They need densely covered forests for using their camouflage rather than sheer speed.
- More active during the night than day.

- Cheetah is taller at the shoulder than a leopard & has a slender body.
- Tail is much more flat in shape.
- Have solid round or oval spots.
- Have black 'tear marks' that streak from the inner corner of their eyes down to their cheeks.
- Bigger back feet to allow massive acceleration for hunting.
- Have semi-retractable claws because Cheetah require rapid acceleration and they turn at high speeds.
- Hunts at speed of 114 km/hr. They need fairly open space like grasslands or savannah to get to that speed safely.
- More active during the day than night.



WHEN A KING MEETS A KING

Cricket legend Sachin Tendulkar is a wildlife enthusiast and a hard-core Tadoba lover. He is a regular visitor to Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve (TATR). He has done multiple jungle safaris in Tadoba with his family members and close friends. Sachin has always enjoyed safaris and expressed his feelings about his experience on social media.

On the occasion of Global Tiger Day this year Sachin posted a video of his tiger sightings in TATR on his Twitter handle. His Tweet read- "Watching a tiger in its natural habitat is an experience like no other. I have been to Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve many times to get a glimpse of these majestic cats. Reminded of these surreal jungle safaris on International Tiger Day."

Sachin has sighted the tiger many times. However, one sighting is very close to his heart. In February 2020, he shared his most exciting experience in Tadoba. "It was an incredible experience. In the morning we spotted a tigress and four cubs. They were playing in front of us for 45 minutes! What a majestic sight that was! These experiences are special ones. It's only possible because of the entire staff, a number of individuals who have put in a lot of hard work. It's a reflection of their commitment which makes our experiences special. I am delighted to be here and want to come back for sure. This morning I saw a tigress and four cubs playing. The next thing that I am looking forward to is the tiger's roar. So I will keep coming here."

On each of his visits to Tadoba, Sachin never forgets to appreciate the conservation efforts of the forest department and the communities. He has publically said, "Thank you so much to all the people involved, all the individuals, especially to the people who put in efforts to make my trip memorable." He is also a very responsible tourist who follows all the rules of wildlife safari, including wearing dull colours during the safari.

Those who have accompanied Sachin on safaris fondly remember him as a very enthusiastic wildlife lover. While on the safari, sometimes he stands up in the vehicle and enjoys every moment in the jungle. He is very alert and dodges the bamboo on the roadside trying to touch his head just as he used to dodge the bouncers. When there is an exciting sighting, his eyes twinkle, and his happiness reflects on his face in no time.

Sachin's sensitivities toward wildlife are not limited to tigers. He has visited many other wildlife sanctuaries like Umred Karhandla and has underlined the importance of our rich bio-diversity in one of his interviews, "We should consider ourselves very lucky. We are the only country in the world where tiger and lion both exist along with clouded and snow leopard. We have it all. We should try and make the most of it because nowhere in the world do we get it."

- Anant Sonawane
Communications Officer, TATR

SUPER CLICK

PARADISE ON EARTH! Indian gaurs on the scenic backdrop of Ambezari backwater at Tadoba. While the herd was enjoying its time in the water, a calf came out of the water body. Immediately, all the gaurs started following the calf to protect it. Because they knew that a tigress was sitting in the water only 100 meters away!



To,

Book-Post

From,
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