

# DIARIES

The official Newsletter of Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve



Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve Conservation Foundation, Chandrapur

₹ 20/-

# CATS: A new recognition for Tadoba



Dear Reader,

roject Tiger, the world's largest species conservation initiative of its kind, was launched on 1 April 1973 with nine tiger reserves. This year marks the completion of 50 successful years of its implementation, during which it has not only revived the population of wild tigers in India but has also inspired global efforts to save tigers across tigerrange countries by setting an example of best practices in conservation. A mega international event commemorating 50 years of Project Tiger will be held in Mysuru from 9-11 April 2023. Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve, a proud member of India's network of 53 tiger reserves, has been accredited with CATS-approved status (Conservation Assured Tiger Standards) on 24th March 2023, which is a testament to its commitment to effective tiger conservation. To date, 23 tiger reserves in the country have been accredited with CATSapproved status.

Conservation Assured Tiger Standards (CATS) is an accreditation tool agreed upon by the global coalition of Tiger Range Countries (TRCs) and developed by tiger and protected area experts. Launched officially in 2013, it sets minimum standards for the effective management of target species and encourages the assessment of these standards in relevant conservation areas. CATS is a set of criteria that allows tiger sites to check if their management will lead to successful tiger conservation.

Although the Management Effectiveness Evaluation exercise is carried out every four years across the tiger reserves and other protected areas of the country, Conservation Assured (CA) is a new conservation tool that sets minimum standards for the effective management of target species. CA fulfills the requirement for protected area management effectiveness in international agreements such as the Convention on Biological Diversity's (CBD) Programme of Work on Protected Areas and will help national governments and their partners in conservation to meet the CBD's Strategic Plan for Bio-diversity. The first such species-specific CA standards

are for the tiger (Panthera tigris).

India has more than doubled its wild tiger population in the last 10 years, but the globally accepted goal of doubling the number of wild tigers by 2022 will not be achieved without a significant increase in the effectiveness of tiger conservation areas across the remaining tiger range countries. Here, global standards can play a significant role in conserving any target species.

The Conservation Assured Tiger Standards (CATS) scheme provides an incentive to those responsible for tiger conservation areas in the 13 tiger range countries to improve the effectiveness of management. The standards consist of 17 minimum elements with associated standards and criteria for effective management of tiger conservation areas, including habitat management, eco-tourism, protection, and community participation. It is not a new management effectiveness system or a ranking of tiger conservation areas but rather provides a means to determine if a particular area attains the minimum standards needed to conserve tigers.

Although it is a voluntary, independent scheme for any area involved in tiger conservation, the National Tiger Conservation Authority has encouraged all tiger reserves to be part of this process of accreditation to commit themselves to global standards of conservation. This recognition is the result of the selfless work of frontline staff, communities, and management authorities, and it is sure to boost the global acceptance of the conservation practices that have evolved over the years and have led to conservation success despite the pressures and challenges of development on our forests and wildlife reserves

Dr. Jitendra Ramgaokar

Field Director, TATR and Executive Director, TATR Conservation Foundation



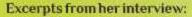
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# A Big Fan of Maya

Sadaa Sayed
 Actross

Sadaa Sayed, a popular actress in Telugu, Kannada, and Tamil film industries is a regular visitor to Tadoba. During her recent visit, she captured a fantastic image of the most popular tigress in Tadoba with her adorable cub. Tadoba Diaries spoke to her about her love for Tadoba.



O: When did you first visit Tadoba? What made you visit repeatedly?

A: My first visit to Tadoba was on April 21. It was the first time I saw T-12 the famous tigress Maya. She was with T-168 Balram in a water body. I had heard a lot of stories about how bold she was, but during that visit, I didn't have the fortune to see her up close.

After that, I have been regularly visiting Tadoba ever since Maya was seen with her little cub. Since December 22, this was my third visit, one each month. And the experience only keeps getting better every time.

Unlike other jungles, it's not just a one-off sighting of a tiger but there is always a story that unfolds around Maya making it even more captivating for me. To experience how she is striving hard to protect her only cub from all potential threats makes me emotionally connected to her.

#### Q: How many safaris you did do? What was the best moment?

A: So far I have done around twenty safaris plus one full-day safari. The best moment was seeing Maya with her cub for the first time. Last time on a full-day safari, I witnessed Maya fighting with T-103 Rudra at Hill Top, while she was on kill with her cub. Even after she escaped with the cub, I could see her stressed till she reached her safe spot, Tadoba lake. That entire drive while Maya and her cub walked non-stop, in front of our gypsy I could feel a mother's struggle to protect her only cub, and the challenges she faces with other male tigers visiting her territory regularly. It was nothing but heartwrenching.

#### Q: What did you like the most in Tadoba?

A: For me, undoubtedly it's Mayal I keep wanting to come back to Tadoba again and again for her. But of course, there are so many more iconic tigers from Tadoba that I want to see like Junabai, Chota Matka, Choti Tara, Lara, Sonam, Dadhiyal, etc. I have also sighted the rare melanistic leopard here which was so amazing and unexpected!

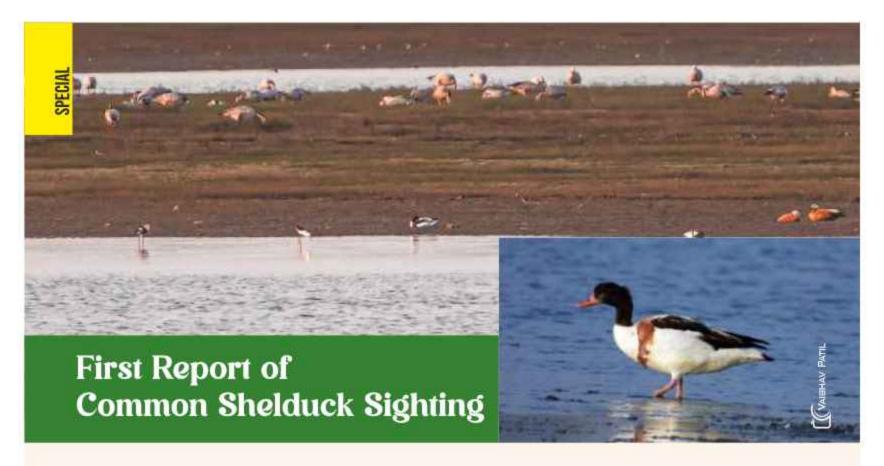
Lam yet to explore the buffers of Tadoba. Lhave heard so much about the movement of many tigers making Tadoba buffers the best in our country. Hats off to the management team for coming up with so many safari zones which in turn has helped the local community get an alternate source of livelihood in the form of eco-tourism and thereby reducing the biotic pressure on the forest helping in conservation.

Also how this jungle has some drama unfolding every other day that even when I am not in Tadoba physically, my mind and heart are still there.

Tadoba is what it is today because of the best conservation, protection, and tourism practices by the management. Right from village relocation and its rewinding and habitat restoration through grassland management, efforts to reduce plastic waste, paperless and cashless safari entries, skill development, and financial inclusion of the locals are a few important initiatives to be mentioned.

Special mention about the guides and drivers, gate staff, and other stakeholders who take sincere and honest efforts to give you a lifetime experience. I have recently started wildlife photography as a passion and I love to capture the moments in wild. Enchanting Tadoba has given me some of my best memories so far.

- Team Tadoba Dieries



he Common Shelduck (Tadorna tadorna) belongs to the Anatidae family and is one of the 42 species of ducks, geese, and swans found in India. Its breeding range includes parts of Europe, the Mediterranean, and Central Asia, while during winter, it can be found across northern Africa, Iran, the Indian subcontinent, coastal China, southwestern Korea, Japan, and Taiwan. Although it is an uncommon visitor to the northern parts of peninsular India, it is rarely seen in the southern peninsula. This note presents the first sighting of the Common Shelduck in Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve on Ist January 2023.



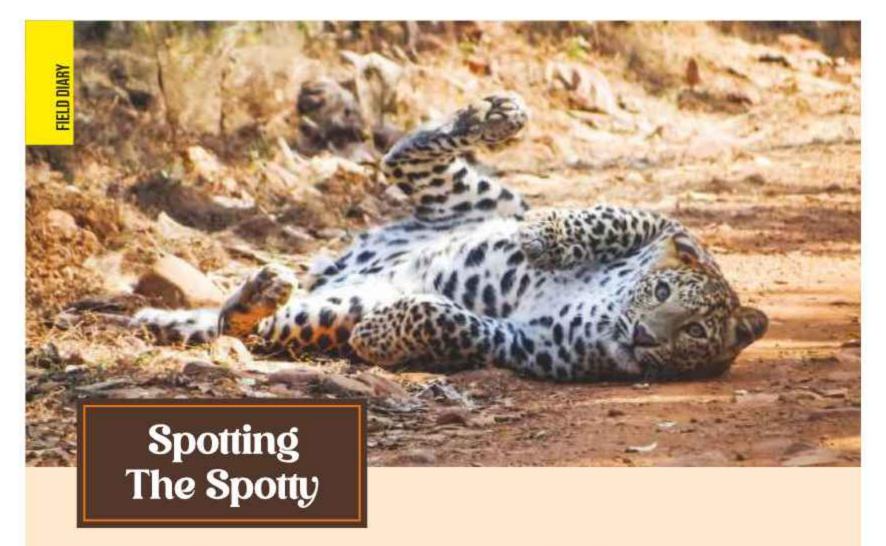
The conservation of migratory wetland birds is of significant importance, and the Chandai Dam near the Ramdegi archaeological site is considered an essential bird habitat in the Chandrapur district. During a visit to the Chandainala Dam on January 1, 2023, several species of

birds were recorded, including a Painted Stork, Bar-headed Goose, Ruddy Shelduck, Small Pratincole, Spoonbill, River Tern, and Cormorants. While observing through binoculars, the author noticed a white and black duck with a greenish-black head and neck, a white body with a chestnut band on the breast, and a black scapular stripe. These morphological characteristics matched those of the Common Shelduck. To support identification, some photographs were taken.

The Chandainala Dam, situated in the Chandrapur district, is an important bird site due to the regular visits of migratory birds. It is surrounded by diverse aquatic flora, Bamboo (dendrocalamus strictus), Ain (terminalia tomentosa), Tendu (Diospyros melanoxylon), Mahua (Madhuca longifolia), and fauna like Spotted Deer (Axis axis), Sambar (Rusa unicolor), Gaur (Bos gaurus), Leopard and Tiger.

Other sightings of the species from the southern peninsula have been recorded at Chilika Lake in Odisha, Pulicat Lake in Andhra Pradesh, and eight more sites in Maharashtra state highlighted on e-bird, including Sonvad Dam, Chandika Devi Mandir, Jalgaon, KavdiPune, Kumbhargaon Bird Sanctuary, Carambolin-Dhado Wetland complex and Narve-Tikhazan Marsh in Goa, Bhandup Pumping Station, Mumbai, Panje, Raigarh, and Airoli Creek, Mumbai. Although Maharashtra has a relatively healthy number of sightings of the species compared to the southern region of the country, a scientific wetland bird survey is required to study the presence of rare and uncommon species.

Rundan Katkar
 Range forest officer, Kolsa, TATR



or over a year, I have been communicating with all of you through the Tadoba diaries, where I endeavoured to cover most of the terrestrial species. However, this time, I decided to switch things up by sharing some of the field stories that I and my team encountered during our research work in the Tadoba forest. These stories not only provide insight into wildlife but also highlight the beauty of our natural surroundings.

One day we set out for our morning drive. The cloudless sky allowed the sun to spread its golden hues, casting a captivating abstract of rays called Komorebi, which illuminated the surrounding bamboo forest. The rustling of leaves and the cool breeze only served to heighten the romantic ambiance. I was eager to spot the jungle king after spending a month cooped up in the office.

As we approached Tadoba Lake, the stillness of the jungle was disrupted by the loud bellowing of a sambar following the calls of the langur. The chital herd swiftly disappeared, leaving two brave sambar females and their fawn behind. One of the sambars continuously stomped the ground to alert others about the king's presence, while the other consoled her fawn by licking its face, encouraging them to stay strong and calm.

As we drove on, the alarm calls of the sambar echoed around the lake, and we eagerly searched for a glimpse of the mighty jungle king. We only managed to catch a shadow disappearing into the woods. Undeterred, we continued to

the next camera, where we were treated to a stunning sight of a female leopard.

Perched atop a Dhawada tree, the leopard slowly made her way behind a crocodile bark tree. Patiently waiting, we watched as she emerged and sat in the middle of the road, basking in the aura of the sun's rays. Her long tail swayed slowly as she stared intently at us, seeming to have something to say. This was one of the best leopard sightings I had ever witnessed. She eventually fell asleep, blocking the road and making it impossible for us to move on. We stayed for a while, basking in the moment before she took a power nap and continued on her way.

It's fascinating to note that leopards and tigers coexist in the same space, competing with each other for food. Leopards are incredibly adaptable animals, marking their presence in fragmented forest patches and outside areas of villages, and even crowded city areas. Tadoba has recorded the presence of four pseudo-melanistic leopards, two adults, and two cubs. These melanistic leopards are not entirely black, as their spots are still visible. It's a genetic mutation that causes an overproduction of pigment, turning their coat black.

So, the next time you visit Tadoba and spot a black leopard, feel fortunate to have witnessed such a rare and unique event.

Prajakta Hushangabadkar
 Wildlife Biologist, TATR

# THE MAJESTIC BATTLE

t was the most exciting Sunday! We were on a morning safari in the core area on 12th March, Initially, we sighted the Queen of Pandharpauni T-12 popularly known as Maya. We were extremely happy to see her. While we thought it was only Maya in the vicinity, two more tigers were walking together in a seemingly affable way! We were surprised when we realized it. They were none other than the famous males in the area T-103 Rudra and T-168 Balram.

The fight soon started with the thunderous roaring of both the tigers which were punching fists at each other in the air standing on two legs. It was the flercest battle we have ever seen which lasted for a good half an hour. We were watching it holding our breath! In this horrifying battle, Rudra got injured with his legs and face covered in blood. Accepting the defeat, he left the place. Later in the day, we were told that Maya was seen with the winner i.e. Balram who is said to be the father of Maya's current cub.

This was a sight to behold and a memory to cherish for life! We were extremely lucky to witness this royal fight. Praying for the good health of both tigers!

The slow gait of the Sloth bear, the gigantic build of the Indian Gaur, the welcoming look of the Barking Deer, the strolling Sambhar followed by its young ones, the Rose-Ringed Parakeet peeping from its tree hole, the petite Thrush bird, the beautiful peacocks with their partners, the



lazy crocodile... all seemed so much at home in their natural habitat! The best treat to our eyes was the sight of a leopardess with two black cubs! The forest guide and driver too were astonished to see it. They informed me that there was just one black male leopard in Tadoba and these two black cub leopards had to be its offspring. I believe it was the first time that these cubs had been spotted. We felt honoured and privileged! The Tiger did not make its appearance during both of our safaris. However, we were not disappointed at all. In fact, we were completely in awe of the wildlife in Tadoba.

We had not carried a camera with us, but we captured those images in our heart, and mind for eternity!

> - Tarun Reddy IRS (Customs and Central Excise)

# THE MAGNIFICENT LEOPARD

n January 2022, Lembarked on my monthly excursion to Tadoba with my friends, eager to capture photographs of the magnificent tigers and other wild animals that reside there. On this particular trip, one of my companions had never before experienced a night safari and insisted that we embark on at least one. I was delighted to agree, as I had previously been fortunate enough to spot both a tiger and a leopard during a night safari.

As we set out on our safari, the freezing air sent shivers down our spines, and it seemed as though luck was not on our side. However, just as we were approaching the endpoint of the route, our guide caught sight of a slight movement amidst the thick bamboo bushes. To our amazement, it was a huge male leopard, nestled comfortably and taking a rest! The skill of our guide was truly remarkable - even though the leopard's eyes did not shine, he was still able to spot it.

The leopard was completely unfazed by the presence of our



vehicle, allowing us to capture some of the most incredible shots of leopards that we had ever seen. After we had enjoyed our encounter, we left the leopard to continue its rest. On our way back, however, to our immense surprise, the leopard was still there! It truly was an exclusive and unforgettable experience to encounter such a magnificent creature during a night safari in Tadoba.

> Shirish Bhakare Sales Trainer, Pune

# AN INCREDIBLE SIGHTING

s we left our lodge and embarked on our safari ride through Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve, we were excited to see what kind of wildlife would cross our path. We had heard stories of tigers, leopards, and sloth bears, but we never expected to see a Honey Badger on our first ride.

As our jeep bounced along the dirt track, our guide suddenly shouted "Honey Badger!" and we all turned our heads in disbelief. These elusive creatures are notoriously difficult to spot, even for experienced guides who have been conducting safaris for years. Yet here we were, a pair of Canadian honeymooners, lucky enough to catch a glimpse of one. The Honey Badger darted across the road in front of us, moving so quickly that we almost missed it. But just as we were about to lose sight of it, it popped its head up, giving us just enough time to snap a well-timed photograph.

We were thrilled with our luck and couldn't stop talking about it for the rest of the safari. We had only been in TATR for a few hours and already we had witnessed something incredibly rare. As we continued on our rides, we saw many



other animals, including a tiger, wild dogs, jungle cats, spotted deer, and lots of beautiful birds. But nothing could compare to the thrill of seeing the Honey Badger!

When we returned to the Svasara Jungle Lodge that evening, we excitedly shared our story with the other guests. We knew that we had been extremely lucky to see such a rare animal and we felt grateful to have had such a fantastic start to our honeymoon!

 Jordan Zelt & Alanna Cluff Tourists, Canada

# The Beauty and Brutality of Nature

n the image, two majestic Sambar deer are locked in a fierce battle, their antlers interlocked as they push and shove each other in a display of strength and determination. Their bodies are tense and their muscles ripple with energy. They push against each other with all their might. Their eyes are locked on each other, their bodies working in perfect unison to twist and turn, trying to gain an advantage.

The sunlight filtering through the trees casts dappled shadows on their bodies, adding to the

drama of the scene. Leaves and twigs are scattered around them, evidence of their violent struggle, and the earth beneath them is churned up and muddy.

Despite the intensity of the fight, there is also a sense of grace and elegance in their moves. Their movements are fluid and precise, and their antiers are like extensions of their bodies, helping them to navigate and balance.

In the background, the forest provides a serene yet dramatic backdrop to the action. Trees tower above, their branches reaching out to create a natural canopy over the deer. The ground is littered with fallen leaves and moss.

This image captures a moment in time, frozen in all its beauty and brutality. It is a reminder of the power and complexity of nature, and the incredible resilience and adaptability of the creatures that inhabit it.



 Swarnil Kokulwar Engineering Student, Chandrapur

# An Exhilarating Moment

his incident took place three years ago, but it is still fresh in my memory. I was leading a morning safari with guests, starting from Ambezari. There was grass on both sides of the road. As we drove along the road, we spotted a herd of wild boars on the right side. Anticipating their crossing, Lasked our gypsy driver to stop the vehicle, and my guests managed to capture some excellent photographs as the boars crossed the road one by one. Suddenly, we heard panicked screeching sounds from the boars on the left side of the road. It became evident that they were under attack. As some of the boars ran back to the road, a tigress, T-127, popularly known as Madhu, appeared right in front of us! I was surprised to see her so close to the road, as I had not anticipated her presence. What followed was a blur of lightning-fast movement. We were all in shock as Madhu pounced on a wild boar, grabbing it by the neck in front of our vehicle. Though the boar put up a fight, Madhu's strength pushed it to the



ground for nearly five minutes until it was completely lifeless. We could not believe that we had witnessed a tiger kill in front of our eyes! After some time, Madhu picked up her prey and walked 500 meters ahead of us before disappearing towards Devada. In my entire career as a guide, I had never witnessed a tiger kill so closely. It was undoubtedly the most exhilarating moment of my life!

> Devidas Mangam Guide, Agarzari Guide

ADOBA BEYOND TIGERS



# Fragrance of Dargah

henever I pass by a dargah or mosque, I am invariably greeted by a remarkable fragrance that simply cannot be ignored. For the longest time, I was unable to pinpoint the source of this wondrous aroma. It was only during one of my trips to the Tadoba forests, several years ago, that a local friend finally revealed the answer to me. The source, it turned out, was the resin of a jungle tree that, upon being burned, released this captivating scent. It was truly love at first sight!

This tree, known as the Luban or Salai gum tree (Boswellia serrata), is responsible for producing Indian frankincense. However, during my explorations of the Melghat Tiger Reserve. I discovered that the same resin that gives the tree its wonderful incense quality has nearly driven it to the brink of extinction. In fact, in many other forests across India, Salai trees are currently at risk of being eradicated due to the unsustainable practices used in their resin

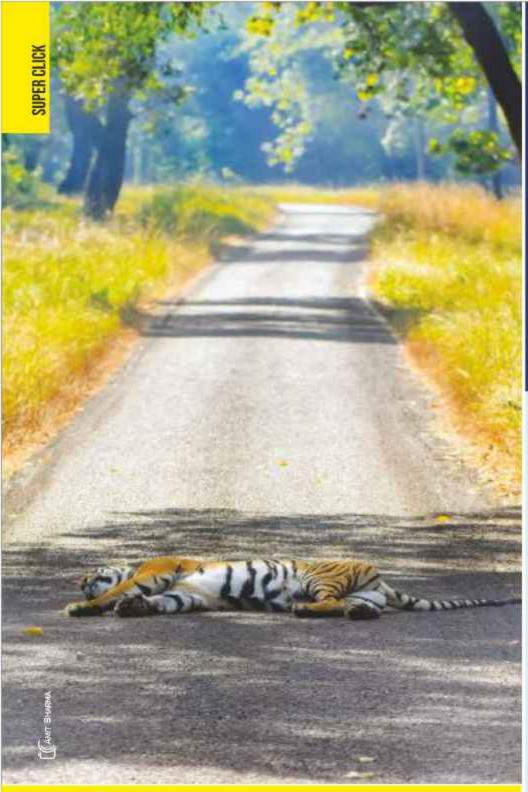
Traditionally, locals would carefully remove a thin band of bark from the tree, thereby exposing the reddish phloem and allowing the resin to slowly ooze out, which would then be collected. Unfortunately, human greed has led to rampant over-exploitation of these trees, resulting in their gradual disappearance from the wild.

Fortunately, Salai trees can still be easily identified in the wild by their thin, grey, or ashy-colored bark, which peels off in thin papery flakes, and their leaves, which are similar to those of the Neem tree. They are often found growing in rocky ridges alongside the Karu (Sterculia urens) tree, and together, they are sometimes referred to as the 'Sentinels of the forest.'

in addition to its aromatic and environmental significance, the Salai tree also possesses important medicinal properties. Ayurvedic practitioners have long used it in the treatment of asthma and arthritis, and in many cases, it is more effective than many anti-inflammatory drugs.

So, the next time you find yourself exploring the beauty of Tadoba, don't hesitate to ask your guide to help you seek out these incredible trees, even though there are not too many of them remaining.

> Anirudh Chaoji Senior Naturalist



#### ROYAL SIESTAL

A magnificent tigress Roma slumbers in the shade, blocking a road in the Januarbodi area. The regal feline exudes the "I own this jungle" attitude while the empty stretch of the road only adds to the serenity of the scene, ensuring that the Queen's nap remains undisturbed. The stunning composition captures the essence of the royal siesta.

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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.





ON THE RAMPI A serpent eagle gracefully unfurls its majestic wings in front of the camera trap, reminiscent of a model showcasing an exclusive costume on the runway.

### **THE ACHIEVERS - February 2023**

lease join us in celebrating the achievements of the best-performing forest guards at TATR. These frontline soldiers of the forest department have done the maximum foot patrolling in their respective divisions. We are happy to announce the top two achievers in February 2023

Forest Guard - Shri. M. A. Chaple

Beat - Chorgaon

Round - Warvat

Range - Chd. (Buffer)
Division - Buffer TATR

Duration - 26 Days

Target - 125 km/Month

Actual Patrolling - 342.12 km





Forest Guard - Shri. M.P. Mendulkar Beat - Navegaon

Round - Kolara Range - Kolara

Division - Core TATR

Duration - 14 Days

Target - 125 km/Month

Actual Patrolling - 161.07 Km



TATR organized a study tour to Kanha Tiger Reserve, Madhya Pradesh for safari guides. The tour helped the guides learn and understand eco-tourism practices, habitat development work, and their role and responsibilities towards tourists and the forest.

### Act of Giving

"Talk to the forest because the forest always talks to you." - Mehmet Murat ildan

ehmet Murat Ildan was born on May 16 in Elazığ, a city located in the Eastern part of Turkey. In 1975, his father was elected as a Senator for the Turkish parliament, which led to Mehmet continuing his studies in the capital city of Ankara. Despite his father's political background in a Middle Eastern-European country, Mehmet is known worldwide as a versatile writer, including being a playwright, poet, novelist, and thinker. His words have been particularly helpful to me when sharing the lessons Llearn from forests during my visits.

My recent trip to the Tadoba region was no exception. Although the area is famous for tiger sightings, for me, it's a classic case study of man-animal co-existence, which is continuously evolving. I had some memorable experiences in the forests, including meeting the people who live in and around Tadoba and listening to their stories.



During this visit, we conducted a sweater donation drive for the gypsy drivers at the Moharli gate. Although the gypsy drivers are not officially trained in wildlife like the guides, most of them are locals who have grown up seeing and living in the forests and know as much as any other wildlife expert. Their job is very challenging, as they have to wake up every day at 4 am, drive on bumpy roads, and keep an eye and ear out for the tiger's movements. If their clients are photographers, they must align the vehicle in such a way that they get a good frame. Our small act of giving them sweaters was a good morale booster for them. We distributed sweaters to nearly a hundred gypsy drivers with the help of the Range Forest officer.

I want to emphasize the importance of our approach toward wildlife tourism. While we all go to the forests to enjoy wildlife, click snaps, and spend on safaris, hotels, and food, very few of us come forward to do something extra, such as joining hands in donation drives for such segments of the wildlife cycle. This can be a big help to wildlife conservation and a great brand-building exercise for your company in the eyes of your clients. In the end, it's for wildlife conservation only, and very few Indian business houses and businessmen think along these lines. Wildlife conservation is always short of funding in any form, and I try my best, along with our venture Jungle Belles, to do our bit.

> Sanjay Deshpande Wildlife Enthusiast Sanjeevani Developers, Pune





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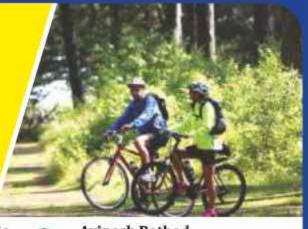




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