



झुनाबाई-पाणवठा

Issue 21/Aug. 2023

Tadoba

DIARIES

The official Newsletter of Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve



Alakhay Chug

Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve Conservation Foundation, Chandrapur

₹ 30/-

Project Tiger: Status and Challenges



Dear Reader,

We have recently celebrated International Tiger Day 2023. Apart from the National level program held at the famous Corbett Tiger Reserve, Uttarakhand, the day was celebrated with enthusiasm and hope across more than 50 tiger reserves of the country. The Project Tiger network that started with nine tiger reserves has now 54 plus and counting. The rise in the extent of area under tiger reserves and the number of tiger reserves also reflects the acceptance by all stakeholders of the idea that the conservation of tigers is important for the ecological security of the nation and also for the overall well-being of the country. It is heartening to note that the rate of increase of tigers in certain landscapes is more than 40% than the last estimates. While the number of tigers in the country overall has increased from 2,967 to 3,682, the increase in central India and Eastern Ghats landscape has been phenomenal from 1,033 to 1,439.

However, wildlife managers and conservation practitioners know that the conservation of tigers goes beyond numbers. Habitat improvement, control of invasive weeds, voluntary relocation of villages, preventing poaching, and securing the support of local communities have been recognized to be of equal importance in achieving the conservation of tigers. The rise in numbers is therefore a reflection of the vast amount of work being carried out on all these fronts at the national level.

With rising numbers also comes the challenge of providing greater space and safer corridors for tigers. With a large population living close to forests, this is increasingly becoming difficult leading to man-animal conflict situations. In the Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve landscape, with one of the highest densities of tigers, the problem is particularly severe. This demands increasing use of modern animal tracking technologies and reducing the dependency of communities on tiger-bearing forests. To expand the area available to wildlife, the time has come to look at the concept of various types of easements and community nature conservancies that take care of the sustainable income to farmers while at the same time rewilding the area for wildlife. At Tadoba, we are taking a lead in this through TATR Conservation Foundation.

Another important challenge is to prevent the organized poaching of tigers. The demand in the international market for the body parts of the tiger is still unabated. This has kept the network of poachers active in various parts of the country.

Recent arrests of organized poachers from Assam have opened Pandora's box and the dark memories of what these

organized gangs can do to the tiger population have come back to haunt park managers and forest and wildlife departments of the states across the country. It is pertinent to note that there was a similar incident of organized poaching noticed in the central Indian landscape in 2013-14 and the team from Maharashtra Forest Department had taken lead to unearth the entire network and value chain of the poaching gangs of Bahelia community and had arrested the majority of the poachers, the traders and most of the involved people. Almost all of the arrested persons were convicted and sentenced to jail terms to such an extent that many of them have died in jail. What we are witnessing today is similar. Fortunately, this time around the forest departments are better prepared with advanced surveillance mechanisms, forensic techniques, and other law-enforcement tools which has led to better intelligence gathering. In quick time, this led to the arrest of a group of poachers from Guwahati, Assam, and one gang of 14 poachers from the forest of Gadchiroli district by a specially constituted Special Task Force of the Maharashtra Forest department. Further investigations have revealed that they were in touch with the person located in Delhi who has vast information about all the major poaching gangs operating in the country and who has got a good understanding of the poaching network and made good money from his connivance with the poachers. The person was on the radar of many law-enforcement agencies but was never arrested because of the lack of evidence. But this time around his luck ran out as the Maharashtra Forest Department team could gather enough information and technical evidence to warrant his arrest and brought him to justice.

Thus, despite several challenges, the tigers are thriving and the future of tigers looks more promising than ever. In addition to the efforts of government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and wildlife enthusiasts, international cooperation and awareness play vital roles in tiger conservation. Global campaigns and initiatives focusing on ending the demand for tiger parts and products are essential to curb poaching and illegal trafficking. By working together on a global scale, we can ensure a brighter future for tigers and secure their place in the wild for generations to come.

Dr. Jitendra Ramgaokar

Field Director, TATR
and Executive Director, TATR Conservation Foundation

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Editor: Dr. Jitendra Ramgaokar, CF & Field Director, TATR | Executive Editor: Anant Sonawane, Communications Officer, TATR



Buffer is Buzzing

The buffer area of Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve boasts biodiversity richness equal to that of the core area. During the monsoon, when the core zone closes for tourism, wildlife enthusiasts flock to the buffer zone to witness nature's raw beauty. Recently, a new feather was added to the glory of the buffer - the Somnath tourism gate, bringing the total count to 15 entry gates, while the core zone has 6 entry gates.

On 22nd July, Maharashtra State Forest Minister, Sudhir Mungantiwar, inaugurated the Somnath gate, conveniently located just 500 meters away from renowned social worker Baba Amte's Kushthrogi Seva Sadan in Mul tehsil of Chandrapur district. From this gate, tourists can embark on wildlife safaris using a 61 km road network in the Mul area, where an estimated 10 to 12 tigers roam. The area is also known for frequent sightings of the elusive black panther near Pangdi, along with other captivating wildlife such as sloth bears, wild boars, Indian gaurs, barking deer, sambars, and spotted deer. Visitors can also explore the Somnath temple and Doni Pahad, famous for the variety of birds that grace the region.

Beyond the tourism benefits, the local villagers from surrounding villages like Maroda, Karvan, Katvan, and Padzari will directly benefit from this development, gaining employment opportunities as gate managers, guides, and Gypsy drivers. Moreover, they will also indirectly benefit through home-stays and resorts catering to tourists.

The management of TATR has consistently followed an inclusive conservation model, integrating local communities into the conservation efforts. Opening new tourism gates is a part of this model, as eco-tourism provides new livelihood opportunities for local youth, making them stakeholders in the forests and nurturing a sense of ownership. This, in turn, encourages the locals to actively support the forest department in protecting the forests from fire, poachers, and other threats, as their income becomes intricately linked to the well-being of the forests. By increasing their incomes, the dependency of local communities on forests reduces, ultimately leading to habitat preservation and enhanced conservation efforts.

- Kushagra Pathak
Deputy Director, TATR (Buffer)



Developed Grasslands of Tadoba

Several villages within the Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve have been relocated over the past few years, resulting in a significant increase in wildlife in the area. Academicians and officials from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) recently visited the lands of these relocated villages in the core area of Tadoba to assess the environmental health of the new grasslands.

The sanctuary was initially declared in 1938 and later designated as a National Park in 1955. Over the years, villages such as Khatoda and Pandharpauri in 1972, Botezari and half of Kolsa in 2006, and more recently, Jamni, Palasgaon, Ramdegi Navegaon, and Rantalodhi have been successfully rehabilitated outside the core area. Three types of grasses have been developed in these village areas: short, medium, and tall grasses. These grass areas are crucial for wildlife, providing essential grazing, hiding, and breeding sites for various species of prey. Certain parts of the vegetation in these areas are dominated by grasslands, with a continuous cover of herbs, shrubs, and wild leguminous plants.

Grass planting has played a vital role in retaining soil moisture and preventing excessive evaporation during the summer months. This significantly contributed to maintaining soil quality. The greater the amount of grassland within a sanctuary, the higher its biological carrying capacity. Currently, Tadoba encompasses approximately 885 hectares of grassland, which constitutes nine percent of the total land area. Efforts are on to further increase the area under grass, as it forms the foundation of the entire wildlife ecosystem.

Following the rehabilitation of villages new grasslands have been developed and are being scientifically managed. In

Navegaon Ramdegi alone, 24 different species of grasses have been developed on approximately 230 hectares of land. Similarly, the grass was planted on 85 hectares of land in Palasgaon and 47 hectares of land in Jamni village. Specific grass species, such as Marvel, Ravi, Shikka, Motion, Kusal, Ghayal, Vatan, Padayal, Survel, Ran-bajri, Datad, Devdhan, Rantur, Ranmug, Heti, Doob, Ran-barbati, Gondli, Wild ragi, Crow fruit, Ber, Durva and many more, have been planted in these designated fields.

To control the growth of useless grass and invasive species, timely identification and uprooting are essential, typically performed two to three times a year before the plants bear fruit. Invasive species such as Bhutganja, Tarota, Chikna, Lenduli, Chipdi, Aghada, White Chikwa, Fetra, Kombra, Diwali Grass, Carrot, and Silk Fork are diligently removed. Significant amount of money is spent every year on the removal of invasive species.

Prof. Suresh Chopane and Prof. Yogesh Dudhapchare of Green Planet Society, Dinesh Khate of HCS Habitat Conservation Society, Manish Naik of Tree Foundation, Amod Gaurkar of Tarun Environmentalist Organization Shankarpur, Ajay Poddar of TER Trust for Ecological Restoration, Saurabh Dongre of Ears Foundation, Shashank Moharkar, Karan Togattiwar, Pintu Uike, Bhavik Yergude of SARD Institute, Mohammad Suleiman of Saving and Conserving Forest (SCF) Trust and others were present on this occasion.

- Dinesh Khate
Habitat Conservation Society, Chandrapur

Counting Tigers: A Tale of Dedication

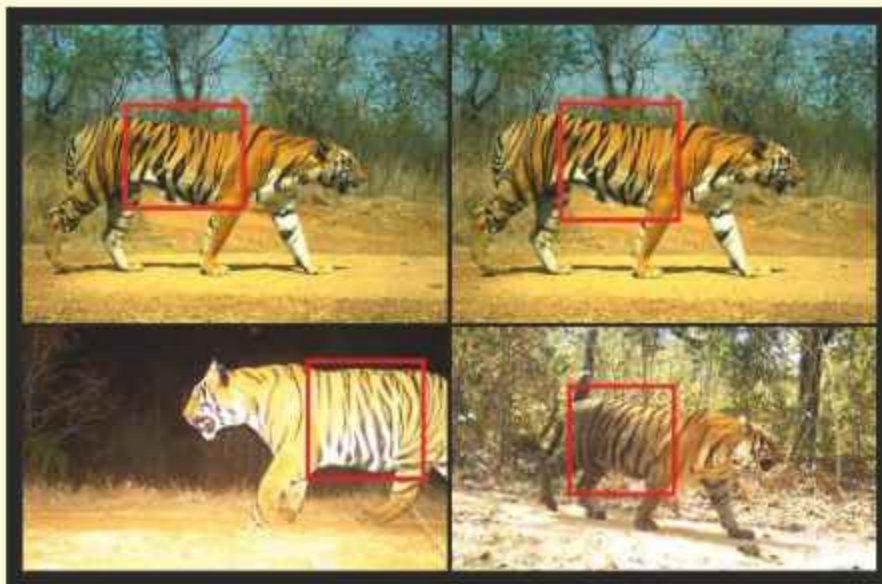
Tiger enthusiasts and conservationists from across the nation gathered in Mysore, were eagerly awaiting the moment the Honourable Prime Minister would unveil the nationwide tiger count. The air was thick with anticipation as minutes ticked away, and every breath was held in suspense. A hush fell over the audience as the numbers started to appear on the screen. "Three thousand one hundred and sixty-seven!" The auditorium erupted in an explosion of joy.

Behind the grand announcement of the nationwide tiger count in Mysore lay a tapestry of sleepless nights, swollen feet, and torn boots. The excitement and celebration were well-deserved, for it was a culmination of countless untold tales of dedication and sacrifice by those working relentlessly to protect the magnificent big cats. These stories of tense nights, sweaty backpacks, and torn boots became part of the legacy of tiger conservation. The world may not have heard them all, but the spirit of these unsung heroes echoed through the forests, becoming the shadows of the stripes—intertwined with the very soul of the majestic tigers they fought to save.

The 'pugmark census' was invented in 1966 by Indian forester S. R. Choudhury. In this method, during a 1–2-week period, thousands of personnel would simultaneously fan out across India to search for tiger tracks. They were expected to locate tiger tracks and obtain plaster casts or tracings of the left hind pugmark. The pugmarks collected would be later compared to identify individual tigers relying on perceived differences in shape and other measurements. These 'individual tiger identifications' would be then refined through cross-comparisons among census blocks, reserves, and larger regions to obtain 'reliable estimates' of wild tiger numbers in India.

The Journey from Pugmark to Camera Trap Survey

Earlier tiger counts relied on the pugmark census, which had many loopholes. From 1972 to 2002, there was no proper tiger tracking system, and the estimation was based on footprints or pugmarks, leading to both underestimation and overestimation of tiger numbers. Although camera traps were first invented around the 1890s to capture wildlife images from wild landscapes, they were made with trip wires and flashbulbs, and the images were caught on film, making them unsuitable for large-scale use. I am fortunate to see the change where the pugmark census was replaced by the



camera trap. I remember taking casts of tiger pugmarks on mud. Touching these marks on the mud trail used to give us an adrenaline rush. Over the years, different modifications to the same design, like adding batteries and reducing the size of the equipment, have made it an indispensable aid to wildlife science and conservation. The most significant change was infrared technology, which helps sense an animal by picking up heat radiation in addition to the traditional movement sensors. Presently, heavy-duty cameras that can withstand heat, cold, and all kinds of extreme weather are also used to establish future strategies, poaching activity, and track progress from previous studies.

Frederick Walter Champion, an ex-soldier in the British Indian Army and a pioneering conservationist, took the first photograph of a tiger in the wild in India. He played a pivotal role in leading the conversation around wildlife conservation at a time when British officials took pride in big game hunting. Camera traps, initially invented in the 1890s to capture wildlife images, have evolved significantly over the years, becoming indispensable aids to wildlife science and conservation.

In 1990, Dr. Ulhas Karanth revolutionized the process by using automated camera traps to individually identify tigers in Nagarhole, India, and then estimate their numbers through formal capture-recapture modelling. This innovative method was subsequently extended to several sites across India to estimate tiger densities. In 2006, the pugmark census was replaced by a more scientific methodology, using camera trapping for tiger estimation with a systematic approach. The first proper tiger census in 2006 reported 1,411 tigers in the country. By 2022, the total number of tigers increased to 3,167, indicating a healthy growth of the tiger population. India now boasts the largest tiger population globally.

- **Prajakta Hushangbadkar**
Wildlife Biologist, TATR

Love at First Ride!

After dealing with hectic work schedules, I finally had the opportunity to visit Tadoba during the Diwali vacations of 2022. My overly enthusiastic husband and I decided to go for a morning Tadoba Safari at the Moharli gate. We had little hope of spotting the King of the jungle, but our guide provided us with essential information to maximize our chances.

In our excitement, we asked the most common question, "Is there any hope?" Within just five minutes of our safari, the guide locked his gaze, seemingly stunned, and informed us about the presence of a massive yellow figure lurking among the bushes, marking its territory. There he was - Bajrang! He exuded an aura of royalty, walking and swaying like a true king, his gaze commanding respect. The encounter with Bajrang felt like coexistence - a tangible and captivating connection. It was love at first sight, during our very first ride!

This encounter with Bajrang made me fall in love with the wilderness and appreciate the beauty of untouched lands. However, when I returned to Tadoba again, Bajrang was nowhere to be seen, and I heard stories of a new King taking over. Despite the heartache, I learned that change is constant in the wild, and I witnessed the splendor of tigress T-12 Maya,



the Queen.

The wild taught me to embrace change and fall in love with nature all over again. Bajrang played his part by introducing me to the wonders of wildlife and the interconnected world it represents. Now, I am determined to be a part of Tadoba and its fauna, and forever cherish the memory of Bajrang, the King who made me fall in love with nature!

- Prof. Sampada Khokle

D. Y. Patil School of Architecture, Navi Mumbai



The English language has been enriched by the beautiful quotes and imagery found in great literature, particularly those that involve the metaphorical concept of wings. These quotes have inspired and nurtured the idea of personal growth and realizing one's potential through flight. However, today's scene was quite different.

The wings, which symbolize freedom and aspiration, seemed motionless and stern. Birds, the very creatures that made the metaphor of "wings" possible, were quietly perched on the bark of an old, lifeless tree. To the casual observer, this sight might seem peculiar, but to bird enthusiasts (ornithophilic), it was an intriguing spectacle. Various species of birds, including the Purple Swamphen, Darter, Great Egret, Little Egrets, Pond Heron, Red-naped Ibis, Common Starling, Red Vented Bulbul, Common Kingfisher, Green Bee Eater, and

An Unusual Board Meeting

Open Billed Stork, were fixated on something strange in the water, as evidenced by the accompanying photos.

As an observer, which is an inherent characteristic of being a naturalist, I dedicated my afternoon to unravelling the mystery at hand. Through my close connection with nature, I have come to understand the concept of learning. Every element of the universe surrounding us seeks to convey a profound message, something meant for the human mind to decipher. However, in this situation where birds held what appeared to be a board meeting in an unconventional location, it proved challenging to interpret the situation accurately. Despite my thorough observation, the image remained unclear.

The pond heron, in particular, captivated my attention as it stared intently at a deceased bird in the water, with a serpent coiled around it. Yet, the significance of this unusual behavior remained elusive. The birds presented a puzzle, challenging us to decode their intentions. It remains an interesting enigma.

- Himanshu Bagade

Naturalist and Wildlife Tourism Consultant, Nagpur



A Mesmerizing Encounter

On the International Day for Leopards, I found myself immersed in the wild wonders of Kolsa, venturing through the Zari gate. The jungle was alive with the essence of an early monsoon, as showers and hailstorms drenched the foliage. Navigating the treacherous path, our gypsy maneuvered through the slush and rising waters, the enchanting greenery and cool rains creating a mesmerizing ambiance.

However, our adventurous spirit encountered a temporary setback when our gypsy succumbed to the slush, its tires spinning fruitlessly, leaving us stranded near Shivanzari. The driver and guide exchanged worried glances, their furrowed brows reflecting the urgency of the situation. With a resolve to overcome this obstacle, our guide valiantly stepped out of the vehicle, determined to procure a stone that would grant the tires a much-needed grip. After tireless efforts, we triumphed over nature's challenge and were back on the road.

As we resumed our journey, only a few minutes had passed when a sudden commotion caught our attention. With a grace that defied gravity, a mysterious object glided in slow motion before our eyes. In that breathtaking instant, our gazes locked upon a monkey, scrambling up a bamboo tree, fleeing for its life, pursued by an unexpected predator—the leopard!

To our astonishment, we realized that the leopard had skillfully employed our gypsy as a decoy, capitalizing on the element of surprise to launch a lightning-fast attack on its unsuspecting prey. With hearts pounding, we watched the unfolding drama, witnessing the intricate dance of survival amidst the backdrop of the dense jungle.

Just as the leopard's claws were inches away from claiming its prize, fate intervened. The bamboo tree, unable to bear the leopard's weight, snapped under the strain, sending the majestic predator crashing down on the right side of our gypsy. Time seemed to stand still as the leopard glared menacingly at the monkey, which had sought refuge in a neighbouring tree, safe from the predator's clutches.

Minutes stretched into eternity as the leopard maintained its threatening stance, a formidable presence reminding the monkey of its prowess. The jungle whispered secrets as we captured the remarkable sight, immortalizing the intensity and beauty of the encounter through pictures and videos.

Eventually, the leopard decided to abandon the hunt, its purpose thwarted by the unforeseen turn of events. With a final gaze that carried a hint of disappointment, the enigmatic predator melted into the undergrowth, vanishing from our sight.

We were left in awe, exhilarated by this extraordinary sighting. The encounter showcased the raw and unpredictable nature of the wild, a testament to the intricate balance between predator and prey.

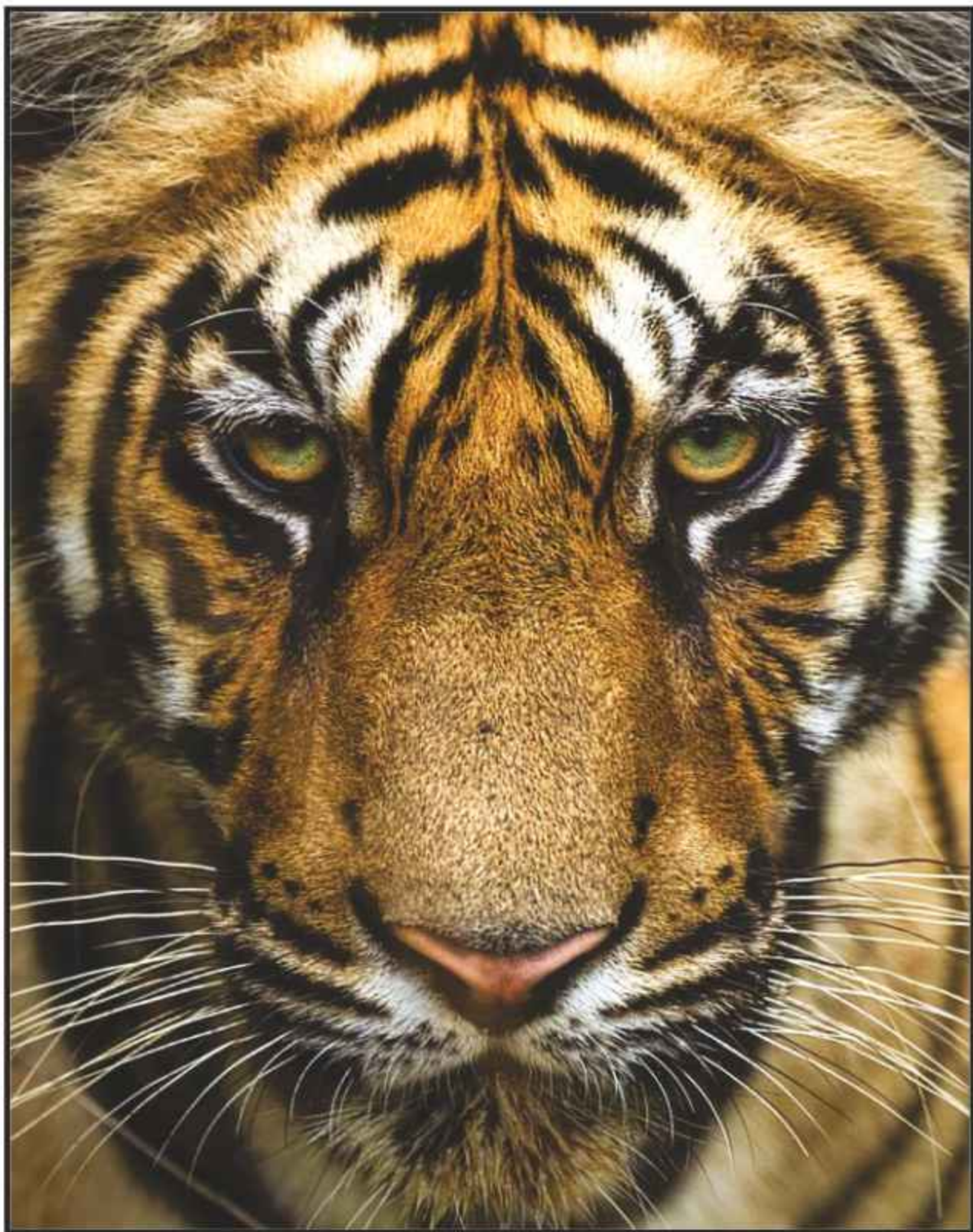
- Sanjay Podder

Co-Founder, Green Software Foundation

Global Managing Director- Technology Sustainability Innovation, Accenture



On the occasion of International Tiger Day, a Marathi movie titled "Territory" was screened at the Forest Academy, Chandrapur. The movie revolves around tiger poaching, its investigation, and the complexities of animal-human conflict. To commemorate this special day, the TATR management organized a cycle rally and a public awareness program, further promoting the importance of tiger conservation.



© Sumit Mehta

IF LOOKS COULD KILL!

In the mesmerizing wilderness of Alizanja buffer area of TATR, a thrilling encounter leaves hearts racing. As the tiger locks eyes with the camera, an electrifying connection is forged, and the observer witnesses nature's raw intensity. A magical moment captured, freezing time in the heart of untamed majesty.



Dance of Life & Death

The real excitement was yet to be unfolded! Lara, accompanied by her adorable brood of four cubs, embarked on her journey to the waterhole. In awe, we realized that destiny beckoned us to explore the aftermath of Lara's morning triumph— a kill she had executed with deadly precision. However, this would not be an easy endeavor, for the ever-watchful STPF team had been greeted with a commanding roar from the fierce tigress, warning them to tread cautiously and keep their distance, earlier in the morning.

The enigmatic mystery surrounding the kill fuelled our curiosity, and thus, our mission to unveil the truth was set in motion. I along with the STPF team, set out to identify the unfortunate victim of Lara's lethal prowess, and more crucially, to ensure it was free from the sinister clutches of poison. So, with determination ablaze, we embarked on a brief but adrenaline-pumping drive, finally arriving at the hallowed grounds where the drama unfolded.

Stepping out of the patrolling vehicle, the team began recounting events. The dusty road bore marks of the gruesome event, providing a breadcrumb trail that led us into the dense bamboo thickets. As we pressed forward, a displaced stone served as a grim reminder of the enormous carcass dragged by the powerful predator. Further, along the path, the bark of a tree, etched with scratches, testified to the friction generated during the tigress's endeavor.

Venturing deeper into the heart of the jungle, the very core of the tiger reserve, the terrain's ruggedness increased, and a thick carpet of dry bamboo leaves challenged our every step. While the RFO Manisha Jadhav and her experienced team effortlessly navigated the wilderness, I, with no expertise, struggled to evade the unforgiving clutches of low-hanging bamboo branches. The wilderness began to engulf us, and a sense of disorientation washed over me, robbing me of my bearings.

"Please don't stay behind!", RFO Madam cautioned me.

When the situation seemed overwhelming, the STPF team's



unwavering prowess revealed the hidden secret—a kill concealed beneath a bamboo. Astonishingly, I failed to notice the gory spectacle even from a mere five feet away. The victim was a sub-adult Indian Gaur, its lifeless eyes hauntingly wide open, a testament to the swift and deadly attack it had faced. Leaves carefully scattered over the carcass revealed the tigress's cunning intelligence, a strategic move to mask the kill's presence from rival predators and, indeed, from her own kind. A masterstroke in survival, confining the scent to ensure her reign over this conquest remained unchallenged.

Having fulfilled our mission, the team swiftly departed the scene, leaving behind the realm of death and returning to the safe embrace of the waterhole. However, our assumptions proved futile, for Lara's movements remained unpredictable. Within a mere 15 minutes of our departure, she had left the waterhole, her maternal duty accomplished, and embarked on her return journey to claim the precious kill once more. Fortunately, our expedition had been swift and timely, ensuring that we remained unscathed in the tigress's domain.

In the realm of Lara, the tigress extraordinaire, nature's drama unfolded, reminding me of the unfathomable intelligence and instincts that governed the wild. And as we retreated from this enthralling spectacle, a newfound appreciation for the intricate dance of life and death in the wilderness resonated within me.

- Anant Sonawane
Communications Officer, TATR

The Unforgettable Night

I will never forget that night in 2020 when the monsoon had just begun in June. It marked the beginning of my career as a safari guide, and I was leading a night safari in the Junona area with a guest from Gujarat. In the initial hours, one of the Gypsy vehicles sighted a tigress known as Collarwali, but unfortunately, we missed her by a few seconds. Later, we also missed a sighting of a leopard, leaving my guest feeling a little disappointed. I tried to explain to him the uncertainties of the forest, where sightings are never guaranteed.

Throughout the entire safari, we didn't have any major sightings, and as the time approached 9.30 pm, we had only a few minutes left before exiting the forest. Just then, I received information at the Junona Protection Camp that Collarwali had crossed the road nearby. Deciding to take one last chance, I asked the driver to head towards the road leading to Junona village.

As we reached the location, the night turned electrifying when we heard an alarm call from a sambar deer. Following the sound, I caught sight of her in the headlights of my Gypsy - the tigress was on the prowl, stalking something. I immediately alerted my guest, and we held our breath in anticipation. In a split second, Collarwali sprang into action, pouncing on a female sambar that was unaware of her presence. The

sambar screeched in distress, trying desperately to escape, but the tigress's grip was unyielding. The sambar ultimately succumbed to the tigress's strength.

Collarwali then dragged her prey to a nearby bamboo thicket and sat close to it, still visible from the road. It was an awe-inspiring and adrenaline-pumping sight - the first live kill I had ever witnessed. My excitement

was palpable, and my guest shared the same exhilaration. He requested to stay and continue witnessing the thrilling experience, but with regret, I humbly declined and started our return journey as the safari time was coming to an end.

That unforgettable night not only enriched my experiences as a safari guide but also left an indelible mark on my guest, showcasing the untamed beauty and rawness of nature in the heart of the forest.

- Divya Palangwar
Guide, Junona Gate

A Giant's Love

Among the myriad tree species for plantation, my heart leans towards fruiting trees that delight birds and animals alike. In the enchanting forests of Tadoba, there stands a remarkable tree - the tough-skinned wood apple, locally known as Kavath. Its cricket ball-like appearance and tantalizing fruits have earned it a special place in my heart.

Amidst the Telia Kuti and the adventure park in Agarzari, I have been blessed with abundant supplies of Kavath fruits, a delicacy that demands gentle hammering to unlock its treasure. However, it remains a mystery which creature is capable of penetrating the Kavath's hardcover. Legend speaks of elephants devouring the fruit whole, only for it to emerge from their droppings seemingly untouched, the shell inexplicably empty. A magic trick, or does the elephant's stomach possess an extraordinary power to savor only the pulp? Even the revered elephant God, Ganesha, exhibits a special fondness for this fruit, honored through offerings during Poojas.



Yet, elephants are not the sole connoisseurs of this delightful treat. Observing langurs and sambar deer relishing the fallen Kavath fruits adds to the intrigue. There must be a certain sweetness that entices these creatures, making it a popular choice.

Beyond its gastronomic appeal, Kavath boasts well-established medicinal properties. Revered for its efficacy in treating digestive disorders and as a natural laxative, it is frequently employed in home remedies. For me, personally, preparing a sharbat with the sticky pulp of Kavath has been a cherished delight.

Sadly, this "poor man's food" remains relatively unexplored. It is time to unravel the true value of Kavath and celebrate its significance in the extraordinary ecosystem of Tadoba. Its unique allure and the myriad mysteries surrounding it make it a treasure worth rediscovering.

- Anirudh Chaoji
Senior Naturalist

Palette of Colours

During monsoon, the once-dry forest undergoes a magical transformation and becomes a lush green paradise. As rain showers replenish the earth, a vibrant palette of colourful birds, plants, and insects emerges, turning the landscape into a breathtaking masterpiece of nature's artistry. Here are a few glimpses:



Common Kingfisher



Blister Beetle



Wild Mushroom



Jewel Bug

The Boogie Woogie Dancer

During our morning safari, our Tadoba star guide mentioned that it is as rare to spot a sloth bear, wild dog, or leopard as it is to spot a tiger. I was secretly praying that we spot a sloth bear, as I had never seen it before. As the day progressed, we saw a few gypsies lined up on the road. So we stopped and looked in the same direction as everyone was looking at.

Soon enough we spotted a sloth bear. It had fluffy, black fur, long claws, half my height and black shiny eyes. It was in a man-made intersection created to avoid the spread of forest fire. Hence we could spot it easily. It was sniffing as it was walking along its path. Our guide mentioned that it was sniffing for termites and ants. Soon it stood up on its two legs and it seemed like it was doing the Boogie-Woogie dance! Actually it was scratching its back against the tree trunk. We could clearly see its long claws that it uses to fight off predators, and to dig for insects. The sloth bears are active at dawn, dusk, and night.

- Khwaish Goyle

Age- 12 years

Billabong International High School, Mumbai



MONSOON DELIGHT!

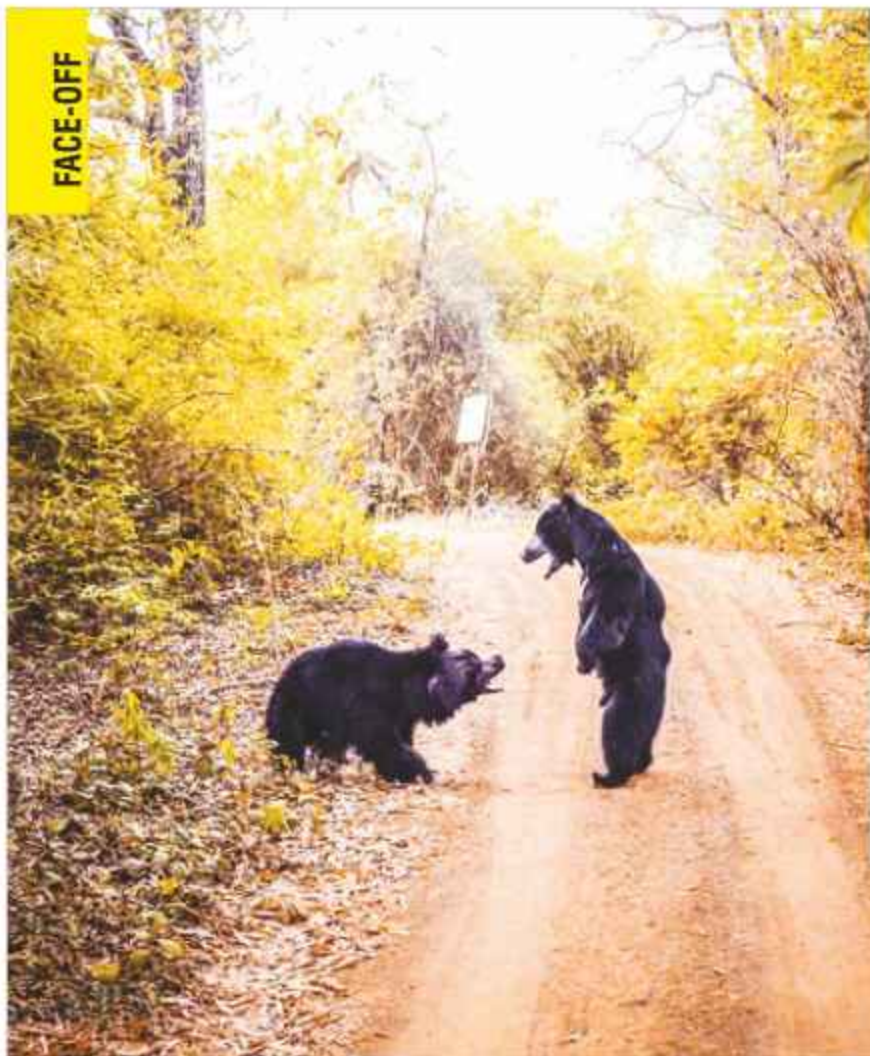
Playful cubs of tigress T-158, affectionately known as Babli, steal the show in Alizanja buffer area. This heartwarming moment, brilliantly captured by our 15-year-old reader from JBCN School, Parel, Mumbai, reveals the enchanting joy of these charismatic cubs during their playful escapades.



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.





Territory Clash at Madnapur

Once in a blue moon, a truly extraordinary event unfolds in the heart of Tadoba's wilderness. In our case, the elusive sloth bear, rarely seen in the wild, emerged from the shadows to create a spectacle that would leave nature enthusiasts in awe.

It was a sweltering afternoon in mid-June, during the pre-monsoon safari, when we set out on a mission to witness the legendary tigress T-82, popularly known as Junabai, and her adorable cubs in Madnapur buffer area. The anticipation was palpable as we waited for two long hours, enduring the scorching heat.

Finally, our patience was rewarded as the majestic Junabai and her cubs arrived at the Junabai temple's watering hole. The moment was magical, capturing the hearts of our team fortunate enough to witness it.

However, nature had more in store for us. Without warning, a massive sloth bear materialized in one corner, causing Junabai to snap into alert mode. What followed was an intense confrontation, with the tigress showing no fear in the face of the intruder. The dense bushes echoed with their thunderous roars, sending shivers down our spines.

For a breath-taking 15 minutes, the forest resounded with a symphony of deafening shrieks and unearthly sounds, leaving us spellbound. It was evident that a fierce battle of dominance was raging between these two formidable forces of nature.

We held our ground, waiting eagerly for any sign of resolution. And then, as abruptly as it began, silence enveloped the forest. Whatever transpired behind those bushes remained a mystery!

Deciding to leave the scene, we ventured 300 meters away, only to find a solitary sloth bear on the road. He repeatedly stopped while walking and looked back. Soon enough, his opponent emerged from the shadows – another sloth bear!

In an extraordinary display of power and ruthlessness, the two sloth bears clashed head to head right in front of us, the astonished onlookers! The fight was both terrifying and awe-inspiring, showcasing the raw force of nature at its peak.

We realized that these two warriors had been engaged in an epic battle for the past two hours, hidden from sight behind the thick foliage.

As the spectacle unfolded, I captured every frame of it, and the result was a series of captivating photographs. These images stand as a testament to the unparalleled beauty and rawness of nature's conflicts, reminding us of the untamed wonder that lies within the heart of the wild.

- Vinayak Joshi

Owner, Gondwana Premium Jungle Homes, Madanapur



HONEY, I GOT YOU!

Images like these showcase the astounding biodiversity of TATR's lush forests. Honey Badger, an extremely rare species, has made Tadoba its permanent home. Primarily carnivorous, this animal is renowned for its fiercely defensive behaviour. In this captivating shot, a mother and her young one are caught in a camera trap.

The Achievers June 2023

Let's celebrate 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 June 2023



Forest Guard - R. M. Mundale
Beat - Karwa-I
Round - Karwa
Range - Karwa
Division - Core TATR
Duration - 15 Days
Target - 125 km/Month
Actual Patrolling - 148.39 Km



Forest Guard - P. B. Tapase
Beat - Khandala-I
Round - Warvat
Range - Chandrapur (Buffer)
Division - Buffer TATR
Duration - 22 Days
Target - 125 km/Month
Actual Patrolling - 305.73 Km

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Monsoon Magic and the Nest

Monsoon forests offer two distinct advantages. Firstly, they provide an opportunity to observe and capture images of birds such as the Asian Paradise Flycatcher, Drongos, and Woodpeckers. These birds are known for their constant movement, which makes it challenging to photograph or observe them for extended periods. However, in the monsoon forests, you can witness them while they sit on their nests, both the male and female taking turns. Secondly, these forests offer a unique opportunity to explore the fascinating world of bird nests.

As a Civil Engineer and builder, I am always intrigued by the ability of other species, besides humans, to construct their homes using limited resources. During my recent trip to Tadoba in the monsoon season, I not only managed to photograph the Asian Paradise Flycatcher but also had the chance to study its nest.

The first thing that caught my attention was the size of the nest, significantly smaller in comparison to the bird's long tail, which is its trademark. Additionally, the construction of the nest was remarkable. It had a whitish colour, appeared watertight, and had a shiny appearance. When I inquired about it from our knowledgeable guide, Arvind from Alizanza Buffer, he explained that the nest was made of leaves, small branches, and bound together with the spider's sticky web strings. This adhesive material not only provided the shiny appearance but also ensured that the nest was waterproof.

Our guide further informed me that observing the Asian Paradise Flycatcher sitting on its nest is referred to as "Miya Muthbhar, Dadhi Haatbhar," highlighting the contrast between the small nest and the bird's long tail, as well as its relatively small body.

The whole experience was truly awe-inspiring. Just imagine the time and effort these birds put into collecting all the necessary building materials for their nests while facing challenges like summer heat, rain, wind, and threats from other birds and predators like snakes. It truly emphasizes why Tadoba is an incredible place to visit in any season. As I left the forest, I couldn't help but express my gratitude to the wonders of nature for granting me such unforgettable moments in the wilderness.

- Sanjay Deshpande
Wildlife Enthusiast,
Sanjeevani Developers, Pune

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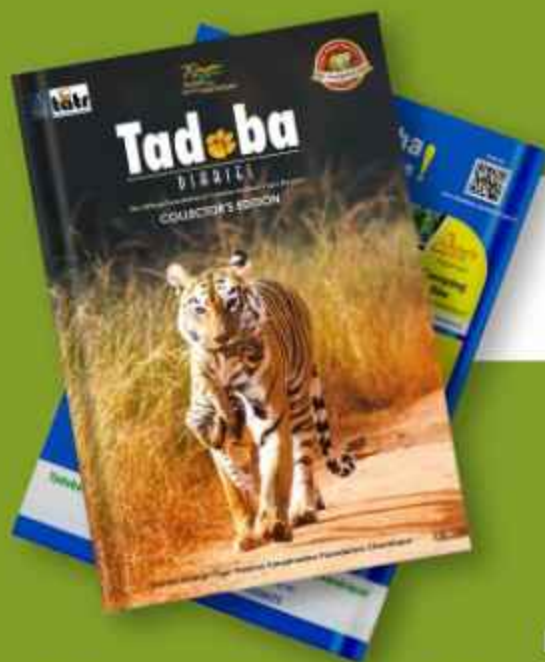
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