

# Tadoba

DIARIES

The official Newsletter of Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve



# New Rays of Hope

Dear Reader,

It is a moment of pride for India as we celebrate 50 successful years of Project Tiger, the one of its kind and largest species conservation program directed towards the conservation of a species. Project Tiger was established in 1973 with the aim of utilizing the tiger's functional role and charisma to garner public support and resources for preserving representative ecosystems. Since then, the project has expanded from nine tiger reserves covering 18,278 km<sup>2</sup> to 53 reserves covering 75,796 km<sup>2</sup>, which account for 2.3% of India's land area. I am thrilled to share with you that despite all the challenges India has managed to maintain an increasing trend in terms of number of tigers. On April 9th, 2023, Hon. Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the results of the All India Tiger Estimation Exercise 2022 in Mysore, which brought cheers among wildlife enthusiasts across the country. Phase III of the census, where sampling was conducted at 174 sites encompassing 32,588 locations, resulted in 470,818,881 photographs, of which 97,399 were of tigers. Phase II involved generating landscape-level data using remote sensing and secondary data sources at the Wildlife Institute of India. The total man-days spent on data collection and collation was 641,102, making this the largest survey done so far.

The tiger population has increased from 2,967 in 2018 to 3,167 in 2022 which means that over 70% of world's wild tigers are in India.

The Central Indian landscape has witnessed an increase in tiger population, with 1,161 unique tigers being photographed compared to an estimated population of 1,033 in 2018. During the camera trapping exercise, a total of 87 adult individual tigers were photographed in TATR. Although the tiger population of TATR has remained stable, there is a shift in the utilization of the core and the buffer area of the tiger reserve, with more and more tigers using buffers more exclusively than the core area.

In addition to these delightful numbers, the first Indian Conservation Conference was also organized in Mysuru, Karnataka. This marked a beginning of a unique platform for scientists, non-governmental agencies, and conservation organizations along with field managers to deliberate and arrive at consensus strategies for managing our wildlife in the future. I along with my colleagues participated in this conference which was attended by representatives from other tiger range countries like Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Kenya, Laos, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal,

Nigeria, Suriname, Tanzania, and Vietnam. They shared the current status of tiger conservation in their respective countries, making it a mega international event.

At the same event, Hon. Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched a unique initiative- the International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA). This alliance aims to conserve seven big cats, namely Tiger, Lion, Leopard, Snow Leopard, Cheetah, Jaguar, and Puma, in 97 range countries where these big cats have their natural habitats. IBCA will strengthen global efforts and partnerships on big cat conservation, while providing a platform for the convergence of knowledge and best practices, supporting existing species-specific inter-governmental platforms, and providing direct support to recovery efforts in potential range habitats. Most importantly, with its wide experience, India will play a leading role in this initiative.

I am sure that the news of the increase in the tiger population in India will provide a much-needed boost for wildlife conservation efforts on a national level. The success of Project Tiger is a testament to the power of public support and resources that are well-directed toward preserving sensitive ecosystems. The new initiatives such as the Indian Conservation Conference and the International Big Cat Alliance will strengthen global efforts and partnerships on big cat conservation, paving the way for knowledge and best practices to be shared among countries that want to make conservation of big cats a national priority.

**Dr. Jitendra Ramgaokar**

Field Director, TATR  
and Executive Director, TATR Conservation Foundation



Rajul Indole

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# Be Natural

- Akash Thosar  
Actor

The star cast of the recently released Marathi movie 'Ghar Banduk Biryani' Nagraj Manjule, Akash Thosar, and Sayli Patil enjoyed a quick visit to Tadoba. *Tadoba Diaries* spoke to Akash Thosar about his experience at Tadoba.

Excerpts from his interview:

**Q: How was your first visit to Tadoba?**

**A:** It was like a dream come true! I always wanted to visit Tadoba. Last year I was shooting in Nagpur. Yet couldn't manage to visit. Hence this time when we planned a film promotion tour to Nagpur and Chandrapur, I said 'let's do it'. I am so glad that I could visit this heaven and we were so lucky that we got to see a tiger on the tenth minute of our safari!

**Q: How did you feel when you saw your first tiger in the wild?**

**A:** I had seen the tiger only in the zoo. But meeting the King in his own empire was an amazing experience. We saw a male tiger known as Chota Dadhiyal. He was 500 to 800 meters away from us. Yet we could feel his royal attitude. I was in the seventh heaven!

**Q: What was the key takeaway of this trip for you?**

**A:** I think the biggest lesson I learned from nature is 'be as natural as you are'. I am very impressed with the way nature is conserved here. I was eating something and thought of feeding it to the monkeys. My guide immediately prohibited me saying, "Sir, let them live their natural life!" We too need to be what we are instead of projecting ourselves to be someone else.

- Rajat Bawankar

Intern, TATR Conservation Foundation



## Meditative Experience

- Perizaad Zorabian  
Actress

Actress Perizaad Zorabian and her husband entrepreneur Rustomjee Boman Irani recently visited TATR. *Tadoba Diaries* spoke to Perizaad about her love for wildlife.

Excerpts from her interview:

**Q: How was your trip to Tadoba?**

**A:** This was my second trip to Tadoba and it was just amazing! I love the forest and Tadoba gives you the calm and tranquillity that only a forest can. Additionally, Limban- the resort I stayed at strikes a perfect balance between luxury and earthiness, and outstanding food.

We did four safaris and the most fun for my family was driving with our safari driver Pravin Gongale who made every safari experience memorable. We had three incredible tiger sightings and four sloth bear sightings along with mongoose and other animals.

**Q: What did you like the most?**

**A:** What I loved the most about Tadoba is the variation in the forest and how every area has its own uniqueness. The core and the buffer are both so uniquely different and amazing!



**Q: What does this experience mean to you as an actor?**

**A:** Actors are creative intuitive beings and the forest helps you connect with your inner being. The calm and quiet of safari and the forest is calming and almost meditative in any way for me both as an actor and an entrepreneur.

**Q: Any unfulfilled wish?**

**A:** I would love to see Blackie! I haven't seen a leopard at Tadoba. Hence I will definitely be back soon.

- Team Tadoba Diaries





## AI-based Virtual Wall to Mitigate Human-Tiger Conflicts



In recent years, human-animal conflict has become a significant issue, particularly in areas where forests and human settlements overlap. To mitigate such conflicts, Valiance, a leading technology solutions company, has undertaken a project to create a virtual wall at Sitarampeth Village, which falls in the Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve Buffer area in the Chandrapur District of Maharashtra, India.

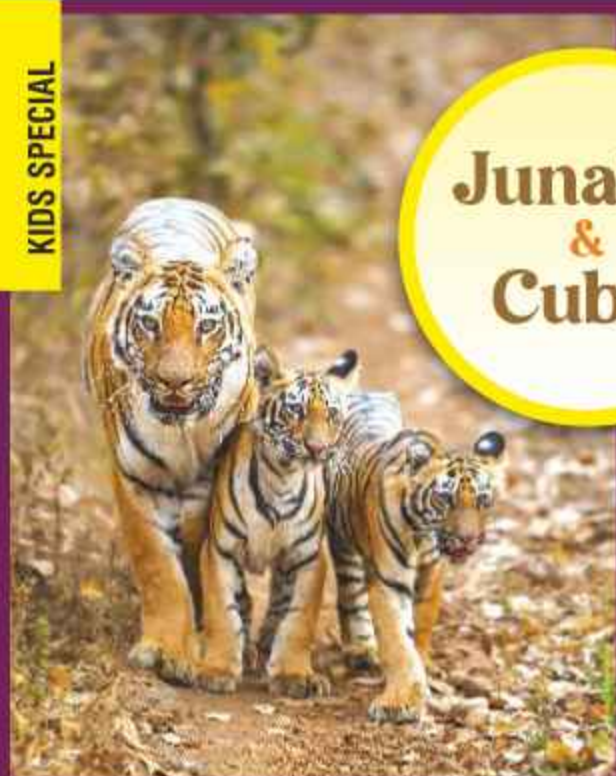
The project involves the installation of cameras capable of transmitting images through an IoT platform to a cloud server, where processing is done using an AI mechanism. Machine learning algorithms are used to identify a tiger by comparing the obtained image with a database. In the case of human-tiger conflict mitigation, the images can be used to track tiger movements. Further, alerts in the form of emails and messages are generated for forest officials in the event of tiger sightings.

The virtual wall system is aimed at mitigating human-tiger conflict by creating a real-time monitoring system that can detect tiger movements and provide an early warning to forest officials, thereby reducing the risk of attacks on humans and cattle.

We are delighted to partner with Valiance Solutions to implement this innovative technology. This virtual wall system is an excellent example of how technology can be used to address real-world challenges. It will significantly help in reducing the risk of human-tiger conflicts and ensure the safety of both humans and wildlife.

The project has been well-received by the local community, who have expressed their appreciation for the efforts made to mitigate human-tiger conflicts. They believe that the virtual wall system will go a long way in ensuring their safety while also preserving the natural habitat of the tigers. The installation of the virtual wall system at Sitarampeth Village is just the beginning, as TATR plans to replicate this technology in other areas that are prone to human-animal conflicts. This project is a significant step towards addressing the issue of human-tiger conflicts, and it is hoped that it will serve as a model for other areas facing similar challenges.

**- Kushagra Pathak**  
Deputy Director (Buffer), TATR



## Junabai & Cubs

It was an afternoon safari in Kolaria Buffer of TATR on 3rd March 2023. One can see many tigers in this area, but I was trying to spot T-82 also called Junabai, and her cubs. She was sighted in the morning safari, so we had a rough idea that the tigress was somewhere near the Junabai water body. I wanted to get a good sighting of them since November when I had first seen them. Till 4:30 in the afternoon, there were no signs of any tiger movement near the water body, and then suddenly we heard a spotted deer's alarm call. It was followed by more alarm calls which indicated that the tigress was close to a road behind the water body. When I reached there, I saw Junabai with her two cubs walking on the road! It was a great sighting and I was very happy to photograph Junabai with her cubs.

**- Vivaan Karapurkar**  
Age- 12 years  
JBCN International School, Parel, Mumbai



# Meeting A Monk

**M**y team and I were in the jungle for some work. It was the beginning of summer, and the late afternoon was still cool and breezy. The sun's golden rays shone through the netted leaves of the Teak trees, and the sky displayed vivid colours, unlike any other time of the year. The blooming Palash and Semal flowers hinted at the summer's arrival, and the space underneath the Palash tree was beautifully decorated with bright orange flowers. The scattered green and yellow leaves created abstract patterns on the ground. The Jungle Fowl was busy in collecting food and the sound of dry fallen leaves echoed in the surroundings. A lonely Ghost tree was changing from pink to fluorescent white. The sweet fallen fruits of Tedu had already been feasted on by Sloth Bears, and Baloo the Bear's poop next to the tree was full of Tendu seeds.

The Mahua trees had started blooming with tiny flowers, which attracted the closely bonded buddies - langur and spotted deer. The troupe of langurs was busy gorging on the Mahua flowers, and a few flowers that fell on the ground were immediately gulped by the spotted deer. This was a perfect example of the association between two different species, and their coordination with each other was a sight to behold! As my vehicle swiftly moved away, the delicious scent of Mahua flowers lingered in my mind.

Near Tadoba Lake, the Wild Boar was busy having leisure time in the mud pool, while the Sambar was submerged in water and eating Waterthyme.

During a 20-minute drive, I tried to absorb everything around me. The cool breeze passing by was eager to tell a story of the tigers. While passing through the perennial Nallah, a strong spray marking smell came from the nearby Arjuna tree, hinting at the presence of a tiger around us. We knew that some of the wild creatures we were seeking also traveled along man-made roads, which often formed their

easiest route. Not very surprisingly, I was in the territory of T-192.

Silently passing along the bank of the stream, we gently moved further on the trail leading to Nallah to place cameras. It took us another 10-15 minutes to select the site and place the cameras while our alert minds were constantly hinting about the presence of wild beasts around us. It often happens that you do not see a tiger, but it sees you even before you sight it.

We moved back even more silently now, our eyes glued to the windows of our vehicle and there she was sitting in a water pool! She continuously looked at her reflection in the water, just like our domestic cats or dogs. It was the first time I had ever seen a wild cat sitting like a monk, lost in its own world. Tigers are a mystery; no one can claim to know everything about them. Every sighting is extraordinary, and every observation adds to the existing information. But, like us, we should respect their space.

We must have passed her just a few minutes before, but our eyes missed her. Spending a few minutes with the charismatic soul of the tiger, with its magical stripe patterns that make it easy to blend in with its surroundings, was a privilege. And do you know how we identify them individually? Like fingerprints of humans that don't match with each other, tigers have unique stripe patterns that enable us to identify and count the number of individuals captured on camera traps.

- Prajakta Hushangabadkar  
Wildlife Biologist, TATR







## Aura of Contentment

It was the very first of the six safaris we had planned at Tadoba in March 2023. As we ambled along for some time in the Kolara core zone, we noticed a couple of jeeps parked near a water body. Immediately, we clutched our cameras with the hope of a tiger sighting. However, as we approached the jeeps, we saw looks of boredom on the faces of the other tourists. When our guide inquired, we were pointed towards a tiger sleeping at the edge of the waterbody, hidden behind the bushes. We could only catch a partial glimpse of the tiger. We were told that it was T-126, also known as Chota Matka, who had been resting there since morning.

More jeeps joined and left after seeing no movement. However, we decided to wait for some more time and moved our gypsy to a spot where we could get a better view

of the sleeping tiger. To our luck, Chota Matka stirred, turned around, and lay down again, now facing us. Through a small window of view between the bushes, we got a clear view of his face.

It suddenly struck me that in our usual clamour for a 'head-on' walking shot, we often miss out on the inherent gentleness of every animal, regardless of its size. Sleeping peacefully with his eyes closed, the massive King of the jungle looked like an innocent baby. Although his face bore the scars of battles fought, there was an aura of contentment around him. I found this image, reflecting tranquillity, much more appealing than the usual aggressive 'looking into the camera' shots.

- Saurabh Dhanorkar  
Tourism, Pune



## Make A Wish

Most tourists visit tiger reserves like TATR to watch and photograph the majestic tiger. However, during my recent visit to TATR, my main goal was to capture a good photograph of the elusive Grey Jungle Fowl and Tadoba did not disappoint me. I was

able to capture satisfactory images of this beautiful bird.

Of course, this does not mean that spotting a tiger was not on our wish list. My elder son and I have been fortunate enough to have seen the tiger multiple times before, but my wife and younger son had yet to witness this magnificent creature in the wild. I had assured them that Tadoba would fulfill their wish, and it did!

On March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023, we entered Moharli gate for a morning safari. As recommended by our guide, we visited Telia Lake and then Aswalhira Waterbody. Even though we could hear the roaring of tigers, we were not able to spot any throughout the safari. However, as we were returning back, we noticed several gypsies waiting on the road with excitement. We stopped there for a while, and then a majestic tiger emerged from the thicket. This tiger was popularly known as Chota Dadhiyal! It was an incredibly thrilling moment that will forever remain alive in our minds, especially in my wife's memory.

This is how Tadoba fulfilled my both the wishes.

- Narendra Kumar Meshram  
Meteorologist, Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh



## Darr Ke Aage Jeet Hai

Recently, I visited Tadoba in April 2023. I entered through the Kolara Gate into the forest on a hot afternoon. Guided by an experienced naturalist, I was directed to a spot known for possible tiger sightings. Without wasting any time, I made my way there and was greeted with an awe-inspiring sight. Yuvraj, a massive male tiger, was resting by a small water body at the edge of the forest. His magnificent appearance left me stunned as I observed his beautiful stripes, white whiskers, and serene composure through my binoculars.

My reverie was interrupted by the sudden and loud alarm calls of three Sambar deer on the other side of the water body. It was my first time witnessing Sambar calls, their cautious body language, and signs of dehydration as they were visibly thirsty. Despite their fear, they were hesitant to approach the water due to the presence of the formidable Yuvraj.

But one female Sambar deer mustered up the courage to approach the water cautiously, keeping a constant watch



on the predator. She quenched her thirst and retreated with unwavering vigilance. Yuvraj remained unfazed, simply giving her a scary glance. It was a defining moment, a triumph over fear, and a lesson learned from the forest - "Dar ke aage jeet hai"

In contrast, the other Sambar deer, lacking the same courage, retreated into the forest without drinking water, succumbing to their fears. It was a powerful lesson in resilience and determination, never giving up despite challenges and uncertainties.

- Dr. Kalpana Anand Deshpande

Associate Professor, Grant Medical College, Mumbai

## Law of Nature

A garzari Buffer Zone is my favourite place. The serene backwaters of Irai Dam, the diverse array of animals and birds, and the satisfying experience of going on a safari have always captivated me.

During one of our ventures into this heavenly habitat, we stumbled upon a group of majestic bison. These heavy and powerful vegetarian creatures caught our attention, especially a week-old baby bison who was struggling to find its mother for milk. We were privileged to witness the tender moment when the mother decided to feed her baby right in the middle of the road in front of us. We were in awe as we watched this beautiful display of motherly love for nearly ten minutes, completely relaxed and comfortable.

Little did we know that a predator was lurking behind the bushes, planning its attack. T-127 Choti Madhu, a pregnant and hungry predator, had been on the hunt for a week. As she walked through the meadows, not a single blade of grass moved, indicating her stealthy movements. We patiently waited for an hour, hoping to catch a glimpse of her, but our safari time came to an end. It was later revealed that she made a kill just after we left.

This experience reminded me of the cruel laws of nature, where humans cannot anticipate what will happen next. It was a stark reminder of the circle of life and the unpredictable nature of the wild.



- Swapnil Jivan Hiwase

Sales Professional, Akola





CASHISH BAIKWADE

#### SUNDAY MOOD!

Even the King of the jungle needs a break! Taru, the majestic male tiger, takes a moment to relax by the lakeside in the Agarzari buffer area of TATR.



## Those 37 Days!

**O**n the auspicious day of Gudi Padwa, 13th April 2021, I alighted from the Mumbai-Nagpur Duranto Express at Nagpur station. Despite the nationwide battle with the second wave of Covid-19 and talks of an impending strict lockdown, I was brimming with excitement at the prospect of heading to Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve, one of India's best tiger reserves. For over 15 years, I had been visiting Tadoba as a wildlife enthusiast, but this trip was different. I was to participate in Tadoba's Summer Internship Program, working for them for a whole month!

I was picked up by Anirudh Chaoji, the then Chief Naturalist of TATR, at Nagpur station, and our journey from Nagpur to Chandrapur was a truly enlightening one. Chaoji Sir regaled me with his experiences in wildlife and community development, and at the forest department headquarters in Chandrapur, I had the pleasure of meeting the incredibly dedicated IFS Officer Dr. Jitendra Ramgaokar, Field Director of TATR. Dr. Ramgaokar briefed me on my responsibilities for the next month - to design a communication plan for TATR, which included drafting a social media plan, preparing a CSR pitch, documenting the untold stories of Tadoba, and conceptualizing the first-ever newsletter of TATR. As someone who had spent over twenty years in mainstream journalism with a passion for wildlife and communication, it was a golden opportunity! I even offered to participate in fieldwork outside my assigned duties, to which Dr. Ramgaokar graciously agreed. I left his cabin with a head full of excitement.

Chaoji Sir then took me to Telia Kuti, a cottage near the MTDC resort in Moharli village, which would be my home for the next 37 days. It was an isolated place, situated on the border of the Junona buffer forest and in the middle of



the curve of the Moharli Lake, frequented by all kinds of wild animals, including tigers.

A few days after my arrival, a strict lockdown was announced, and TATR was closed to tourists. With almost no human activity, the place became even more isolated, and I had the rare opportunity to observe wildlife from my window and backyard. I shared Telia Kuti with Chaoji Sir and Sudhendra Sonawane, another young intern from Ahmednagar. Every day, at 5.00 am, Chaoji Sir and I took a four-kilometer morning walk, discussing and debating wildlife and conservation issues, making my stay even more meaningful. Besides my human companions, I had the company of a stray dog we called Bibat or Rocky, a family of rats, a pair of frogs, a couple of dozen lizards, and hundreds of ants. A giant lizard had made the backyard its home, and a hare came to enjoy the soft grass in the front yard every night. While different types of birds were frequent visitors, the snake was an occasional guest.

Those 37 days were the happiest and most enriching days of my life. Under Dr. Ramgaokar's guidance, I designed a newsletter during this period, which was launched in December 2021 as *Tadoba Diaries*. Since then, my bond with Tadoba has grown stronger, and every subsequent visit has blessed me with unforgettable experiences, which I will continue to share through this column.

- Anant Sonawane  
Communications Officer, TATR

## Contribute to 'Tadoba Diaries'

Are you a forest department staff, tourist, guide, driver, working with a resort, managing a home stay or a community member from TATR vicinity? Do you want to join our effort to spread awareness on forest and wildlife conservation through 'Tadoba Diaries'? Please share your interesting photographs (not less than 4 MB) and experiences (not more than 250 words) on [tadobadiaries2021@gmail.com](mailto:tadobadiaries2021@gmail.com). Your photograph/experience must be related to TATR only. The best content will be published with due credit.





## Double Hunt

The winter morning of 2018 was a spectacle to behold. As I entered the Kolara buffer gate with my guests, I could feel the excitement in the air. The anticipation of a majestic sighting of the ferocious tigers was palpable. And boy, did we hit the jackpot!

As we ventured further, we found ourselves a mere 300 meters away from the infamous Junabai Kuti. There she was! Tigress T-82, also known as Junabai, was strolling nonchalantly down the road with her three cubs.

But, we weren't the only ones. Other tourist vehicles had also arrived to witness the magical sighting of the tigers. Junabai put on quite the show, and then disappeared into the bushes, with her cubs in tow. As the other vehicles drove off, anticipating the tigers to emerge on the other

side, I decided to wait and watch.

And that's when things took a dramatic turn.

All of a sudden, Junabai made a sharp turn and headed back our way, her cubs trailing behind. We were now the only ones left to witness the exclusive sighting. Then, Junabai's instincts kicked in as she spotted a herd of wild boars nearby. She moved into hunting mode, and with lightning speed, she pounced on a young boar, fatally injuring it.

But that wasn't enough for the fierce tigress. She chased down a full-grown boar, and what followed was a fierce and brutal fight for survival. For 52 minutes, all we could hear was the sound of wild boar fighting for its life and we were transfixed. The other gypsies had returned to the spot, drawn in by the sound of the intense battle. Finally, the sound ceased, and the victorious Junabai emerged from the nallah, walking towards the water hole.

Meanwhile, her cubs were having a great time playing with the fatally injured piglet. And soon, they killed it.

It was a sighting that will forever be etched in my memory as the most thrilling and memorable one in my entire career as a safari guide. The majestic and fierce Junabai, with her cubs, put on a show of nature's might and the circle of life. Truly unforgettable!

- Asish Jiotode  
Guide, Kolara Gate



## Ferns Formed Coal

Many forests, like Tadoba, face a unique problem: they sit on top of a huge resource - coal. Big businesses are eyeing these vast coal deposits, essential sources of energy in today's world. However, we are all aware that coal mining and its use as a fuel cause significant environmental problems.

Did you know that this coal was formed by the burial of

dense and swampy forests of giant ferns, reeds, and mosses during the Carboniferous era, around 300-325 million years ago? Interestingly, coal was never formed before this time and rarely after it. Can you guess why?

It turns out that there were hardly any decomposers then, so the great ferns, after dying, didn't decompose and remained well-preserved. Heat and pressure produced chemical and physical changes in the plant layers, which forced out oxygen and left behind rich carbon deposits. As time passed, they were buried deeper and deeper, and temperature and pressure started building up, which led to their transformation into coal.

We can still see many ferns around our forest streams where there is no water logging, but significant moisture remains. Such stream side soils have lost most of their nutrition to erosion, and only iron remains, making them red and acidic. Most ferns prefer such acidic soils to grow well. Based on the percentage of carbon, oxygen, and hydrogen present in coal, it is classified as lignin, bituminous, and anthracite, with anthracite being the highest grade.

So next time you see ferns, don't think of these pteridophytes as lowly plants. In fact, we should thank them for powering industrial development across the world.

- Anirudh Chaoji  
Senior Naturalist





## Lesson from the Wild

There are some dates that are etched into your memory forever. Dates that leave an indelible mark on your soul. For me, that date is 20<sup>th</sup> June 2019. It was a day that taught me the biggest lesson of my professional life, a lesson I will never forget.

Tadoba, my first posting as a Forest Guard! I completed my training from October to March of 2019 and had just joined the Karwa range. Little did I know that within four months of starting my first job, I would have an encounter that would test my courage and leave me with a newfound respect for the wilderness.

It was a crisp, cool morning after a night of rain. I set out on foot patrol in my assigned beat at Piparheti round, accompanied by two watchers who carried axes, while I had a simple stick in hand. My assistant was unwell, so it was just the three of us.

Around 8:30 am, as we turned a bend in the road, the watchers noticed some movement in the bushes. Their trained eyes picked up on the slight movement of ears, and before we could comprehend what was happening, a majestic tigress leaped out of the bushes and charged toward us. As a rookie guard, I was taken completely by surprise. My feet froze, my heart pounded in my chest, and my stick slipped from my hand. The tigress was just a few feet away from me, and fear enveloped me like a shroud.

Instinctively, I raised my hands and shouted at the top of my lungs. The tigress changed her direction and passed by me, but she wasn't done yet. She turned and charged again, and



this time, the watchers and I stood together, shouting and waving our axes and stick wildly. Miraculously, she stopped just a few feet away from us and retreated once more. She circled back for a third time, roaring ferociously, but again stopped short of attacking us directly. Instead, she stood her ground, glaring at us with eyes full of fury.

We slowly backed away, keeping our eyes fixed on her until we reached a safe distance. It was a heart-pounding experience, and I was trembling with fear, but I was also in awe of the power and beauty of the tigress. Later, I learned that she was a famous tigress known as Patlin, and she had two tiny cubs. That explained her aggression - she was fiercely protecting her offspring, just as I was doing my duty as a Forest Guard.

Returning to the spot with a team of experienced members, we found tiny pugmarks on the wet soil nearby, confirming the presence of her cubs. It was a humbling reminder that we were mere visitors in their domain, and we had inadvertently crossed paths with a mother's protective instincts.

That day, I learned a valuable lesson about the untamed wilderness and the responsibilities of being a Forest Guard. It was a lesson in humility, respect, and understanding of the wildlife that I had pledged to protect. The encounter with Patlin left an indelible mark on me, reminding me of the awe-inspiring power of nature and the importance of coexisting with the wildlife that calls the forest its home. It was an experience that I will never forget, and it shaped me into a better Forest Guard, ready to face the challenges of the wild with newfound wisdom and respect.

- Vikas Karkade  
Forest Guard, Karwa Range, TATR





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## A THRILLING ENCOUNTER

**D**eep in the heart of Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve, an exhilarating encounter between two of the jungle's most fearsome creatures was about to unfold. As we entered the gate, we learned that a male tiger had been spotted during the morning safari near water hole number 244. Without wasting any time, we immediately drove to the location, where we found the tiger relaxing in the pool. Around 4:30 p.m., the tiger emerged from the pool and disappeared into the bushes.

After that incredible tiger sighting, we considered venturing into the Junabai and cubs' area. However, there was no evidence of her or the cubs' presence in that region. So we took a moment to enjoy a cup of tea and discuss our next move. Junabai was an option, but we decided to take a chance and go to another area where a leopardess with melanistic kittens had been spotted a few days back.

As we approached the location, the sounds of the jungle began to stir with langurs making loud alarm calls. We saw the leopardess heading towards the waterhole, and our excitement grew as we expected her to call her cubs out. But to our surprise, something unexpected happened.

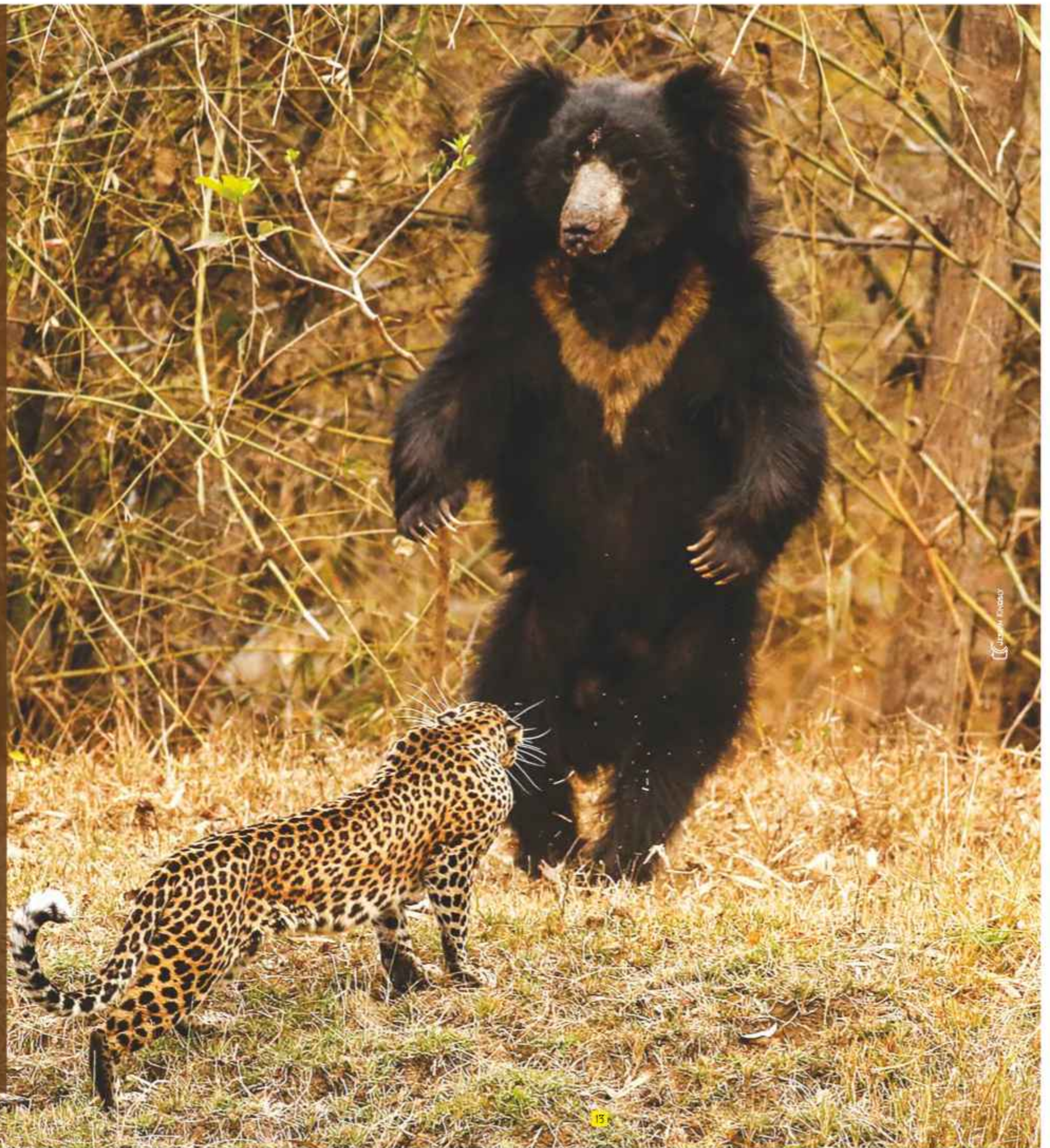
The leopardess suddenly changed her body language, crouched low to the ground, and began stalking. As she drew closer, a sudden commotion erupted in the forest. Out of nowhere, a huge sloth bear emerged, snarling and growling as it charged towards the leopardess. The two animals faced off, sizing each other up for a battle.

We were transfixed as we watched the incredible scene unfold before our eyes. The leopardess was clearly more agile, but the sloth bear was a formidable opponent with its massive size and sharp claws. They stood their ground, ready to engage in a fierce encounter.

Finally, the sloth bear moved away and drank water from the pond before leaving the area, while the leopardess kept a watchful eye on it. It was time for her to have her evening drinks. She drank water for over 10-15 minutes as if she hadn't had any since the morning.

We were startled by this extraordinary once-in-a-lifetime sighting. Witnessing the face-off between the leopardess and the sloth bear was truly extraordinary, and the image of that intense moment will stay with us for the rest of our lives.

- Ranjit Mandal  
Svasara Jungle Lodge, Kolara, TATR











**GUARDIANS OF THE NIGHT!** A rare sight captured by a camera trap – an Asian Palm Civet and a Nightjar teaming up to keep a watchful eye over the forests of Tadoba.

## THE ACHIEVERS - March 2023

**P**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 March 2023

Forest Guard - K. L. Kadam  
Beat - Sonegaon  
Round - Sonegaon  
Range - Tadoba  
Division - Core TATR  
Duration - 15 Days  
Target - 125 km/Month  
Actual Patrolling - 210.10 Km



Forest Guard - V. L. Karadbhuj  
Beat - Valni  
Round - Mahadwadi  
Range - Chandrapur (Buffer)  
Division - Buffer TATR  
Duration - 22 Days  
Target - 125 km/Month  
Actual Patrolling - 313.32 Km



## Conservation through Community Development



**T**ATR involves local communities in forest conservation and supports them through various livelihood initiatives. Participatory eco-tourism initiatives are a milestone and a change-maker model of the TATR buffer zone, providing direct employment to more

than 1,000 locals and indirect support to over 10,000 families.

TATR collaborated with the ICICI Foundation to establish the Vanya Jeevan Skill Development Academy in Pangadi, providing training in repairing domestic appliances, and solar and LED technology. So far, 240 youths have been trained and employed in corporate companies, and presently, 60 youths are receiving training, while 28 local women have been trained in hospitality.

Additionally, 175 youths were trained in driving and working independently, and 29 youths associated with the Forest Academy, Chandrapur received training in mobile and laptop repair. To empower local women, an ornamental skill training program was organized, and the Self-Help Group (SHG) in Agarzari and Madanapur Nature Education Campsite was involved in training for hospitality and catering.



## Don't Sulk; Just Enjoy

For nearly thirty years, I have been traveling through forests, and for the last twenty, I have done so with a camera in hand. We all have our own wish lists, especially when exploring nature. It may seem foolish, but what is life, and nature, without a bit of whimsy? Over the years, I have ticked many items off my wish list, but one remained unchecked: seeing a sloth bear mother carrying her cubs on her back. I knew this was a rare sight, as sloth bear sightings are already scarce, and mothers with cubs are even more protective.

I had been waiting for twenty years for this moment, but I also knew that the forest listens to those who call it with their hearts. And what better place than Tadoba to call upon? We were waiting for tiger cubs at a watering hole when we saw them crossing the road. I was sure they would show up again, so we waited for the other vehicles to clear out. Then, a new gypsy arrived, and during a casual conversation with the driver and guide, they mentioned seeing a mother sloth bear with cubs on the way to the same watering hole. They didn't stop to observe the bear, however, as they were in search of tigers.

The mention of cubs caught my attention, and I asked our guide where this spot was. He informed us that the location was just five minutes away. I told him to forget about the tigers and take me to the sloth bear instead. It was a risk, as the tiger cubs and their mother could have appeared at any moment, and chasing a sloth bear in the dark is like diving into the unknown. However, when the mother bear is carrying cubs, her pace is slower, and they're also likely in search of water due to the heat. We set off on our quest.

Luckily, most of the gypsies in the area were waiting at the watering hole, so the road was quiet. As we rounded a bend, we saw the female sloth bear with two small, black fur balls following her. Our first goal was achieved - we had sighted the sloth bear mother with her cubs. Now, we hoped to observe her carrying them on her back as she walked, and take some photos. Suddenly, we heard the engine of another gypsy coming towards us in the distance. My heart sank, as sloth bears are shy animals, and we were around a bend, so the mother bear couldn't see us. The approaching gypsy would definitely scare them away into the bushes behind. We started flashing our upper-deeper lights to signal the other gypsy to stop, and fortunately, they understood and stopped at a safe distance, allowing the sloth bear and her cubs to continue their foraging.

Then, the moment we had been waiting for arrived. The mother sloth bear turned around as her cubs tried to climb onto her back, sending my heart racing. At last, I saw at least one cub riding on her back, with the other trying to follow suit. I managed to capture the sight with my camera, although at one point, our driver had wrongly positioned the gypsy, making it difficult to get the perfect shot. At that moment, I felt like cursing him, but then I realized what I had been waiting for so long was happening right in front of my eyes. I shouldn't be sulking about not getting the perfect shot; I should be enjoying the entire experience. So, I kept looking at the mother sloth bear, happily taking whatever photos I could. This sighting not only enabled me to cross off a long-standing item on my wish list but has made me understand that life is amazing for what it gifts you rather than sulking for what it has not given me!

- Sanjay Deshpande  
Wildlife Enthusiast  
Sanjeevani Developers, Pune



### MY FOREST MY HOME



When We Build Your Home in Pune,  
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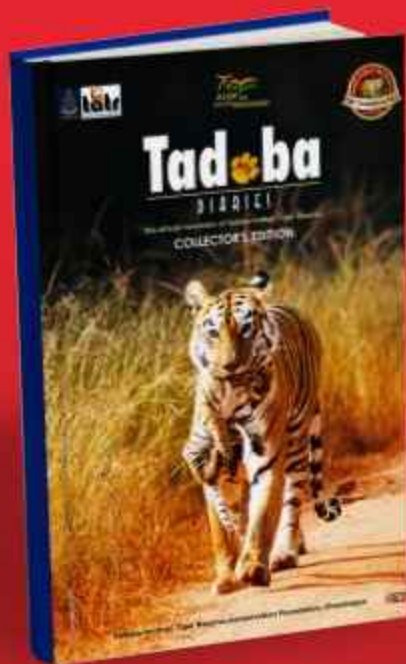
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