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Tadoba

DIARIES

The Official Newsletter of Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve

Himanshu Bhat

Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve Conservation Foundation, Chandrapur

30/-

SUMMER TEST, MONSOON CHALLENGE

Dear Reader

The first rains of monsoon bring miraculous changes to the forests and bring them alive once again with almost overnight greening of vast stretches of dried-out forests. It also brings great relief to the forest department as it heralds the end of the constant threat of forest fire which has kept all forest personnel on their toes throughout the summer.

This summer was more special because of the increased vulnerability of the forest to the fire because of flowered and dried inflammable bamboo that littered the forest floor across Tadoba and the surrounding landscape. It is difficult to imagine the devastating effect of fire in such situations, as it becomes practically impossible to extinguish such fire.

Fortunately, at Tadoba, we had made our plans well in advance and carried out fire prevention works like creating wide fire breaks, maintaining them regularly, deploying additional fire fighting teams at strategic locations, equipping them with the right firefighting gears and most importantly, keeping 24x7 vigil on every inch of the forest either from our fire watch towers or scanning the satellite data of various fire alert providing agencies at our control room at Chandrapur. This ensured that whenever there was fire, we could respond immediately, and the fire was contained within a small area to ensure that the burnt area was minimal per incident.

You must have read in the news about the devastating forest fires in Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh due to extreme heat waves. Such fires damage entire landscapes and disturb the ecological integrity of the area. It severely affects wildlife which has nowhere to go when entire forests are on fire.

Fortunately, we did not face nature's fury in the summers and this year we could limit the fire to only about 6.23 ha out of 1,72,700 ha of the entire Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve, which is an exceptional achievement going by the incidences of fire across the country. While there has been no fire incident in the core area, only two incidents have been registered in the buffer area of the TATR. This is the lowest number in the past five years. A total of 30 incidents (484.61 ha burnt) in 2022, 76 fires (963.46 ha burnt) in 2021, and 15 fire incidents (64.86 ha burnt) were recorded in 2020.

Now, with the beginning of the monsoon, nature has turned a page. Forests are teeming with young fawns as the abundant grass in the season makes it a wonderful breeding season. Tigers, especially the young ones looking to disperse in search of new territories, make their moves as the increased vegetation provides them excellent cover to go unnoticed.

But this also increases the possibility of them coming in contact with human habitations and agricultural fields where they might end up in conflict. We take special measures through our Primary Response Teams and frontline workforce to keep a close watch on dispersing tigers, and their path and try to avoid any unpleasant situations.

While we have passed the summer test with extraordinary grades, we are prepared to face the monsoon challenge.

Dr. Jitendra Ramgaokar

Field Director, TATR
and Executive Director, TATR Conservation Foundation

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A STORY OF DISPERSAL AND SURVIVAL

Our team was thrilled when we came across a camera trap image from the Saoli range in the Chandrapur district. The image captured a young male tiger that had originally been spotted in our Warora range. This four-year-old tiger, born to a female in Warora, had embarked on an incredible journey, travelling more than 120 km in search of his own territory.

Tigers typically leave their mothers between 18 to 24 months old to establish their own territories. Our young male tiger began this process of dispersal around the age of two and a half years. In October 2023, he was caught on a camera trap in Pombhurna, over 75 km from Warora. Intriguingly, he was seen with a tigress, indicating he had found a mate. He stayed in Pombhurna for four months before moving on and was next captured on a camera trap in Saoli in May 2024. His journey offers fascinating insights into the dispersal behaviour of tigers.

Tigers are highly territorial animals, and conflicts with other tigers often drive them to disperse. Dispersal is a complex process influenced by both natural and human factors. Males usually disperse to find new territories and mates, whereas females tend to remain in their birth areas. Records show that tigers can travel remarkable distances. For instance, last year, an adult male tiger from Bramhapuri in the Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve landscape travelled 2,000 km, eventually reaching the forests of Odisha. He crossed several states, including Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, and Chhattisgarh. In 2021, an 18-month-old female tiger set the record for the longest dispersal by a tigress, settling in a forest 99 km away from her home in Panna Tiger Reserve, Madhya Pradesh.

Understanding the dispersal routes of tigers is essential for their conservation. While radio-collaring is the most effective method to track a tiger's movements, it is not feasible to

collar every individual. Instead, matching images from camera traps is the most widely used method. This approach helps us piece together the routes and patterns of dispersal.

Tiger habitats in India are fragmented and interspersed with human-dominated landscapes. During dispersal, tigers navigate through small habitat patches that provide temporary refuge for resting and foraging. These patches are crucial for the success of long-distance dispersal events. Conserving such areas is vital for facilitating future dispersal. It is also important not to label a tiger sighting in human habitats as a 'conflict.' Allowing tigers to pass through human-dominated areas peacefully is key to coexistence. This highlights the need for conservation efforts beyond protected areas, including corridors, agricultural lands, and reserve forests, which are essential for sustaining tiger populations and enabling their range expansion.

Our young male tiger too crossed numerous villages, agricultural fields, and urban areas on his way to Saoli. He was likely seen by humans and may have encountered other tigers. Although he stayed in Pombhurna for four months, he did not settle there. It is uncertain whether he will establish a territory in Saoli. If he finds the area safe, with an adequate prey base, suitable mates, and minimal competition, he may settle. Otherwise, he will continue his search for a territory of his own.

The journey of this young male tiger underscores the importance of understanding and supporting the natural dispersal processes of tigers. By protecting and connecting fragmented habitats, we can ensure the survival and expansion of tiger populations across India.

- Noor Ali Sayyed

Wildlife Biologist, Central Chanda

WHERE DID THE TIGERS GO?

A mere century ago, tigers roamed across the vast expanse of the Indian subcontinent and indeed across a large part of South Asia, Southeast Asia, and Europe. A conversation with your grandparents would reveal that back in the day, tigers were not that hard to come by. Even without an integrated Protected Area (PA) network, tigers were thriving across the geographical extent of India. The remnants of this truth lie in the fact that even today, tigers are found in a variety of diverse forest types in the country, whether it be the dry deciduous forests of Central India, the evergreen forests of the Western and Eastern Ghats, the arid shrubby forests of Western India, the grasslands of the Terai, or the marshlands of the Sundarbans. Recent research indicates tiger presence even in the Eastern Himalayas of Arunachal Pradesh. If forest types and terrain are not a limiting factor for the distribution of tigers, what could have stopped the regal beast from wandering where its heart desired?

Over the course of a hundred years, the geographical range of tigers has gone down by 93% with tigers now occupying fragmented forest patches in South Asia, Southeast Asia, and a small chunk of Siberia. When it comes to absolute numbers, the historical count of approximately a hundred thousand tigers in India has come down to less than 4,000 tigers in the wild today. Of the nine subspecies of tigers that walked the planet, three subspecies – The Caspian, Javan, and Balinese tigers are extinct. The South China tiger is also functionally extinct with a tiger not having been spotted in the wild for over 25 years. How does an apex predator like the tiger end up occupying less than 4% of its historic range in the mere course of a hundred years? Well, the answer lies in the presence of a more dangerous, technologically advanced being on the planet – the Homo sapiens.

Owing to their beauty, tigers are admired across the globe but

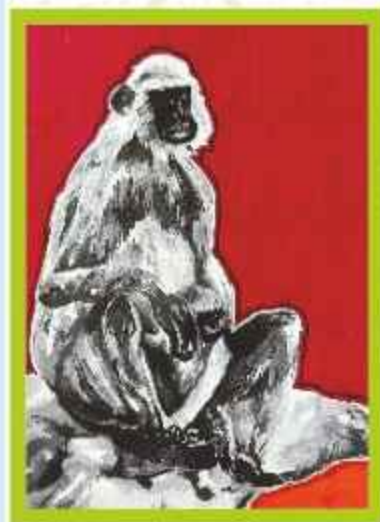


they are equally feared as ferocious beasts that would kill fragile humans if they ever encounter one. In reality, though, the contrary is true! Major threats to the survival of tigers in the wild include – habitat loss and destruction, poaching and illegal wildlife trade, human-wildlife conflict, fragmentation of forests and reduced connectivity, and funnily enough the illegal pet trade. As forests are cleared to make way for agricultural and rural expansion, there is less space for tigers to flourish. To cope with the lack of habitat, tigers often venture into human-dominated spaces getting into altercations with people, often ending with the large carnivores being persecuted, or worse, poisoned. Another major threat to wild tigers in Southeast Asia is the conversion of forests to monoculture plantations of oil palm, a cash crop that is set to replace native biodiversity wherever it is established.

In the absence of integrative conservation measures, it is unlikely that tigers will make it into the wild over the course of the next decade, especially in countries other than India where tiger numbers are dwindling.

Interesting Factoid: Currently, more tigers are living in captivity or as pets than tigers surviving in the wild!

- Yashaswi Rao
Wildlife Biologist, TATR



Monkey Business

Gray Langurs dot Tadoba and can be seen quite commonly, hanging around in villages, colonies, resorts, and the streets. However, the Langurs in and around Tadoba will not care much for humans (unless provoked), for they have plenty to eat in the forest. They simply lounge around with their little ones. Young Langurs are darker in colour, fur-less, and uncannily notorious. Watch the older ones as they put their arm around them protectively and pull them close snarling their potentially nasty teeth or watch their graceful tails coil and uncoil to cover the width of the entire road. Observing Langurs is the most palpable proof of just how much we have in common with the wild!

- Shreya Khadilkar
Visual Designer

FARMERS OF FORESTS & FIELDS

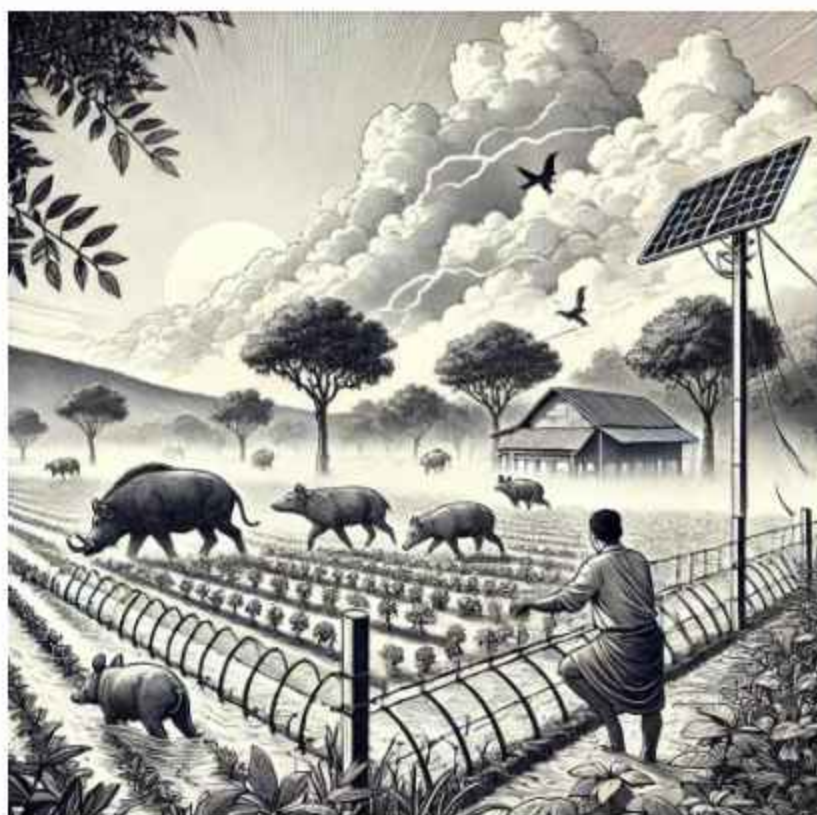
As the monsoon clouds gather over Tadoba, the end of the tourist season signals a new chapter for the local communities. With tourism winding down, the focus shifts to agriculture, the primary livelihood for the majority of the population in this region. This seasonal transition brings promises of growth and renewal, but also a host of challenges, chief among them crop depredation by wildlife.

Agriculture is the backbone of life across the Tadoba landscape. The arrival of the monsoons is eagerly awaited as they mark the beginning of the farming season. Fields that lay dormant during the dry months come alive with the promise of crops that will sustain families and communities. However, this period of intense agricultural activity also brings sleepless nights for farmers, who must guard their fields against nocturnal raids by wild herbivores.

While wild boars, often called the "farmers of the forest" for their habit of digging up the land, are notorious for their destructive behaviour, they are not the only wildlife posing a threat to the fields. Herbivores such as deer and nilgai (blue bulls) cause significant damage to crops. These animals often venture out of the forest and into farmlands in search of food. The reasons for this encroachment are multifaceted. Habitat loss, competition for resources, and changes in the ecosystem all contribute to wildlife straying into agricultural fields. This situation is exacerbated during the monsoons when the lush crops present an attractive and easily accessible food source.

The human-wildlife conflict in the TATR region is a complex issue that requires multifaceted solutions. Traditional methods such as fences and scare tactics offer limited success against the persistent threat of these herbivores. Farmers often resort to night watches, taking turns to guard their fields, which can be physically exhausting and mentally draining. Community-based initiatives that involve local farmers in wildlife management strategies have shown promise. These initiatives focus on finding a balance that allows both agriculture and wildlife to coexist. Improved crop protection techniques, better land use planning, and compensation schemes for crop losses are some of the measures that can help mitigate this conflict.

To address these challenges, there is a need for sustainable and innovative approaches. Integrating modern technology,



such as solar-powered electric fences and motion-sensor alarms, provides more effective deterrents against wildlife incursions. Additionally, promoting agroforestry and buffer zones around farmlands creates natural barriers that reduce the likelihood of herbivores entering cultivated areas.

At TATR, community engagement is strengthened, and education on wildlife behaviour and conservation is provided to foster a more harmonious relationship between humans and wildlife. When local communities are actively involved in conservation efforts, they are more likely to support and participate in sustainable practices that benefit both their livelihoods and the environment.

This transition from tourism to agriculture around Tadoba highlights the multifaceted challenges faced by local communities. As the monsoons breathe new life into the fields, they also bring the perennial struggle against wildlife to the forefront. Addressing this issue requires a nuanced understanding of the human-wildlife dynamic and a commitment to finding solutions that benefit both people and animals. For the farmers of Tadoba, the monsoon season is a time of hope and hard work. It is also a showcase of their resilience and their critical role in maintaining the delicate balance of this unique ecosystem.

- Saket Agasti
Social Scientist, TATR

Book your safaris only through the official booking site:
<https://mytadoba.mahaforest.gov.in>



DEEP IN A TIGER'S YAWN!

Our TATR trip was an impulsive decision to celebrate my 50th birthday. I was born in the year Project Tiger was launched, and this seemed like a fitting tribute to the magnificent creature.

I contacted a tour operator, who accompanied my husband, me, and another family there. I have been on many safaris within and outside India. Everywhere else, when we spotted an animal, we clicked a few pictures and moved on in search of another sighting. So, I was very surprised in TATR to see the driver and guide patiently waiting for a tiger upon hearing alarm calls from deer or when we spotted a peacefully sleeping tiger.

One such afternoon, we chanced upon a sub-adult daughter of tigress T-163, popularly known as Collarwali. Initially, near a solar-powered waterhole, we saw langurs on the ground and ignored them. Little did we know that the tiger was resting right beside them, and the langurs were brave to be sitting so near. We went back and enjoyed observing her different lazy moods. We took photos of her sleeping, stretching, yawning, and then suddenly becoming alert and ready for action, even denying a sloth bear access to 'her'



Shyam Nambiar

water with just angry glares. When reviewing photos while awaiting the next action, we zoomed in on one of her yawning, and saw that her upper left canine was missing (and she was just a sub-adult)! She had a big 'U' on both cheeks, and our excited tour operator named her Urmila—I hope this name sticks!

What an unforgettable 50th birthday it was!

- Shweta Chitrodia
Home Maker, Dubai

AN EMOTIONAL MOMENT

I began my journey as a safari guide in October 2023, and just a month later, I experienced the most unforgettable sighting of my career. It was a crisp morning, and we had been on the safari for over an hour without any tiger sightings. Suddenly, the alarm calls of spotted deer and monkeys echoed through the forest, coming from the direction of the main road. I immediately directed our vehicle to head there.

Upon reaching the main road, we found other tourist vehicles from the Junona, Dewada, and Adegaon gates already lined up, having heard the same calls. Everyone waited patiently and with anticipation. Then, she appeared—T-127, popularly known as Choti Madhu, walked gracefully onto the road. She paused in the middle, making a soft sound. From the bushes, a tiny cub, about four months old, emerged and joined her. It was my first time seeing such a small cub, and my heart swelled with awe.

Choti Madhu led the first cub across the road and then returned, standing in the middle once more. She made the same soft call, and soon the second cub came running to her.

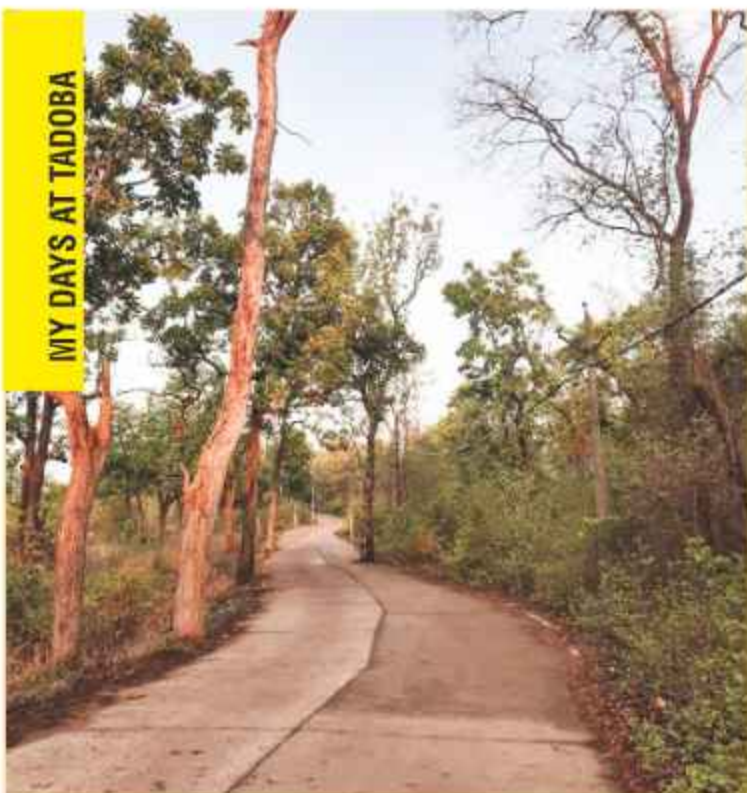


Nayan Mondhe

She guided this cub across the road as well, ensuring both were safely on the other side.

Witnessing the tigress and her two tiny cubs was an emotional and unforgettable experience. It's a moment that will forever be etched in my memory, reminding me of the incredible beauty and wonder of the wild.

- Manish Jawade
Guide, Adegaon Gate, TATR



ROAD TO HEAVEN

Last month, the renowned tigress T-163, popularly known as Collarwali, was seen taking a leisurely stroll along the concrete road that bridges the Junona buffer forest and the Moharli Lake. Though this stretch is barely a kilometer long, it's a veritable road to heaven for wildlife sightings. A 100-150 meter portion of this road is flanked by thick bushes, creating a natural corridor for animals. On one side, you have the serene Moharli Lake, and on the other, a grassy expanse connecting to the buffer forest. This unique setup allows for frequent glimpses of wild animals crossing the road.

During the lockdown in April-May 2021, I had the incredible opportunity to stay at the Telia Kuti near the MTDC resort. With tourism at a standstill due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the entire forest seemed to converge on this singular road. Every morning, I watched from my window as herds of spotted deer made their way to the lake. At night, lying in bed, I listened to their alarm calls—a sound that became my favourite lullaby.

Each day began with a morning walk alongside the then Chief Naturalist, Anirudh Chaoji. As the first rays of sunlight pierced the canopy, we embarked on a 5 km journey, often accompanied by a couple of local dogs. Just a few feet from Telia Kuti, opposite the FDCM rest house, the dogs would suddenly become agitated, reacting to a pungent odour. "This is the smell of a leopard's urine," Chaoji Sir would explain, "It must have marked its territory during its night patrol."

This road is a bird-watcher's paradise. On one side, you can see water birds such as Jacanas, Water Hens, Open-billed Storks, Bitterns, Herons, Black-winged Stilts, and various

types of ducks, not to mention the Kingfishers darting about. Near the Junona tourism gate, the forest comes alive with a variety of forest birds like Black-hooded Orioles, Barbets, Asian Paradise Flycatchers, various Cuckoos, Parakeets, and small birds like the Common Iora, Sunbirds, and Tailor Birds. Birds of prey, such as the Serpent Eagle and Changeable Hawk Eagle, are often seen perched high, scanning for their next meal. A pair of spotted owlets regularly greeted me from a Peepal tree near the forest rest house, and I still remember the thrill of spotting my first Indian Pitta at the Moharli village end.

Walking this road, I have even witnessed the migration of honey bees and encountered a fascinating array of species, from deadly scorpions to the majestic Indian Gaur. One morning, on my way back, I stumbled upon a dead Asian Palm Civet on a narrow path leading to the lake. I could closely observe this elusive creature. On another occasion, fresh scat from a sloth bear revealed Tendu seeds. "These are processed through the bear's stomach acids," Chaoji Sir said, "They will sprout easily." I collected those seeds, feeling a strange connection to the cycle of life in the forest.

The thrill of hearing alarm calls from spotted deer and langurs during my walks was a daily rush. While I often sensed the presence of a tiger or leopard, I never had a direct encounter. Once, I found myself mere feet away from a massive male Indian Gaur. Thankfully, he chose to ignore me, allowing me to continue my journey unscathed.

Walking along the road between Junona buffer forest and Moharli Lake is more than just a stroll—it's an immersion into the heart of the wild. The experiences and sightings on this road are memories etched in my heart, a testament to the beauty and unpredictability of nature. For any wildlife enthusiast, this is a road worth traveling, but with due caution.

- Anant Sonawane
Communications Officer, TATR



SIGHTING A FOX

It was my first visit to Tadoba, and I was fortunate to see a total of 13 individual tigers in four safaris. Watching tigers of all ages and sizes was indeed a feast for the eyes. The sighting of tigress T-7, popularly known as Choti Tara, and her cubs was the icing on the cake. However, I will never forget the morning when I spotted a fox on my own.

It was during the early hours of May 30th this year when we set out in our Gypsy to spot Choti Tara and her cubs from the Kolara gate. The air was still thick, and visibility was low due to the fog. As we entered the gate, just about 400 meters in, I spotted something as small as a cat moving on a small, flat plot of land. Asking our guide to stop, I looked through the binoculars, and to my surprise, what I thought was a cat turned out to be a fox! He had just hunted a small squirrel-like animal and was feasting on his kill. His tail rose high as he stared down at our jeep, with blood dripping from his mouth. Our guide informed us that spotting a fox during the safari was quite a rare occurrence. We were very fortunate to spot a fox in the first five minutes of our safari.

- Atharva Aher

Age- 18 years,

Class- FYBSC, UW Madison, Mumbai

TATR DD (BUFFER) IS NOW LIEUTENANT



It is a matter of great pride for Team TATR that Mr. Kushagra Pathak, the Deputy Director (Buffer) of TATR, has become the first forest officer in India to be commissioned into the Territorial Army! The 2016 batch Indian Forest Services (IFS) officer from the Maharashtra Cadre has achieved a historic milestone. Mr. Pathak has been commissioned to the 161 Battalion of the Territorial Army (Home and Hearth) in the Jammu and Kashmir Light Infantry (JAK LI). Mr. Pathak will join JAK LI as a Lieutenant (Lt) on July 1st. He will serve for two months in the Territorial Army and return to his duties at TATR for the remaining 10 months. Major General S. K. Vidyarthi, AVSM, SM, GOC Uttar Maharashtra, and Gujarat Sub Area, felicitated him on his commissioning to the TA and presented him with a set of Accoutrements at Nagpur.

Team TATR is immensely proud of Mr. Kushagra Pathak for his relentless dedication and outstanding achievements.

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.





© Pallavi Kulkarni, Red Earth

BOLD & FEARLESS! In the Kolsa range of TATR, this bold female leopard embraces a tree, rubbing her cheek against the bark and leaving scratch marks with her powerful claws. Just like a tiger, she fearlessly walks the roads, undeterred by tourist vehicles.



STORK-BILLED KINGFISHER

The Stork-billed Kingfisher (*Pelargopsis capensis*), the largest of the kingfishers, is easily identifiable by its massive scarlet bill. The head of this kingfisher is olive-brown, complemented by dark green-blue upper parts and buff underparts. Its wings and tail are a vibrant blue, with the rump being even paler, making it particularly noticeable in flight. Both males and females look similar.

The Stork-billed Kingfisher is widely distributed across India. In Tadoba, these birds are often seen singly or in pairs near lakes and streams. They can frequently be spotted perched on electric wires or tree branches in areas with water bodies. Their preference for well-wooded habitats near lakes, rivers, or coastal regions means they are often found in serene, verdant environments. This species is territorial and boldly chases away large predators to protect its domain. The Stork-billed Kingfisher is a versatile hunter. It preys on fish, frogs, crabs, rodents, reptiles, and even young birds. Its hunting method is both patient and precise, perching silently before swooping down on its unsuspecting prey.

The breeding season spans from January to July. Preferred nesting sites include large streams, rivers, and the edges of large water bodies with vegetated banks. Like other kingfishers, the Stork-billed Kingfisher creates tunnel-like nests in muddy walls near streams. The female lays four to five eggs in these nests, ensuring the continuation of their lineage.

- Rundan Katkar
Range Forest Officer, Kolsa, TATR

NUX-VOMICA

Every time I passed the Forest Rest House at Moharli, I would stop, captivated by the thick, shiny leaves of a few trees that are seldom seen elsewhere in Tadoba. It piqued my curiosity to learn about the person who introduced these Nux-vomica trees, typically found in the forests of the Western Ghats.

The beautiful *Strychnos nux-vomica*, commonly known as the poison fruit or Quaker button tree, is native to India and Southeast Asia. Locals in Moharli refer to it as the Kulcha or Kuchali tree. Its greenish-orange fruits resemble the Tendu fruit, but the locals are well aware of its highly poisonous nature. Nevertheless, we have often been surprised to see langurs and hornbills relishing the ripe fruits without being affected by their toxicity.

The poison is known to be fatal to humans, affecting the brain and causing muscle contractions, leading to convulsions and eventual death. The seeds contain a highly toxic and bitter alkaloid called strychnine, while the tree bark contains brucine and other toxic chemicals.

The seed is enclosed in a fruit similar to the Tendu fruit, with a smooth, hard shell and soft, jelly-like pulp.

The leaves of this tree are easily identified by their 'decussate' arrangement, with opposing pairs of leaves at right angles to the next pair. Be sure to look for this tree the next time you are in Moharli.

- Anirudh Chaoji
Senior Naturalist

ROLE OF WILDLIFE VETERINARIANS IN CONSERVATION AND CONFLICT MITIGATION

India is home to a rich and diverse wildlife population, with numerous protected areas such as national parks, wildlife sanctuaries, and tiger reserves. These regions play a crucial role in conserving endangered species and maintaining ecological balance. However, the presence of wildlife close to human settlements often leads to conflicts and challenges that need to be addressed. Wildlife veterinarians play a vital role in both conservation efforts and mitigating human-wildlife conflict in India.

One of the key responsibilities of a wildlife veterinarian is to have a comprehensive understanding of the wild animal species present in the area. This includes gathering information about specific species of concern, their behaviour, habitat preferences, and population dynamics. Wildlife veterinarians need a deep understanding of wildlife to provide the best possible care and help mitigate human-wildlife conflict. This understanding encompasses knowledge of wildlife biology, ecology, behaviour, and diseases.

Wildlife Biology is the study of wild animals and their interactions with their environment. Wildlife veterinarians need to understand wildlife biology to: (A) Identify and treat diseases in wild animals. (B) Develop and implement disease prevention and control programs for wild animals. (C) Manage and rehabilitate injured or orphaned wild animals. (D) Educate the public about wild animals and their habitats.

Wildlife Ecology is the study of the relationships between wild animals and their environment. Wildlife veterinarians need to understand wildlife ecology to: (A) Develop and implement human-wildlife conflict mitigation plans. (B) Conserve wild animal populations and their habitats. (C) Monitor and assess the health of wild animal populations. (D) Educate the public about the importance of wildlife and their habitats.

Wildlife Behaviour is the study of how wild animals behave. Wildlife veterinarians need to understand wildlife behaviour to: (A) Safely handle and restrain wild animals. (B) Administer veterinary care to wild animals without causing undue stress. (C) Develop and implement human-wildlife conflict mitigation plans. (D) Educate the public about wild animal behaviour and how to avoid conflict.

Wildlife Diseases are the diseases that affect wild animals. Wildlife veterinarians need to understand wildlife diseases to: (A) Identify and treat diseases in wild animals. (B) Develop and implement disease prevention and control programs for wild animals. (C) Monitor and assess the health of wild animal populations. (D) Educate the public about wildlife diseases and how to prevent them.



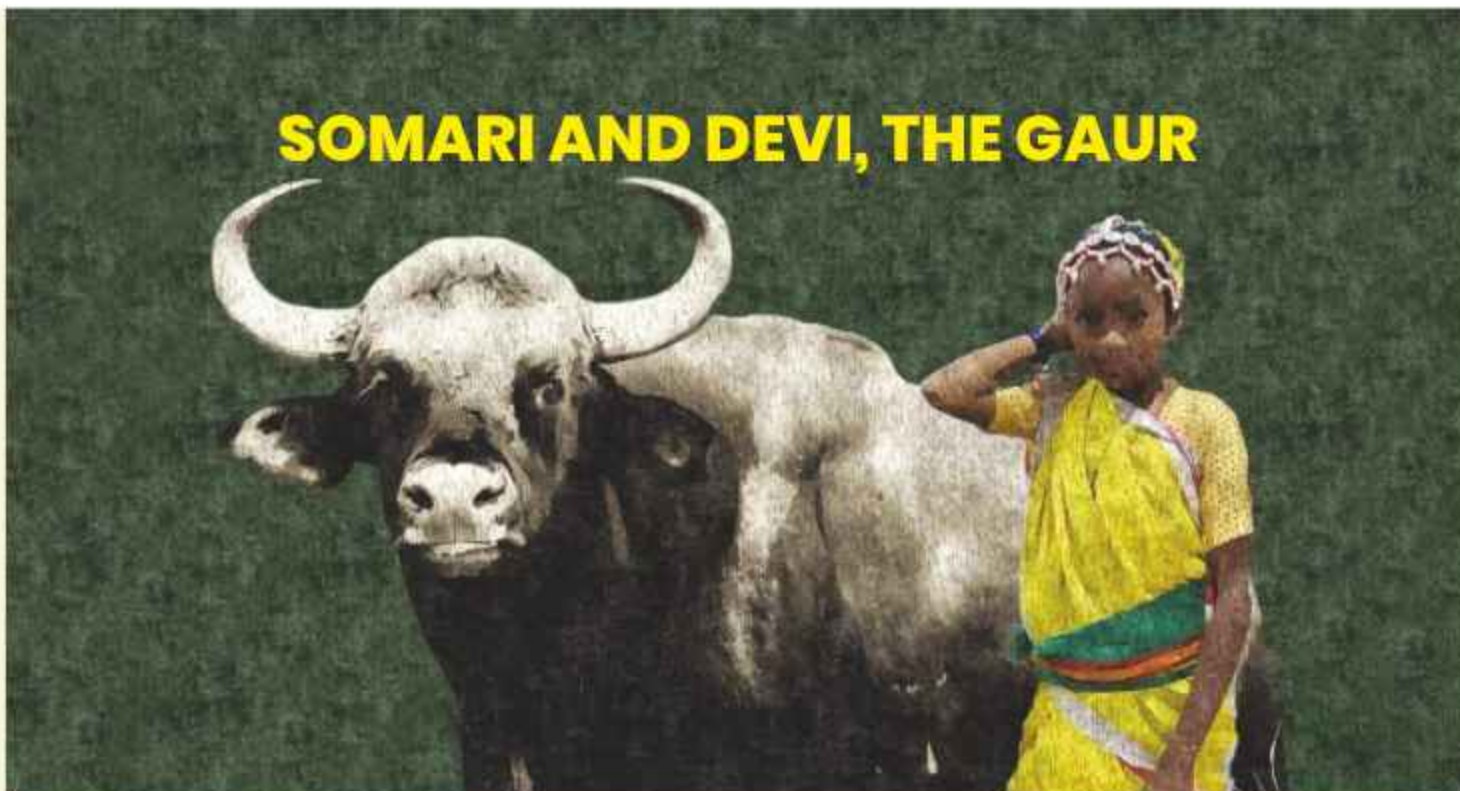
Vegetation and Feed Resources

To effectively manage and conserve wildlife, it is crucial to identify the major vegetation that serves as specific feed resources for herbivores in the area. Wildlife veterinarians review the feed preferences of specific animal species and understand the seasonal availability of these resources. This knowledge helps in assessing the nutritional needs of wildlife and implementing suitable conservation strategies. Vegetation and feed resources play a vital role in wildlife conservation and human-wildlife conflict mitigation. Wild animals need a variety of plants to stay healthy and reproduce. When wild animals do not have enough to eat, they may be forced to raid crops and livestock, leading to conflict with humans.

Wildlife veterinarians play an important role in understanding the role of vegetation and feed resources in wildlife conservation and human-wildlife conflict mitigation. They can help to: (A) Identify and assess the vegetation and feed resources available to wild animals. This information can be used to develop conservation plans and identify areas where human-wildlife conflict is likely to occur. (B) Develop and implement strategies to improve the availability and quality of vegetation and feed resources for wild animals. This may involve planting trees and shrubs, providing supplemental food, and managing grazing and other human activities in a way that is compatible with the needs of wildlife. (C) Educate the public about the importance of vegetation and feed resources for wildlife. This can help reduce the risk of human-wildlife conflict and promote conservation.

- Dr. Ravikant S. Khobragade
Veterinary Officer (Wildlife), TATR

SOMARI AND DEVI, THE GAUR



Chaitanya/Art Generator

In the heart of the dense forests of central India, there lived a Gond tribal community known for their deep respect for nature and its creatures. Among them was a wise and kind-hearted woman named Somari. She was known for her extraordinary ability to communicate with animals, and the forest dwellers revered her as a protector and a friend.

One summer, the forest faced an unprecedented drought. Rivers dried up, plants withered, and the animals struggled to find food and water. The Gonds, too, felt the pangs of scarcity, but they believed in sharing whatever little they had with their forest companions.

Among the animals, there was a majestic female Indian Gaur named Devi. Devi was the leader of her herd, renowned for her strength, wisdom, and nurturing nature. However, the drought had taken a toll on her and her herd. They wandered the forest, searching for sustenance, growing weaker with each passing day.

One evening, as the sun cast long shadows across the parched land, Somari ventured deeper into the forest, seeking herbs and roots to help her people. As she walked, she heard a faint rustling in the bushes. She turned to see Devi, the mighty Gaur, struggling to stand, her eyes filled with exhaustion and desperation.

Somari approached Devi slowly, her heart heavy with empathy. She knelt beside her and spoke softly, "Oh, wise Devi, you are the strength of the forest. Let us help each other in these troubled times."

Devi, sensing the sincerity in her voice, nodded weakly. Somari

quickly gathered fresh leaves and roots from the nearby trees, using her knowledge of the forest to find the most nourishing plants. She brought water from a hidden spring, known only to the Gonds, and offered it to Devi.

As days turned into weeks, Somari continued to care for Devi and her herd. The Gonds shared their resources, ensuring that the animals had enough to eat and drink. Slowly, the forest began to recover. The rains returned, filling the rivers and bringing new life to the land.

Devi regained her strength and, in gratitude, vowed to protect the Gond community. She and her herd would stand guard around the village, warding off any predators and helping the Gonds in times of need. The bond between Somari and Devi grew stronger, symbolizing the harmonious coexistence between humans and nature.

Years passed, and the story of Somari and Devi became a legend, passed down from generation to generation. The Gonds and the Gaurs continued to live in mutual respect and harmony, a manifestation of the enduring bond formed during the harsh summer of the great drought.

And so, the legend of Somari and Devi, the Gaur, remains etched in the hearts of the Gonds, reminding them of the strength found in unity and the beauty of living in harmony with nature.

(Koitur = People from the Gond tribe/People who live on hills)

- Mandar Pingle
Deputy Director, Satpuda Foundation



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A DREAM FULFILLED

In the heart of Maharashtra, on the fringes of the Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve, lies the humble village of Madnapur. It is here that Sanket Kelzarkar, a 23-year-old entrepreneur, began his inspiring journey. Today, Sanket runs a successful catering service in Nagpur, a reflection of his hard work and the transformative impact of the Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve Conservation Foundation's initiatives.

Sanket was born into a modest family. His father, a dedicated farmer, and his mother, an Asha worker, worked tirelessly to provide for their family. They instilled in Sanket and his younger brother the values of independence and ambition. After passing his 12th standard exams, Sanket dreamt of a career in hotel management. Little did he know that an opportunity was just around the corner, one that would change his life forever.

The TATR Conservation Foundation, committed to providing alternative livelihoods for local communities, announced a special training program. This initiative aimed to empower the youth from villages around TATR, offering them skills and opportunities beyond the traditional occupations. Sanket seized this golden opportunity and enrolled in the training program.

The training took place at the prestigious five-star hotel Taj Skyline in Ahmedabad. For three months, Sanket immersed himself in the world of hotel management. He learned the art of cooking, food presentation, and outdoor catering. The rigorous training also included practical exposure at various hotel outlets, allowing him to gain hands-on experience in different aspects of hotel management. This period marked a turning point in his life, providing him with the skills and confidence needed to pursue his dreams.

Upon completing his training, Sanket returned to Nagpur with a renewed sense of purpose. He started working as a helper in the kitchen of a local hotel, gaining valuable experience and honing his culinary skills. However, Sanket had bigger aspirations. With the support of his maternal uncle, he decided to take a bold step towards entrepreneurship.

On January 1, 2024, Sanket launched his own outdoor catering service. Equipped with the necessary vessels and equipment, he began catering for weddings, birthdays, and other events. His dedication and hard work paid off, and within six months, he was earning a profit of around Rs. One lakh a month. This remarkable success was a dream come true for Sanket, a testament to his perseverance and the opportunities provided by the TATR Conservation Foundation.



With the monsoon, wedding season came to an end and Sanket faced a slowdown in business. Undeterred, he began planning for the future. Now has decided to start his own kitchen and a sandwich hub to keep his business rolling even during the slack season. This adaptability and forward-thinking approach exemplify Sanket's entrepreneurial spirit.

Sanket's story is not just one of personal success but also a shining example of how the right policies and conservation models can transform lives. The TATR Conservation Foundation's initiative provided Sanket with the skills and opportunities needed to break free from the constraints of his background and pursue his dreams.

Sanket Kelzarkar's journey from a humble village on the fringes of a tiger reserve to a successful entrepreneur in Nagpur is a story of ambition, hard work, and the transformative power of opportunity. His success underscores the importance of initiatives that empower local communities and provide them with the tools to build better futures. Sanket's journey serves as an inspiration to many, demonstrating that with the right support and determination, dreams can indeed become a reality.

- Anant Sonawane
Communications Officer, TATR



MATERNAL INSTINCT! Under the cover of night, a tigress delicately carries a hare in her mouth, preparing to train her cubs in the art of hunting. This maternal instinct ensures they learn the skills needed to survive in the wild.



SUMMER INTERNSHIP PROGRAM 2024

The Summer Internship Program at TATR has successfully concluded, marking a significant achievement in our ongoing efforts to enhance forest and wildlife habitats. The program, which commenced on May 5, 2024, and concluded on June 30, 2024, welcomed 14 interns from across India. These interns were selected from 180 applicants based on their qualifications and experience.

They were chosen to contribute to a range of topics including

wildlife and social research, creating alternative employment opportunities for locals, habitat management through pasture development, generating employment through nature tourism, and reducing human-animal conflict through artificial intelligence and GIS mapping.

- Prafulla Sawarkar
Education Officer, TATR

THE ACHIEVERS (May-2024)

Join us in celebrating the amazing achievements of the top forest guards at TATR. These dedicated frontline heroes have done the most foot patrolling in their divisions.

We are excited to announce the top two performers for May 2024!



Forest Guard	- P. R. Kosurkar
Beat	- Bhanuskhindi
Round	- Sonegaon
Range	- Tadoba
Division	- Core TATR
Duration	- 25 Days
Target	- 125Km/Month
Actual Patrolling	- 234.64 Km



Forest Guard	- S. M. Thamke
Beat	- Khandala-II
Round	- Warvat
Range	- Chandrapur Buffer
Division	- Buffer TATR
Duration	- 29 Days
Target	- 125Km/Month
Actual Patrolling	- 336.29 Km



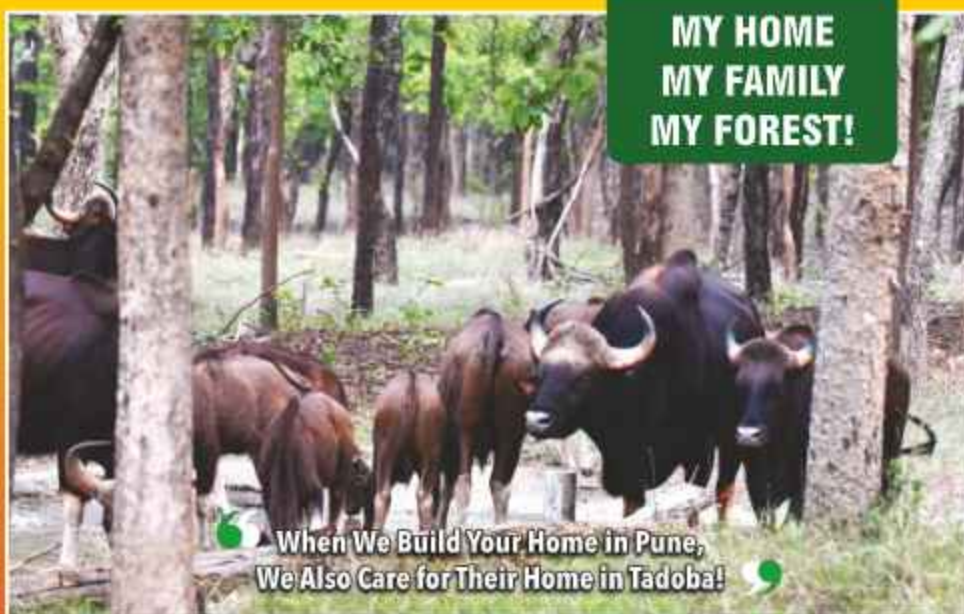
I had carried this wish for a long time. Every time I saw an image of a tiger or a leopard drinking water and its reflection, I would think, "Can I get to see such a sight, if not click it?" To capture a perfect reflection, the water must be absolutely clear and steady, and the light must be just right. This is only possible before the tiger enters the water or starts drinking, as ripples would disturb the reflection. In the forest, where sighting a tiger itself is a stroke of immense luck, aligning all these parameters seems nearly impossible. However, on this trip, that near-impossible happened, and it was on the same safari where I ticked off my first wish!

We were waiting at a waterhole where we saw a sub-adult cub. We hoped its brother, who was likely nearby, would join it in the water. In the distance, we heard an alarm call of a deer, which made us think it might be the cubs' mother. So, we decided to follow the calls. A few kilometers away, the calls led us to a water body with absolutely still water and lots of bird activity. There was a group of sambar deer and monkeys waiting at the water's edge but not entering, indicating a tiger was nearby. We decided to wait.

In the meantime, a sambar deer gave an alarm call, meaning it had seen the tiger that our urban eyes had missed. After scanning the surroundings again, our guide declared that a tigress was sleeping peacefully behind the bund. With great effort, I could see her too! The guide informed us that this was not the cubs' mother but a different tigress T-20 popularly known as Jharani, a very shy one. He advised us to be ready because if she came to the water, it would be just a brief window of a few minutes. We decided to wait further.

An hour passed as we waited patiently with the sambar deer and monkeys. Silently, a face appeared in the bushes at the edge of the bund. The tigress came right onto the bund, looked at the water, drank a few gulps, walked on the bund, sat in the water for five minutes, and then disappeared into the thick bushes! Those five minutes were enough for me to fulfill my wish. There was a small hurdle; from my position, a patch of grass obstructed the tigress's reflection. Yet, the overall effect was good, and I managed to take a video too, with the reflection!

- Sanjay Deshpande
Wildlife Enthusiast,
Sanjeevani Developers, Pune



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