



Tadoba

DIARIES

The Official Newsletter of Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve

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Sanjay Podder

Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve Conservation Foundation, Chandrapur

30/-

TADOBA FESTIVAL 2024 CELEBRATING CONSERVATION & COEXISTENCE



Dear Reader

In the spirit of honouring wildlife conservation, sustainable tourism, and local heritage, I am delighted to present this issue of Tadoba Diaries, coinciding with the first-ever Tadoba Festival 2024. This momentous occasion marks not only the celebration of our rich biodiversity but also the collective efforts of all the stakeholders dedicated to safeguarding it.

The convergence of the Tadoba Festival with World Wildlife Day and the foundation day of the Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve amplifies its significance. We are deeply humbled by the recognition bestowed upon us by the Honourable Prime Minister Shri. Narendra Modi, during his address in Man Ki Baat. His commendation of our innovative use of Artificial Intelligence to mitigate human-wildlife conflict serves as an appreciation of our unwavering commitment to conservation and also inspires us to expand its reach to more areas.

Under the visionary leadership of Honourable Shri. Sudhir Munagantiwar, Minister of Forests, Cultural Affairs, and Fisheries, Maharashtra State, the Tadoba Festival emerges as a platform to showcase the success of TATR on a global scale. The participation of Miss World contestants in promoting the Tadoba Festival highlights the urgency of the message to 'Save the Tiger' and underscores the festival's global reach.

At its core, the Tadoba Festival celebrates the resounding success of Project Tiger in TATR and Maharashtra. Through collaborative efforts with local communities, we have

witnessed a remarkable increase in the tiger population from 65 in 2014 to 93 in 2023 within TATR alone. The overall tiger population in the TATR landscape, including Chandrapur district forests, has surged by 82%, taking it to 218 in 2022 from 120 in 2014. It is a result of the diligence of our staff, the engagement of local communities, and strategic conservation planning.

But there are challenges that lie ahead on our path and beyond the festivities. The Tadoba Festival also aims to serve as a platform for critical dialogue on these challenges confronting wildlife conservation and sustainable tourism. Eminent personalities from various fields including research, conservation, and eco-tourism convene to chart a path forward for tiger conservation and biodiversity preservation.

As we revel in the festivities, let us acknowledge and express gratitude to all stakeholders - from the dedicated forest department personnel and local communities to tour operators, resort owners, nature guides, and gypsy drivers - whose tireless contributions have transformed Tadoba into an example of conservation success.

Together, let us celebrate the spirit of coexistence at the Tadoba Festival 2024 and renew our commitment to safeguarding our natural heritage.

Dr. Jitendra Ramgaokar
Field Director, TATR
and Executive Director, TATR Conservation Foundation



Makrand Pardesi

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MANN KI BAAT

"The number of tigers in the Tiger Reserve of Chandrapur, Maharashtra has risen to more than 250. The help of Artificial Intelligence is being taken to reduce conflict between humans and tigers in Chandrapur district. Here cameras have been installed on the border of the villages and the forest. Whenever a tiger comes near a village; with the help of AI, local people get an alert on their mobile. Today, this system has provided a lot of convenience to the people in the 13 villages around this Tiger Reserve and the tigers have also got protection."

Shri. Narendra Modi
Hon. Prime Minister



CELEBRITY GUEST

MUSIC OF TRANQUILITY

- Mahesh Kale
Vocalist

National Film Award-winning singer, Mahesh Kale, recently was on his maiden trip to Tadoba. Tadoba Diaries had an exclusive interview with him about his immersive experience at the Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve.

Here are some insights from his interview:

Q: How did you find your first visit to Tadoba?

A: It was truly fascinating. I had always imagined the splendour of the wilderness, but to actually explore it was a first-time experience for me. While I had briefly visited Pench in the past, my memories were limited to fleeting moments. However, exploring the depths of the Tadoba forest was an entirely new adventure.

The biodiversity within the Tadoba forest is simply astounding. From a variety of plants and trees to a diversity of bird species, including a mesmerizing encounter with an owl, and witnessing the graceful cormorant drying its wings, devoid of wax, it was all a delightful spectacle. Witnessing the primal game of nature unfolding before my eyes left me exhilarated.

Q: Do you believe that the forest possesses healing powers?

A: Absolutely. Nature, in its purest form, emanates an energy that remains untapped. As a practitioner of music, I can attest to this profound connection. One can feel this energy



while travelling from Moharli to Tadoba Lake, and traversing the rugged terrain of Jamun Bodi. The innocence reflected in the eyes of the deer resonates deeply. It's a reminder that amidst the chaos of modern life, we often overlook the essence of existence. Like the trees, animals, and birds, humans too possess innate instincts that facilitate a connection with the hidden energies within ourselves.

(continue on page 9)...



The Nature of Art

Capturing any animal through a lens, may it be that of a camera or that of an illustrator's eye, makes you more appreciative and observant. For example, the first time I saw this serpent eagle, it was slipping away from a waterhole in very close proximity for a long time. It kept looking up at us between sips, capturing our attention with a curious, cautious, and shrewd expression. The entire time, I was fixated on the bright amber colouring of his huge eyes and sharp pointy beak, which is what automatically got captured in this sketch. But it was only while sketching, that I also noticed the little white spots scattered across its chest, almost like sparkly highlights. I noticed how softly its feathers lay in layers making it look almost like a brown cloud. Now with a sketchbook

- Shreya Khadilkar
Visual Designer

SYMPHONY OF NATURE

For the past decade, I've served as a safari guide in the buffer zone of the Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve, bearing witness to countless captivating moments in the forest. Yet, amidst these experiences, one particular moment stands out as truly exceptional.

During a morning safari with my guests last year, the warm summer air enveloped us in its embrace as we ventured into the forest. Despite the absence of tiger sightings, my guests, genuine wildlife enthusiasts, reveled in the natural splendour surrounding them. As we approached a magnificent Silk Cotton Tree in full bloom, adorned with vibrant red flowers, I seized the opportunity to share insights about its significance. Watching a Golden Oriole indulging in the nectar of these blossoms left my guests in awe of its striking yellow colour.

Our tranquil reverie was interrupted by the arrival of Parakeets and Jungle Babblers, their melodious chirping filling the forest with sweet harmony. Soon, a Magpie Robin and a pair of Red-Vented Bulbul added their voices to the symphony, accompanied by the graceful presence of the Yellow-Footed Pigeon, Maharashtra's state bird.

As we marveled at this natural orchestra, a monkey joined the festivities, partaking in the floral feast atop the tree. Then a spotted deer joined the party and started eating the flowers dropped by the monkey. We were amazed to see the entire scene. However, the monkey's sudden panic-stricken calls shattered the tranquility. Alerted by the monkey's distress,



Artist Creation

the deer scanned the dense thicket, sensing a danger. The deer then sounded an alarm call and rushed from the spot.

Moments later, our anticipation peaked as Tigress T-20, fondly known as Jharni, graced us with her regal presence. With silent dignity, she traversed the road, indifferent to the monkey's alarm and our excitement. Ours was the sole vehicle privileged to witness this captivating spectacle.

Reflecting on the day's events, I found profound joy in the intricate interplay of nature - the harmonious chorus of birds, the symbiotic relationship between the monkey and the deer, and the majestic stride of the tigress. It served as a reminder that patience and appreciation for the forest's wonders yield the most rewarding encounters.

- Krishna Patil
Guide, Navegaon-Ramdegi Gate

FESTIVAL OF WILDERNESS

As everyone is drowned in the happiness of the Tadoba Festival, my thoughts are consumed by a flood of nostalgia and an overwhelming sense of belonging that only this captivating place can evoke. Tadoba, nestled amidst the untamed wilderness of Maharashtra, isn't just a Tiger Reserve; it's a vibrant celebration in motion. Here, amidst the melodies of birdsongs, the kaleidoscope of floral hues, and the tangible joy that fills the air, each day unfolds like a cherished festival.

Even when I find myself miles away from Tadoba, my roots remain firmly entrenched in its soil. Every moment spent within its embrace is akin to flipping through the pages of an enchanting storybook, with each day revealing a new chapter

of wonder and delight. Whether it's the exhilaration of catching a glimpse of a playful tiger cub or the enchanting tales of Blackie, the ghost of Tadoba, every experience leaves an indelible mark upon my heart. The countless stars adorning the night sky and the flickering fireflies from the machan are no less than a spectacle of lights at Diwali. The butterflies and the golden hues painting the sky spread more vibrant colours than any Holi celebration.

To say that I have celebrated more festivals in Tadoba than with my own family wouldn't be an exaggeration. Whether it's the radiant lights of Diwali, the exuberant hues of Holi, or the promise of fresh beginnings with the New Year, each occasion is infused with a unique charm, resonating with the untamed spirit of the wilderness. Amidst life's trials and tribulations, the comforting embrace of Tadoba has always been a steadfast source of solace and fortitude.

I often find myself pondering if I have ever felt as deeply connected to any other place as I do to Tadoba. Here, amidst the towering trees and the gentle rustle of leaves, I have discovered a home unlike any other. Tadoba and I have grown together, bearing witness to each other's triumphs and trials.

As we gather to celebrate the Tadoba Festival, let us not only revel in its festivities but also pause to reflect on the profound bond we share with this mesmerizing wilderness. Let us treasure each moment spent in its embrace and commit ourselves to preserving its splendour for generations to come.

In Tadoba, every day is a festival, and every moment is a celebration of life itself. And as we immerse ourselves in its majestic beauty, let us be grateful for the privilege of being a part of this timeless spectacle of nature.

*My feet, tap to the forest's song,
A melody of ancient, both fierce and strong.
Through the woods, among the trees and creepers
I find myself lost, in the woods, where I truly belong*

*Whirling with winds, my spirit flies,
In nature's embrace, where freedom lies.
Lost in whispers, tiny stars glitter high
I find my song, In the Woods, where I truly belong...*

- Prajakta Hushangabdkar
Wildlife Biologist





TIGER TALES FROM TADOBA

It was our first visit to India in late November/early December 2023 and we embarked on a wildlife tour, driven by our shared love for nature. Following our arrival in New Delhi, we took a flight to Nagpur and then proceeded to drive to the Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve.

The very next morning, on our initial safari in Tadoba, fortune smiled upon us as we encountered three tigers – tigress T-115 popularly known as Bijli with her two cubs – within just ten minutes into our journey. Those magnificent animals leisurely mingled by the roadside for nearly half an hour, engaging in grooming rituals, marking territory, and casting curious glances in our direction. We never expected to get that close to a tiger in our wildest imaginations! Our guide, Swarna, explained that heavy rains in preceding days had washed away the markings of the tigress's territory, prompting her to renew them – a stroke of good timing for us!

The subsequent day led us to a different area of the reserve where another tigress had made a fresh kill accompanied by her three cubs in the morning. Initially, the scene appeared serene, with the tiger cubs reclining in the tall grass of a nearby meadow. However, their attention soon shifted to an activity in the adjacent forest. Two of the cubs stealthily

ventured into the bushes, triggering a sudden outburst of anger – the sound of snorts and rustling trees. Moments later, two tigers burst from the forest, followed by an angry Gaur emerging from the scrub.

Despite the male tiger cub's attempts to challenge the Indian Gaur, each encounter concluded with the tiger retreating into the forest, outmatched by the formidable prey. It served as a poignant reminder that even for a tiger, the Indian Gaur poses a significant challenge – a valuable lesson for the young feline.

Subsequently, we learned that the three tiger cubs, aided by their mother, successfully brought down a Gaur a couple of days later!

In summary, our time in Tadoba proved to be a once-in-a-lifetime experience. We hope all of us contribute to the protection and preservation of these breathtaking forests, with their remarkable fauna and flora. Heartfelt thanks to all the individuals working tirelessly within the lodges and the forest department, dedicated to the cause of nature!

- Kirsten Schneider & Dominik Smith
Tourists, Germany



HEAVEN IN THE WILD

Although my primary job revolves around communications, I seize every opportunity to engage in fieldwork. Venturing into the field not only fosters a profound connection with the forests I cherish but also offers invaluable insights into the workings of nature. It was during the summer of 2021 that Team Tadoba dedicated efforts to the camera trapping initiative. Camera traps were strategically positioned across Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve (TATR) in areas frequented by tigers. The visual data garnered from these traps is meticulously analyzed to estimate the tiger population.

Eager to contribute, I volunteered for the camera trapping endeavour. Wildlife Biologist Prajakta Hushangabhadkar graciously agreed to mentor me during this venture. She not only imparted technical expertise on camera trapping but also patiently addressed my queries, no matter how trivial. Throughout this assignment, I explored numerous breathtaking locations within the reserve, some of which were inaccessible by vehicle.

Among the sites I explored, one behind the Ramdegi temple in the Khadsangi buffer area left a lasting impression. The scorching summer sun beat down upon us as we arrived in the afternoon, making the ascent up the steps a taxing task. Yet, all exhaustion dissipated upon reaching the picturesque location. It offered respite from the heat, akin to stumbling upon an oasis in the desert.

This hidden gem within Tadoba was tranquil and undisturbed. A natural water body nestled amidst rocky outcrops maintained a perpetually cool ambiance, sustained by

underground streams that ensured its year-round replenishment. The verdant surroundings, lush with thriving foliage, stood a testament to the ecosystem's vitality.

As I was appreciating the scenery, I realized that it must be a favourite resting place for tigers. I was lost in my thoughts and suddenly, nature unveiled its wonders. An unexpected sighting of an Asian Paradise Flycatcher brought unparalleled joy to me. It was a full-grown male resplendent in its dark blue head and pristine white plumage. With graceful agility, it darted towards the water, quenching its thirst before perching elegantly on a nearby branch. Its long tail trailed behind like a delicate ribbon in the breeze. He repeatedly dived toward the water flaunting his beautiful tail. What a mesmerizing sight it was!

I also noticed clusters of honeycombs adorning the rocky walls and nearby trees. That attested to the area's allure for honey bees. Prajakta pointed out a majestic Arjuna tree adorned with numerous big honeycombs. "This is the Sloth Bear's restaurant," she remarked, directing me to observe the tree's bark. It was etched with hundreds of scratch marks! The Sloth Bears, drawn to the sweet nectar, frequented the site, ascending the Arjuna tree to feast upon its golden treasure. Witnessing this symbiotic relationship unfold underscored the ecosystem's intricate interconnectedness.

I wished to spend some more time in that heaven. However, constraints forced us to depart as soon as we completed our task. The memories of that cool summer afternoon linger as evidence of the wonders of Tadoba.

- Anant Sonawane
Communications Officer, TATR



Himanshu Bagde

PEEK-A-BOO! Tiger cubs are enthusiastic and mischievous. This playful cub of tigress, popularly known as Babli, checks for witnesses after sneaking into the grassland management zone at Navegaon Meadows.



HOW DO I LOOK? A sub-adult cub (lovingly called Nayantara because of her beautiful eyes) of tigress T-16 popularly known as Bhanushkhindi admiring her own reflection at Nimdhela buffer.

....Continued from page 3

Q: Did you feel inspired to sing a particular song while in the jungle?

A: In fact, my recent travels have kept me busy with performances in various cities including Chennai, Bangalore, Qatar, Japan, and across Maharashtra. My journey to Tadoba was an opportunity to cleanse my creative palette and reignite my passion for music. Amidst the tranquil melodies of nature, I found solace and rejuvenation, laying the foundation for a renewed musical journey. Immersing myself in nature's embrace has always been a source of inspiration for me.

Q: What aspect of Tadoba did you appreciate the most?

A: I commend the Tadoba administration for their commendable initiative in banning single-use plastic water bottles and mobile devices during safaris. Why burden ourselves with artifacts that defy nature's simplicity? Disconnecting from technology allows one to forge a deeper connection with the natural world.

Reflecting on the simplicity of life within the jungle, I strongly advocate for everyone to experience the marvels of a forest like Tadoba at least once in their lifetime. I, for one, eagerly anticipate my return to its captivating embrace.

- Team Tadoba Diaries





LESSER ADJUTANT STORK

The Lesser Adjutant Stork, a prominent wader bird, belongs to the Ciconiidae family of stork species. Distinguished by its towering stature, reaching heights of 100 to 120 cm, it boasts long, slender legs enabling it to wade into depths beyond the reach of most other avian species. Sporting a yellowish neck, scant feathers atop its head, and a spear-like elongated beak, this stork cuts an impressive figure in its habitat.

Typically found in habitats adjacent to lakes, rivers, and nallas, the Lesser Adjutant Stork occasionally strays into areas devoid of water bodies. Its diet encompasses a variety of aquatic creatures including fish, frogs, reptiles, and small mammals, while also exhibiting scavenging behaviour on occasions of encountering deceased animals.

In Tadoba, the Lesser Adjutant Stork frequents specific locations albeit in modest numbers. Observers can spot them along the shores of Kolsa, Moharli, Telia, and Tadoba Lakes, as well as at Sukdi Bodi, Botezari, Palasgaon, Andhari River, Hirdi Nala, Pandharpauri, and even in Sindewahi beyond Tadoba.

The nesting season commences in September-October, during which they construct nests exceeding one meter in diameter. Breeding activities peak from January in the Tadoba region, where clutches of two to four white-colored eggs are incubated for 25-30 days. However, the survival rate of their offspring remains meagre, contributing to their constrained population. Classified as Near Threatened by the IUCN, the Lesser Adjutant Stork warrants concerted conservation endeavours to ensure its continued existence.

- **Rundan Katkar**
Range Forest Officer, Kolsa, TATR



Shyamal L. - Wikimedia

ANJAN TREE

Did you know that the hardest and heaviest wood in India isn't Teak? Numerous other trees hold that prestigious title, with Anjan (*Hardwickia binate*) standing tall among them. This majestic tree boasts one of the highest specific gravities, adorning many roadsides in Nagpur and gracing the Forest Rest House at Rambaug Colony in Chandrapur.

Its graceful branches cascade with compound leaves, each adorned with two leaflets joined at the base, resembling delicate butterflies fluttering in the breeze. Legend has it that Anjan was a vital part of Ashokvan, where Sita resided during her captivity under Ravana, as mentioned by the sage Valmiki. Extracted oil from this tree emits a sweet fragrance, endearing elephants to its bark. The resin extracted from its heartwood is prized for treating elephant sores and used in the manufacture of varnish. Anjan wood's resistance to termites and its excellent polish makes it a favoured material for agricultural equipment, cartwheels, and more. Its sturdy nature also makes it ideal for mine props, bridges, and house construction.

Remarkably, the bark of Anjan possesses a unique ability to absorb mercury from water, underscoring its ecological significance. In the past, ropes crafted from its bark were employed in capturing elephants.

Planting native trees like Anjan presents a wonderful opportunity to preserve our natural heritage, eschewing exotic species for those that are indigenous to our land. Let's nurture our environment and celebrate the enduring beauty and utility of our native flora.

- **Anirudh Chaoji**
Senior Naturalist



DRAMA FULL OF TWISTS

For my twenty-first birthday, I chose to celebrate at the place closest to my heart: Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve. I booked two safaris and set off with my friends. On February 17, 2024, during our afternoon safari through the Devada gate, we heard alarm calls just two kilometers from the entry gate. Our guide sensed a tiger or leopard nearby, so we patiently waited by a water body.

A female Indian gaur grazed peacefully along the water's edge, seemingly undisturbed. Despite the absence of any predator movement, we remained vigilant for half an hour. Suddenly, a flock of birds took flight, alerting our guide and causing the gaur to raise its head. Without warning, a tiger, the dominant male T-84 popularly known as Chota Dadhiyal, leaped from the grass, ambushing the unsuspecting gaur. Neither the gaur nor we had spotted his stealthy approach. With swift precision, Chota Dadhiyal seized the gaur by the

throat, despite its frantic attempts to escape.

As we watched in awe, expecting Chota Dadhiyal to claim his meal, an unforeseen twist unfolded. Just as the gaur had been oblivious to the tiger's presence, the tiger was unaware of another intruder. A massive male gaur emerged suddenly, charging at Chota Dadhiyal. The male gaur forced the tiger to abandon his prey and flee. Overwhelmed by the unexpected aggressor, the tiger retreated, chased by the male gaur for some distance.

We were thrilled by the unfolding drama, a stark reminder of the jungle's unpredictable nature, where only the strongest survive.

- **Bhushan Shaymkant There**
Engineering Student, Chandrapur

SKYWARD ILLUSIONS

In the early days of the Earth, when God had just created the birds, there was a sense of bewilderment among them. They were clueless about how to navigate this new world—what to eat, how to live, and, most importantly, how to build their nests. Faced with this uncertainty, the birds collectively decided to delegate the responsibility of seeking guidance to the Baya Weaver, known for its remarkable weaving skills.

The Baya Weaver, with its golden-yellow plumage, was chosen as the emissary to approach the divine Rain God. This celestial being was responsible for orchestrating the arrival of rain, a vital aspect the birds needed to consider for the construction of their nests.

Guided by their collective trust, the Baya Weaver embarked on a journey to the realm of the Rain God. Upon reaching the celestial palace, adorned with glistening droplets and echoing with the distant rumble of thunder, the Baya Weaver humbly asked the Rain God for guidance. The Rain God, a majestic figure with the power to bring life to the land, responded with wisdom, "I will arrive with a royal drum roll, lightning flashing across the skies, when clouds adorn mascara, and the wind sings my praises."

Armed with this divine knowledge, the Baya Weaver returned to the assembly of birds to share the Rain God's instructions. However, the Baya Weaver, known for its deceitful tendencies, couldn't resist the temptation to embellish the encounter. Instead of relaying the Rain God's words accurately, it concocted a story, claiming that the Rain God would come from the land below.

The birds, trusting the Baya Weaver's reputation and not having witnessed the celestial splendour of the Rain God themselves, took the Weaver's words at face value. As they set out to build their nests, the Baya Weaver reassured them that there was no need to worry. The Rain God, it insisted, would arrive from the earthly realm beneath them.

Yet, there was one bird that harboured suspicion from the

beginning—the Tailor Bird. This perceptive creature, characterized by its green and yellow plumage, had followed the Baya Weaver on its journey to the Rain God's palace. Hidden in the shadows, the Tailor Bird eavesdropped on the conversation between the Weaver and the Rain God.

Upon overhearing the true words of the Rain God, the Tailor Bird was filled with concern for its fellow birds. It rushed back to the assembly, urgently trying to warn them about the Baya Weaver's deception. However, the other birds, enamoured by the Weaver's charisma and reputation, dismissed the Tailor Bird's caution as baseless.

Undeterred, the Tailor Bird decided to take matters into its own wings. It began building its nest with an opening on the bottom, aligning with the Rain God's actual instructions.

As time passed, the clouds gathered, and the distant thunder heralded the imminent arrival of rain. The unsuspecting birds, influenced by the Baya Weaver's misinformation, had all built their nests with openings on top. The Rain God, true to its celestial nature, unleashed a torrent of rain from the sky above.

The birds caught off guard, found their nests filling with water. Panic ensued as they struggled to protect their offspring and sought refuge from the deluge. Amidst the chaos, only the Baya Weaver and the wise Tailor Bird remained unaffected. Their nests, with openings at the bottom, became shelters from the rain that poured from the heavens.

So, the Baya Weaver's deception left a lasting mark on the avian world. To this day, most birds build their nests with openings on top, a reminder of the tale where trust was misplaced, and wisdom prevailed in the face of deception.

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

-Mandar Pingle
Deputy Director, Satpuda Foundation



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.

BUILDING DREAMS

Representing the aspirations of many youths, Swapnil Sonwane, a 33-year-old entrepreneur, operates a two-room homestay in Agarzari, a humble village near Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve. Additionally, he owns a gypsy used for safari tours. Talking about his journey, Swapnil shares, "I never imagined that ecotourism could provide a livelihood!"

Around 2011, when the TATR management explored the possibility of opening a safari gate at Agarzari, Swapnil had little interest in wildlife. He commuted 20 kilometres daily to the Chandrapur Thermal Power Station at Durgapur, earning a modest Rs. 60 per day as a labourer. Despite a few youths from the village beginning work as guides when safaris commenced from the Agarzari gate, traction was minimal due to rare tiger sightings at the time.

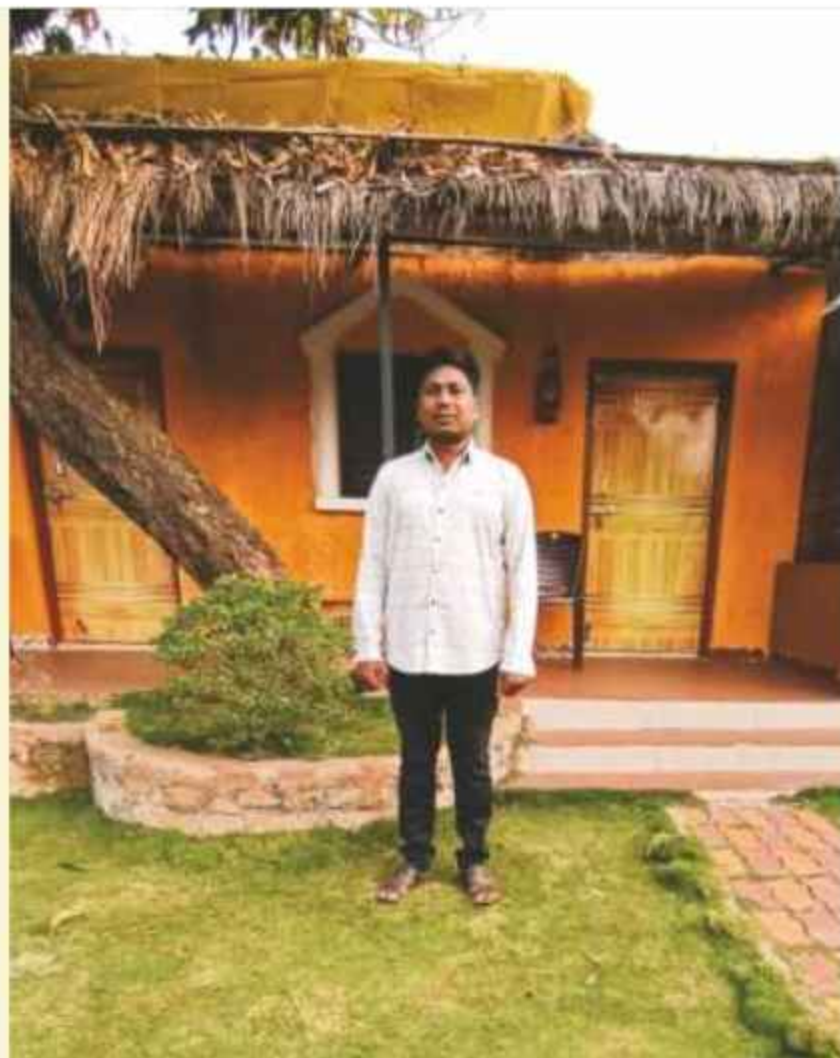
During a bustling X-mas holiday season, when bookings at the Moharli gate were full, numerous tourists flocked to the Agarzari gate. With limited guides available, Swapnil seized an opportunity to accompany a tourist vehicle, despite his limited knowledge of wildlife. This maiden trip proved a turning point, igniting his interest in wildlife and offering a more lucrative alternative to labourious work.

The forest department took a policy decision that only locals can own a safari gypsy. Recognizing the potential in ecotourism, Swapnil invested his savings and secured a loan from the Bachat Gat to purchase a second-hand gypsy for Rs. 65,000. He stopped working as a guide and focussed on driving his own gypsy. As wildlife sightings and tourist numbers increased, Swapnil's financial prospects improved significantly. He and his family were in a happy zone now.

In 2022, the Forest Department extended an offer of Rs. 3 lakhs to local youths to establish home stays. Seizing this opportunity, Swapnil raised Rs. 5.50 lakh by mortgaging his house and built the Nisarg Tadoba Home stay. Today, tourists from various cities praise Swapnil for his hospitality.

With steadfast determination, Swapnil now strives to swiftly repay his loans and position his home stay as a favoured destination among tourists.

- Anant Sonawane
Communications Officer, TATR



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THE HAPPY RIDE! A sloth bear cub hitching a ride on its mother's back, caught in a candid moment by a camera trap hidden deep within the Tadoba forest.

THE ACHIEVERS (January-2024)

Please 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 January-2024



Forest Guard - V. B. Madavi
Beat - Nimdhela
Round - Bhanuskhindi
Range - Tadoba
Division - Core TATR
Duration - 23 Days
Target - 125 km/Month
Actual Patrolling - 368.96 Km



Forest Guard - M. A. Dhurve
Beat - Mamla-I
Round - Mamla
Range - Chandrapur (Buffer)
Division - Buffer TATR
Duration - 28 Days
Target - 125 Km / Month
Actual Patrolling - 330.26 Km

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**PATIENCE
IS THE KEY**

During a recent presentation about tigers at a school, a curious student posed a question: "How do you capture a picture of a tiger? Does the tiger notice you when you take its photo?" It was an interesting question, and I responded by emphasizing the necessity of patience when photographing a tiger. I likened the forest experience to a lesson in patience, explaining that events unfold according to the tiger's discretion. I also affirmed that tigers are keenly aware of their surroundings, including when photographs are being taken, yet they generally don't mind as long as a safe distance is maintained.

This exchange reminded me of a recent encounter with tiger T-138 Mowgli in Tadoba. On a sweltering summer afternoon, while scouting waterholes in anticipation of spotting a tiger cooling off, we were alerted by the sharp call of a sambar deer nearby. In the serene forest, the sambar's call came like a gunshot, prompting us to reach the nearest water source.

In the peak summer of central India, one can leisurely photograph a male tiger, provided one maintains silence. Even in the excitement of spotting a tiger, excessive noise can disturb the tranquil scene. However, even in such situations, the gentleman doesn't pay much heed. If roused, the tiger may cast an irritated glance before retreating into the nearby bush to resume its rest. Only when the surroundings are suffused with complete quiet does the tiger emerge once more and get to the waters.

Wisely, we refrained from making any commotion, and Mowgli allowed us to capture some fantastic moments. Then we kept the camera aside and simply basked in its presence. Such moments emphasize the importance of keeping patience in the wild.

- Sanjay Deshpande
Wildlife Enthusiast,
Sanjeevani Developers, Pune



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