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Tadoba

DIARIES

The Official Newsletter of Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve



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Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve Conservation Foundation, Chandrapur

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TRANSLOCATION: A TIGER CONSERVATION STRATEGY

Dear Reader

The summer rages on in central India but with it, it brings the holiday season for school children across the country. In spite of the scorching sun, tourists rush to national parks and tiger reserves to spend their holidays. Tadoba is experiencing a similar surge of tourists at this time of the year largely because of the deciduous nature of our forests, which allow for the increased visibility of animals around natural and artificial sources of water.

At Tadoba, we are currently welcoming numerous new additions to our tiger family, as several tigresses have recently delivered cubs who are still quite young (up to 6 months old). Our beloved tigress T-7 has recently given birth to new cubs. Also, some tourists had the fortune of witnessing T-127 crossing the road connecting Padmapur and Moharli carrying her month-old cubs in her mouth. Many other tigresses, including T-163 and T-162, were seen mating earlier this summer, and these tigresses are likely to give birth to the future princes and princesses of Tadoba.

However, survival in high-tiger-density areas has its own set of challenges. Male tigers are known to kill the cubs of other males, which raises concerns about the survivability of the young cubs across the reserve. Tigers exhibit territorial behaviour, with males fighting other males and females contending for territories and mating rights. Over the last couple of months, tourists may have been lucky to see tigers in their most primal form, as renowned tigresses T-24 and T-163 engaged in a duel over the Teliya Lake territory. While territorial fights to the death are natural among wild tigers, such fights are even more prevalent in high-tiger-density landscapes like Tadoba. Ideally, tigers would disperse from high-density areas to areas with relatively fewer numbers and occupy newer, unexplored territories. However, rapid urban expansion and the development of roads and rails have fragmented the natural connectivity between forest patches. As a result, some tigers who set out to explore newer worlds end up as victims of road accidents or electrocution.

In Maharashtra, two tiger reserves – Sahyadri Tiger Reserve (STR) and Navegaon-Nagzira Tiger Reserve (NNTR) – have the potential to host large tiger populations. Unfortunately, the wildlife corridors to these reserves are garmented or broken, hindering tigers from naturally dispersing to these areas from neighboring tiger-bearing regions. For instance, even if a tiger

from Tadoba wanted to disperse to NNTR, the lack of connectivity wouldn't allow it. In such cases, tiger translocations have been envisioned as a potential solution. Tigers are picked up from a source population and released in low-tiger-density areas to augment tiger populations at the destination. Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve (TATR) may be considered a source population, with tigers breeding and birthing a bunch of new cubs each season. With this in mind, TATR has been selected as a source for these translocation projects. Tadoba will be translocating some tigers to Sahyadri and some to Navegaon-Nagzira to augment the tiger populations there. So far, three tigresses have been translocated to NNTR as part of the project.

Post-translocation, the behaviour of tigers depends on their individual personalities. While, some tigers easily adapt to their new habitats, with ample space, prey, and potential mates available, others explore the new space they find themselves in and sometimes end up leaving the reserve. This presents a major challenge for managers, leading to considerable efforts and resources being invested in continuously tracking the movement of translocated tigers.

While tiger translocations offer a temporary solution to the lack of natural corridors for tiger movement, our ultimate goal as conservationists is to aid wildlife with minimal disruption to natural systems. It is really important to rebuild natural corridors between forest patches to facilitate the natural movement of animals between these forests. The natural dispersion of wild animals also requires a lot of community support, as tigers often end up moving through villages and agricultural fields during transit.

In the short run, translocating tigers may be a tough decision, with park managers having to say goodbye to some of their beloved tigers. However, in high-tiger-density areas like Tadoba, tigers are at risk of perishing due to infighting if there is no option to disperse into newer territories. Our larger goal is to conserve the species, and translocations offer dual benefits – 1. Reduced infighting in Tadoba with spaces opening up and 2. Augmented tiger populations in low-density reserves like STR or NNTR. As we bid farewell to some tigers, we are sure to see some new faces take up these territories!

Dr. Jitendra Ramgaokar

Field Director, TATR
and Executive Director, TATR Conservation Foundation

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A QUIET ESCAPE

- Roopkumar Rathod
Singer

Popular playback singer Roopkumar Rathod recently visited Tadoba with his family and friends. A frequent visitor to the land of tigers, he is a genuine wildlife lover and photographer. He spoke to Tadoba Diaries about his recent visit and his love for wildlife.

Here are excerpts from his interview:

Q: You have been visiting Tadoba for quite some time now. How was your recent visit?

A: I have been coming to Tadoba since 2015. I just can't stay away from this natural paradise. Tadoba offers the best of nature. Besides tigers, you get to see different types of deer, Indian gaur, leopards, sloth bears, and a plethora of birds and other mammals.

This time, my experience in Tadoba was truly unbelievable, a once-in-a-lifetime experience. It was very well organized, and each safari was remarkable. Witnessing tigers and other animals in their natural habitat is beyond imagination. I consider myself extremely fortunate.

Q: What was the most memorable moment of this trip?

A: We went on five regular safaris and one full-day safari. The jungle is always full of surprises, and every moment is beautiful. But the most memorable moment was when tigress T-24 popularly known as Sonam was soaking herself in Teliya

Lake, and suddenly her mate, the dominant male tiger T-84 i.e. Chota Dadhiyal came to say "Hi" to her. It was indeed a magical moment. We all know that the tiger is an apex predator, but there is a side of it that is not often talked about, and that is love and care. You have to be lucky enough to witness such an encounter.

Q: As an artist, how do you connect your creativity to nature?

A: The jungle is the greatest inspiration for any artist, whether you are a musician, a writer, or a painter. Away from the hustle and bustle of the city, the jungle offers a serene escape to unwind and recharge amidst nature's embrace. I gather numerous ideas and melodies for my music here.

Q: You have sung the patriotic song 'Sandese Aate Hai' in the movie Border. Our Forest Department frontline staff's job is as challenging as that of the soldiers on the border. What are your thoughts on this?

A: I believe this work is even riskier because on the border, you know the enemy is on the other side, but in the forest, there are no borders. Frontline staff are tasked with the protection, conservation, and management of forests. They ensure that forest resources are preserved and illegal activities that could harm the forests are thwarted. Hats off to those frontline soldiers of the Forest Department!

- Team Tadoba Diaries

Keeping up with Kumbhi



If a tiger is marvelous, its home is equally so! From the canopied waterbodies and lakes to its neighbours, and, of course, all the flora that provide the foundation for survival. Among them, the Kumbhi tree arguably boasts the most magnificent flowers. Though their scent may not be as potent as Mahua flowers, they will catch your eye from a distance as they lie on the ground, blanketing it in a luscious white carpet. The delicate flowers, with their beautiful soft white tentacles and pink roots as petals, along with light green leaves and dark green buds, are simply a visual treat. Against a pastel blue summer sky, when they are in full bloom, they brighten up the landscape just as much as the fiery Flame of the Forest or Palas. Countless such flowering trees adorn the jungles of Tadoba, providing a home for wildlife and a feast for our eyes!

- Shreya Khadilkar
Visual Designer

A FEARFUL ENCOUNTER

I am from the first team of guides in Tadoba. I have roamed these forests for years, yet each day brings a new experience. Tourists always ask me about the best of my encounters with the tigers. Of course, I have got plenty. However, the one among them still sends shivers down my spine.

I remember, it was the last day of tourism season in the core area, 30th June 2014. The Queen of Pandharpauni, tigress T-12, whom we lovingly called Maya was the star attraction for tourists. That day, I was looking for her with my guests. As we reached Ambepat, I saw three more vehicles from Moharli already parked there. Another one from Kolara gate joined us shortly. Now five vehicles lined up there and waited patiently to catch a glimpse of the Queen.

Our patience paid off and she indeed appeared, that too right in front of my vehicle! She walked with her usual swag and tourists-friendly approach. Maya was the most favourite tigress among photographers as she was bold, beautiful and always posed for them. Now also the photographers started clicking her photographs. But then all of a sudden something unusual happened which I had never imagined.

A photographer's camera flashed by mistake. That startled Maya and her entire body language changed. With a stiffened body, there was a visible displeasure on her face. The other guides and I shouted at the photographer and made him switch off the camera, but that was not enough for Maya. She was upset and angry. Suddenly, she charged at my vehicle, running towards us. I was scared, as were my tourists and others present there. We had never seen Maya so angry. We

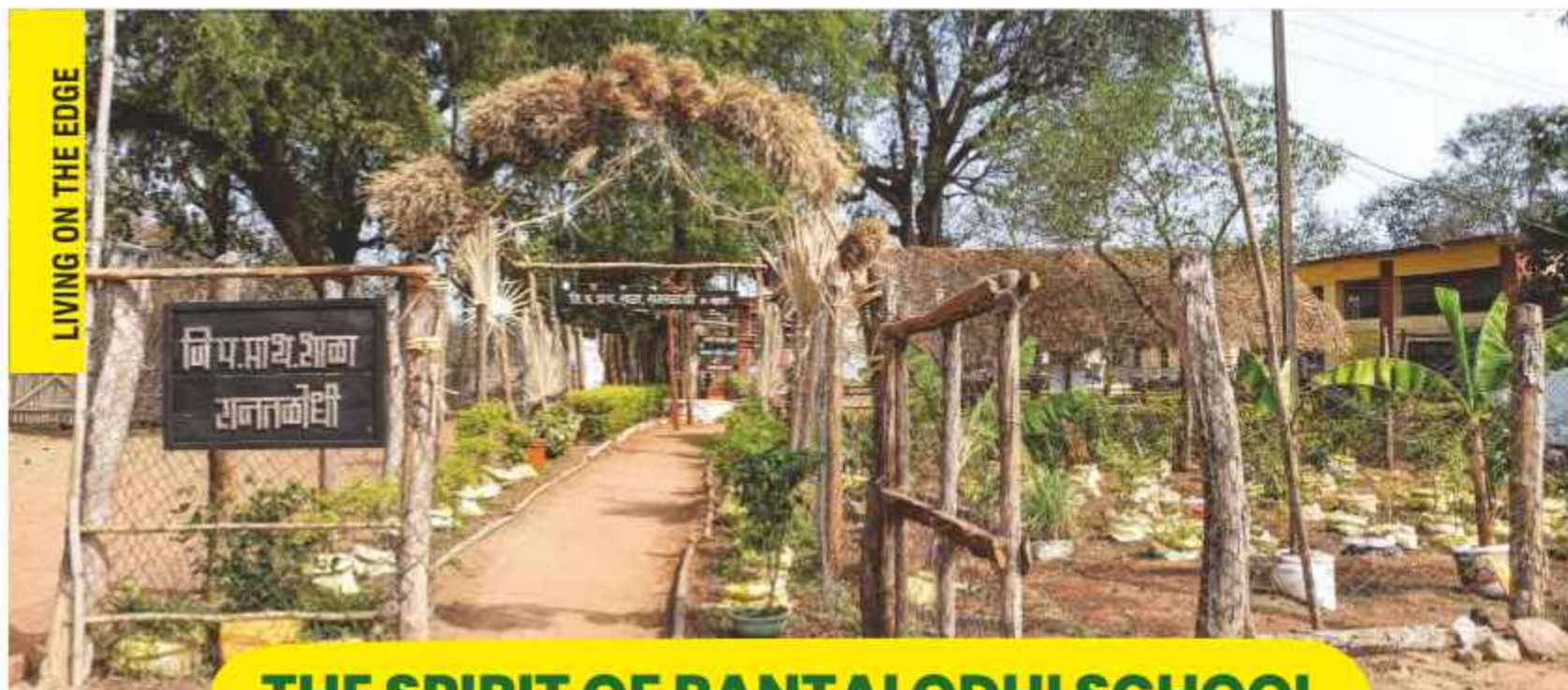


tried to reverse our vehicle. Though we were under the hood of the Gypsy as those were the rainy days, it wasn't much difficult for a tiger to pull one of us down. I had never been so afraid; my whole body was shivering for those few seconds. I started praying to God for our safety.

I don't know happened, but the charging tigress stopped just a foot away from my vehicle. She was angry, but decided to let us go with a warning. She stood in front of us for a few seconds giving us that deadly look, then walked away and sat in the water to cool down.

I thanked God also our beloved Maya and retreated from the spot.

- Vitthal Bhojar
Guide, Moharli Gate



THE SPIRIT OF RANTALODHI SCHOOL

In the heart of the Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve, Rantalodhi village stands on the brink of change. This year, the village is preparing to relocate, a decision echoed in the bustling activity of moving belongings to a new site. Amidst this flurry, an afternoon village meeting at the Rantalodhi Naka was gently interrupted by the voices of children from the Zilla Parishad Primary School next door. It was English class, and the kids, circling their teacher, practiced introductions in English with a touch of their local accent. "My name is ABC, I live in Rantalodhi," they said, one by one.

It struck me then, how soon these introductions would need an update. Not just the address, but their whole sense of identity would shift. Yet, with this change comes a promise: an opportunity to get the proper education that every child deserves.

In Rantalodhi, where life's essentials often overshadow schooling, the local school shines as a beacon of hope. Despite the scarcity of resources, it has managed to keep its doors open, offering education to around 30 students from grades one to four. The budget is tight, hardly enough to cover basic needs, but the school stands as a pillar of community and determination.

Walking into the school, the atmosphere shifts. The entrance opens up to a play area that doubles as an outdoor classroom in the winter months. The playground, built with wood and

minimal plastic, is a testament to sustainable living, a concept often discussed in far-off conferences but lived here daily. The greenery that fills the school grounds isn't just decoration; it's cared for by the students themselves. This hands-on approach to learning and living with nature is part of what makes the school special.

Then, there are the teachers, who have turned one of the classrooms into a temporary home. They stay through the week, ensuring that the children's education isn't disrupted. It's a commitment that's rare and invaluable, especially compared to more remote schools where teachers might only visit a few times a month.

This story is a key part of Tadoba's history, showing how education, community, and conservation efforts can coexist. As Rantalodhi moves to a new location, the school will face changes and challenges. However, the essence of what makes it unique will remain, bolstered by better facilities and continued dedication from the teachers. The village's sacrifice for tiger conservation is a significant one, but the hope is that this spirit of resilience and the pursuit of knowledge will continue to flourish.

Soon, the children will introduce themselves, "My name is ABC, I live in New Rantalodhi."



- Saket Agasti
Social Scientist, TATR

THE MIGHTY MATKASUR

In the late summer of 2019, we set off for the Pandharpaur area. Upon arrival, we found Mr. Nallamuthu, a renowned wildlife filmmaker, already there. He informed us that T-49, also known as Matkasur, a dominant male tiger, had been sighted near the Ainbodi waterhole.

Quickly, we made our way to the waterhole, where a few vehicles were already lined up in anticipation of Matkasur's appearance. Within minutes, more vehicles joined the queue behind us. Soon enough, Matkasur emerged from the bushes and made his way towards the waterhole. The nearby peacocks and grazing Sambars were alarmed, filling the air with distress calls. Matkasur responded with a series of deep roars, seemingly commanding the distressed animals to quieten down. It felt as though he was conveying, "I am not in the mood for hunting, so keep quiet!" And obediently, the distressed animals fell silent at the command of their King!



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After a while, Matkasur moved along the bank of the waterhole and disappeared into the thicket. Our guide then instructed the driver to turn the vehicle and reach a spot where we might have a better chance of seeing the tiger on an open track. As we reached the new spot, we noticed that several other vehicles had already gathered there. We eagerly waited, our hearts pounding with anticipation.

Suddenly, the rustling sound of dry leaves broke the silence, and Matkasur emerged from the thicket, walking just a few yards away from our vehicle. He paused briefly, his powerful presence palpable even from a distance. We watched in awe as he walked by our side, his immense size and strength on full display.

For a moment, our hearts skipped a beat as Matkasur glanced in our direction. I instinctively leaned back, avoiding direct eye contact. The mix of thrill, excitement, fear, and wonder was indescribable.

As Matkasur disappeared into the distance, the memory of that encounter remained etched in our minds, an unforgettable experience that we would cherish forever.

- Kedar Kulkarni
Web Developer, Pune

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UNDERSTANDING ELEPHANTS

Exactly three years ago, on May 6th, 2021, tragedy struck the Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve. Gajraj, the male elephant at the Botezari camp in the TATR core, became aggressive, broke his chain, and tragically killed the Chief Accountant of TATR. To bring him under control, Gajraj was tranquilized and chained, and Anand Shinde, the elephant whisperer, was called in by the department, to calm him down.

Anand and I had known each other for six to seven years, having spoken several times and living in neighbouring cities, Thane and Dombivli respectively. However, we met for the first time in Tadoba. Volunteering to assist Anand seemed like a great opportunity to learn more about elephants.

Anand interacted with Gajraj much like one would with a child. He fed him, provided water, and even mud for him to sprinkle on his body, all from a safe distance, as Gajraj showed signs of aggression despite being chained, expressing his displeasure. Gajraj was and still is in musth, a period when a male elephant's testosterone level surges, making him highly aggressive. During this time, even the smallest act can trigger extreme anger. Anand's efforts to calm Gajraj included offering his favourite foods and communicating with him continuously. Remarkably, Gajraj responded, eventually even playing with the bottom of a broken drum, placing it on his head like a hat!

Anand had met Gajraj before, in 2019 when Gajraj had killed his caretaker. Yet, Gajraj remembered him. The emotional and intelligence quotient of elephants is astounding; they have an impeccable memory, as evidenced by their ability to remember travel routes across generations.

Assisting Anand in feeding Gajraj revealed fascinating facts



about elephants' dietary habits. A full-grown elephant consumes up to 200 kg of food daily, chews it with its teeth, and can suck up to 10 liters of water with its trunk at a time drinking 200 liters in a day. Their dung, weighing around 4 to 5 kg, feeds 7,000 to 17,000 insects and also helps generate new grasslands.

Unfortunately, elephants are often misunderstood. May the Elephant God instill some basic sense of humanity in those who interact with these majestic animals.

- Anant Sonawane
Communications Officer, TATR

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Swagril Bhavathar

BEAUTY & THE BULL! Tadoba is home to Nilgai or Blue Bull, the largest antelope in Asia. A fearless male, standing in his beautiful natural habitat, stares at a tourist vehicle.

THE LAND OF BIRDS & BUTTERFLIES

Dr. Raju Kasambe, Former Assistant Director – Conservation, Bombay Natural History Society shares the notes on his visits to Tadoba.

TADoba has always been a dream place to visit for every wildlife lover. As a former employee of BNHS leading wildlife camps to educate the general citizens, I was lucky to visit Tadoba twice in the last three years. Seeing a tiger is not the main purpose of my visits. The idea we carry is to make our citizens aware of the entire forest as an ecosystem. This is to bring behavioral change among the visitors towards nature.



I always look for and talk

about the birds and butterflies that I see, that is my forte. I also love documenting the flora and fauna I encounter. As mobiles are not allowed in Tadoba for obvious reasons, I always carry a notebook and pen to list everything. I have shared here a list of birds and butterflies I have positively identified in Tadoba during the period 2021-2023. Both lists are not comprehensive as watching birds and butterflies from a Gypsy has its own constraints.



We were blessed to observe the majestic tigress T-24 Sonam, playing with her cubs for half an hour, and then shifting to hunting mode! On a previous occasion, I had seen Dholes chasing, killing and nearly finishing a spotted deer.

We visited the meadow at the relocated Khatoda village site. This meadow is as good as a beautiful patch of grassland, and has already attracted a Lesser Florican, now listed as Critically Endangered by the IUCN! We saw labour collecting grass seeds and visited the second site from where the Jamni village has recently been relocated and another meadow is being developed. I felt that this work could be highlighted to visitors during the safaris by the trained naturalists.

Butterflies in Tadoba:

Though many species were fluttering around during my safari, it was difficult to identify all of them without getting proper time or photographs. Here is a list of some species that could be identified mostly through binoculars in two safaris in December 2023.

Common Mormon, Common Rose, Lime Butterfly, Tailed Jay, Common Emigrant, Mottled Emigrant, Common Jezebel, Common Gull, Common Wanderer, Grass Yellow sp, Common Banded Awl, Dark Palm Dart, Dark Grass Blue, Plains Cupid, Leaf Blue, Chocolate Pansy, Lemon Pansy, Blue Pansy, Grey Pansy, Yellow Pansy, Peacock Pansy, Common Baron, Baronet, Common Leopard, Plain Tiger, Striped Tiger, Blue Tiger, Common Crow, Tawny Coster, Common Sailer, Great Egfly, Danaid Egfly, Commander

Birds in Tadoba:

Notably, Tadoba could be the southernmost breeding ground of the Lesser Adjutant Stork (listed as Vulnerable as per IUCN). Also, it is the best place to see the Grey-headed Fish Eagle (listed as Near Threatened as per IUCN) feeding on fish and nesting. Though most people visit Tadoba for sighting of mammals, it is also recognized as an Important Bird Area by BNHS and BirdLife International, U.K., due to the occurrence of many threatened species of birds.

Lesser Whistling-Duck, Knob-billed Duck, Cotton Pygmy-Goose, Indian Spot-billed Duck, Indian Peafowl, Red Spurfowl, Grey Jungle fowl, Grey Francolin, Jungle Bush-Quail, Rock Dove (Blue Rock Pigeon), Collared Dove, Red Collared Dove, Spotted Dove, Laughing Dove, Yellow-footed Green-Pigeon, Green Imperial-Pigeon, Painted Sandgrouse, Greater Coucal, Asian Koel, Grey-bellied Cuckoo, Fork-tailed Drongo-Cuckoo, Common Hawk-Cuckoo, Indian Cuckoo, Jungle Nightjar, Indian Nightjar, Savanna Nightjar, Asian Palm Swift, Crested Treeswift, Common Moorhen, Grey-headed Swampfen, White-breasted Waterhen, Indian Thick-knee, Black-winged Stilt, Yellow-wattled Lapwing, Red-wattled Lapwing, Pheasant-tailed Jacana, Bronze-winged Jacana, Eurasian Curlew, Snipe sp., Common Sandpiper, Wood Sandpiper, Yellow-legged Buttonquail, Barred Buttonquail,



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ORIENTAL PRATINCOLE

The Oriental Pratincole (*Glareola maldivarum*) is a familiar sight in India, particularly during the summer when it migrates to Tadoba for breeding. You can spot these birds in abundance along flood plains, muddy patches, and riverbanks, especially around Irai Dam, Kolsa Lake, and Chandai Nalla in TATR.

Resembling tern birds, Oriental Pratincoles sport short legs and long, narrow, pointed wings. Their upper wings showcase a greenish-brown hue, and a distinctive black necklace-like marking extends from their eyes to the lower part of their neck. Males and females share a similar appearance.

In flight, they display elegant maneuvers, akin to swallows, with dark flight feathers, chestnut underwing coverts, and a flashing white rump. Their flight call is a harsh "tarrack."

During the breeding season (March to May), Oriental Pratincoles nest in ground patches created by animals' hooves, laying two to three eggs with pale yellow colour and black spots. Both parents share the responsibility of raising chicks.

These birds have a unique feeding behaviour, hunting insects in flight like swallows, though they can also feed on the ground. You will often find them near water in the evenings, foraging for insects.

Observing these fascinating birds in Tadoba adds a delightful dimension to your wildlife experience!

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



UNSUNG FOREST BEAUTY

Lagerstroemia parviflora, also known as Sejha in central India and Bondara in Maharashtra, is the wild cousin of our glamorous state tree, Taman or Lagerstroemia speciosa. This medium-sized tree comes alive in April, just when most of the showy spring blossoms have faded. The entire leafless canopy becomes adorned with masses of tiny white flowers. These delicate blooms boast crinkled petals and protruding stamens, enhancing their beauty, while a subtle yet pleasing light fragrance further adds to their allure. Against the backdrop of the scorched landscape, these white cloud-like trees stand out distinctly.

Following the flowering period leaves quickly emerge. One of the reasons for its survival in the wild is its unappealing nature to herbivores. A leafless, flowerless tree is often challenging to identify, but not this one. Its characteristic bark is flaky, falling off in thin scales.

Locals often bundle the flowers of Dragon Stalk Yam or Shevla (*Amorphophallus commutatus*) with the green leaves of Bondara. This is because the flowers of Shevla contain minute crystals of oxalic acid that can cause itching of the throat, while the leaves of Bondara contain tannins that can neutralize it.

In some markets, you might even find ladies selling Bondara gum. This slimy gum has a sweet taste and is also believed to possess medicinal properties.

- **Anirudh Chaoji**
Senior Naturalist

SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST



Reaching the top is a challenging feat, but maintaining that position over time is even harder. The legends of Tadoba would certainly attest to this truth. Dominant tigers in any forest relish the privileges of their status, including the admiration and affection of wildlife enthusiasts. Yet, few tourists realize the intense battles these legendary tigers endure to safeguard their reign.

Recently, two of Tadoba's most renowned tigers, the dominant male T-126 Chota Matka and the beloved tigress T-24 Sonam, were sighted in an injured state. Chota Matka has been engaged in conflicts with other males for several months, most recently with T-100 Tala, resulting in visible wounds on his nose. Similarly, Sonam clashed with another female, T-163 Collarwali, sustaining injuries on her face, neck, and entire body.

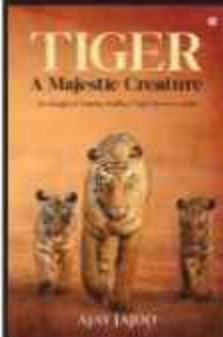
Tigers, being highly territorial animals, often engage in clashes as part of the natural order. Such encounters underscore the fierce competition for dominance within their habitat and the rule of the jungle- survival of the fittest!



The book encompasses comprehensive information about Tigers with excellent IMAGES

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The book also provides glimpse into Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve located in Maharashtra with bloodlines and lineage of Tigers inhabiting in Tadoba.



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FARMER AND THE MUNIAS

In the heart of central India, nestled in the lush greenery on the outskirts of a dense forest, there existed a quaint village where life unfolded at the rhythm of nature's cycles. In this idyllic setting lived Ramu, a humble farmer whose days were spent toiling under the sun, cultivating his small plot of land in hopes of providing for his family.

Ramu was a man of integrity and resilience, but despite his best efforts, his crops were often ravaged by pests, and his livelihood was threatened by marauding wildlife. Each season brought new challenges, and Ramu found himself teetering on the edge of despair as his dreams of abundance turned to dust with each failed harvest.

One fateful day, as Ramu laboured in his field, his eyes fell upon a group of Munia birds, their vibrant plumage a stark contrast against the verdant backdrop. At first, he felt a surge of frustration, for these birds were feasting on the grains he had painstakingly sown. But as he moved closer, he noticed something peculiar – the birds seemed to be conversing in a language he could understand.

Intrigued and bewildered, Ramu approached the Munias cautiously, his curiosity piqued by this extraordinary occurrence. To his astonishment, the birds greeted him with a melodious chirping, their voices resonating with an otherworldly cadence. They introduced themselves as messengers of the gods, sent to aid those in need, and revealed that they had been observing Ramu's plight with sympathy.

Overwhelmed by a mixture of disbelief and hope, Ramu listened intently as the Munias offered him a pact: in exchange for his promise to never harm them or any other bird again, they would become his guardians, protecting his crops from pests and predators, and ensuring a bountiful harvest for years to come.

Though hesitant at first, Ramu felt a glimmer of optimism ignite within him, and with a solemn vow, he accepted Munias'

offer. From that moment onward, a profound bond was forged between man and bird, rooted in mutual respect and gratitude.

As the seasons passed, Ramu witnessed a remarkable transformation take place in his fields. Where once there had been devastation, now there was abundance – his crops flourished, his animals thrived, and prosperity graced his doorstep. The Munias proved true to their word, their watchful eyes and swift wings warding off threats with unwavering determination.

Word of Ramu's newfound fortune spread like wildfire through the village, and soon he found himself at the center of admiration and awe. Neighbors marveled at the lushness of his fields and the bounty of his harvests, and whispers of the miraculous alliance between man and bird echoed through the streets.



But for Ramu, the greatest reward lay not in material wealth, but in the harmony he had found with nature and the bonds of friendship he had forged with the Munias. Together, they stood as guardians of the land, their unity a beacon of hope in a world fraught with discord.

As the years passed and Ramu grew old, he imparted the tale of his extraordinary journey to the younger generation, urging them to cherish the sanctity of all living beings and to nurture the delicate balance between man and nature.

And so, in the annals of time, the legend of Ramu and the Munia birds lived on, a timeless testament to the power of compassion, the resilience of the human spirit, and the enduring bond between man and the natural world.

(Koitur = People from the 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.



POWER OF OPPORTUNITY



Sujal's story highlights how a helping hand and professional training can turn around the life of village youth. Sujal Katwale, age 20 works as a housekeeping staff in a hotel in Chandrapur city. Six months ago, he had no idea where his life would lead him. Born into a farming family in Mamla village on the fringe of Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve, Sujal was a first-year Bachelor of Arts student. His parents worked on their own rice farm and others' farms, struggling to make both ends meet.

Last August, a ray of hope emerged when the Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve Conservation Foundation offered professional training opportunities to local youths. Sujal got himself registered for the initiative and went to Ahmedabad with ten other aspiring youths. The TATR Conservation Foundation partnered with the TATA Institute of Social Skills (IIS), Ahmedabad, and paid fees of Rs. 15,000 per participant. To meet the ever-changing job markets, TATA-IIS conducts courses on extensive practical training in advanced manufacturing, electric vehicles, electronics, and hospitality. Sujal was selected for housekeeping training in hospitality.

"All of us were nervous initially as it was the first time we had travelled to another state. Some of my colleagues gave in. But I had decided to complete the training," says Sujal.

For the first two weeks, he was trained at the prestigious 5-star hotel Taj Skyline in Ahmedabad. Practical sessions covered cleaning skills, laundry basics, kitchen basics, time management, communication, etc. Though everything was new to Sujal, he took a keen interest and focused on training sincerely.

Next one month, he interned at another prestigious 5-star hotel in Ahmedabad- Hyatt Regency. It was an on-the-job training that also earned him a stipend. This internship boosted his confidence to the next level. This one-and-a-half-month-long training transformed a shy village youth into a confident, skilled professional.

Returning to Mamla in September, Sujal wasted no time in putting his newfound skills to use and secured his first job at Siddharth Hotel in Chandrapur. With a monthly salary of Rs. 12,000, he now supports his family and funds his own education. He is proud of his job and aims to grow in his career while completing his graduation. Sujal's story serves as a guiding light for village youths, showcasing the power of opportunity and hard work in shaping a better tomorrow.

- Anant Sonawane
Communications Officer, TATR



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REEL DEAL! Lights, camera, antlers! These spotted deer bucks put on a show in front of a camera trap, turning their clash into a reel deal. Strike a pose, boys!

THE ACHIEVERS (March-2024)

Let's celebrate the outstanding achievements of the top-performing forest guards at TATR. These frontline heroes of the forest department have tirelessly conducted extensive foot patrols in their respective divisions.

We are delighted to announce the top two achievers for March 2024.



Forest Guard - S. A. Mahajan
Beat - Andhari
Round - Moharli
Range - Moharli
Division - Core TATR
Duration - 20 Days
Target - 125Km/Month
Actual Patrolling - 278.51 Km



Forest Guard - M. T. Buradkar
Beat - Moharli-II
Round - Moharli
Range - Moharli Buffer
Division - Buffer TATR
Duration - 23 Days
Target - 125Km/Month
Actual Patrolling - 301.709Km

THE LAND OF BIRDS & BUTTERFLIES

From page 9

River Tern, Tern sp., Asian Openbill, Lesser Adjutant, Oriental Darter, Little Cormorant, Indian Cormorant, Little Egret, Indian Pond Heron, Eastern Cattle Egret, Great White Egret, Medium Egret, Grey Heron, Purple Heron, Black-headed Ibis, Red-naped Ibis, Black-winged Kite, Crested Honey-buzzard, Crested Serpent-Eagle, Changeable Hawk-Eagle, White-eyed Buzzard, Shikra, Grey-headed Fish-Eagle, Brown Fish-Owl, Jungle Owlet, Mottled Wood-Owl, Eurasian Hoopoe, Indian Grey Hornbill, Common Kingfisher, White-throated Kingfisher, Black-capped Kingfisher, Pied Kingfisher, Asian Green Bee-eater, Indian Roller, Brown-headed Barbet, Brown-capped Pygmy Woodpecker, Black-rumped Flameback, Alexandrine Parakeet, Ring-necked Parakeet, Plum-headed Parakeet, Indian Pitta, Small Minivet, Indian Golden Oriole, Black-

hooded Oriole, Common Woodshrike, Common Iora, Spot-breasted Fantail, White-browed Fantail, Black Drongo, White-bellied Drongo, Greater Racket-tailed Drongo, Black-naped Monarch, Indian Paradise Flycatcher, Long-tailed Shrike, Rufous Treepie, Large-billed Crow, Rufous-tailed Lark, Lark sp., Common Tailorbird, Grey-breasted Prinia, Ashy Prinia, Plain Prinia, Zitting Cisticola, Warbler sp., Barn Swallow, Wire-tailed Swallow, White-browed Bulbul, Red-vented Bulbul, Green/Greenish Warbler, Tawny-bellied Babbler, Jungle Babbler, Indian Pied Starling, Brahminy Starling, Chestnut-tailed Starling, Common Myna, Orange-headed Thrush, Indian Robin, Oriental Magpie-Robin, Tickell's Blue Flycatcher, Red-breasted Flycatcher, Siberian Stonechat, Pied Bush chat, Purple Sunbird, Golden-fronted Leafbird, Baya Weaver, Indian Silverbill, Scaly-breasted Munia, White-rumped Munia, Tricoloured Munia, Red Avadavat, House Sparrow, Yellow-throated Sparrow, Grey Wagtail, Western Yellow Wagtail, White-browed Wagtail, Paddy field Pipit.

MOODS OF THE TIGER

Each journey to Tadoba unveils a new chapter in my jungle exploration, enriching my wildlife encounters. Observing a tiger in its natural habitat is undeniably thrilling, but delving into its moods and respectfully yielding to its whims is equally captivating. After all, as the King of the Jungle, a bit of regal temperament seems fitting.

One evening, as dusk settled in and we made our way back from the opposite end of Navegaon gate, we encountered a forest vehicle halted in front of us. There, in the middle of the road, sat a sub-adult male tiger, nonchalant to our presence, lost in his own world. The Range Forest Officer (RFO) noticed our eager faces and cameras, graciously allowing us passage by pulling his vehicle aside.

Eagerly, I sought to capture a shot of the tiger, hoping for that perfect moment when he would meet my lens with his gaze. However, the tiger remained absorbed in his own musings, paying no heed to my aspirations. Undeterred, I continued clicking, even though the desired frame eluded me.

Just as we contemplated giving up and turning back, the tiger granted me a fleeting glance, meeting my camera's lens head-on. At that moment, I seized the opportunity and captured the shot I had been longing for.

The look he gave me, captured in the photo I share here, felt special, almost as if he were teasing me for my pursuit. Such is the essence of a tiger; it lives by its own rules, indifferent to ours.

Encounters like these remind me of the importance of patience and the necessity to align with the tiger's rhythm. In the jungle, time bends to the whims of the wild, teaching us to embrace each moment with humility and appreciation.

- Sanjay Deshpande
Wildlife Enthusiast,
Sanjeevani Developers, Pune



© Sanjay Deshpande, TATTA, May 2024



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