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Tadoba

DIARIES

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[[Svethakumar Rangarao Bobbili

Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve Conservation Foundation, Chandrapur

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THE AVIAN SYMPHONY AT TADODA

Dear Reader

With the onset of November, the mornings and evenings start getting chilly at Tadoba. This heralds the winter and the seasonal transformation of the forest. This also is a signal to the birds that make their annual journey from much colder far-flung areas of the world such as the Tibetan plateau and central Asia, to this part of India especially the many large and small waterbodies that start teeming with birds of many hues. The skies above Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve fill with a vibrant symphony of birds that grace the reserve each year. We can prominently observe these winter visitors like Bar-headed geese, woolly-necked storks, painted storks, Greylag geese, Northern pintails, Shovellers, and many others mainly at the Irai backwaters, Tadoba Lake, Mahalgaon, Telia, Pangadi, Nalleshwar and Kolsa lakes. These areas become a haven for winter migrants and many breed here.

To mark this period, Maharashtra state has declared the week from 5-12 November as a state birding event every year. The dates coincide with the birth anniversaries of Shri Maruti Chitampalli (5 Nov 1932) and Dr Salim Ali (12 November 1896). Several birding events are organized during this period to celebrate the joy birds bring to our lives.

This seasonal phenomenon is nothing short of magic for bird enthusiasts and nature lovers. But beyond their beauty, these birds play a crucial role in the ecological balance of our environment.

Bird migration is one of the most spectacular natural events, with millions of birds journeying thousands of miles from their breeding grounds in the northern hemisphere to more temperate climates in the south. Tadoba also plays a role in this migration.

These birds are not only important for maintaining the balance of the local ecosystem but are also vital indicators of the health of the environment. The presence of these migratory species is a sign of a functioning ecosystem, while their absence can point to larger environmental issues that need to be addressed.

Birds are often referred to as "bio-indicators" because they are sensitive to changes in their environment. The UK government has adopted an index based on wild bird populations as one of its 15 headline Quality of Life indicators. Birds are considered good indicators of environmental health and biodiversity, so their populations can reflect the overall quality of the environment, which in turn affects human well-being. The fact is not hard to grasp as we have observed the deterioration of our urban environment with the near disappearance of sparrows. They also play an important role in maintaining the health of aquatic systems by controlling algae growth and helping with nutrient cycling.

Birds also serve as prey for larger predators, thus maintaining the food chain balance. In Tadoba, where the top predators like

tigers and leopards dominate the food web, smaller birds, whether migratory or resident, contribute to the broader ecological structure.

While we enjoy sighting these colourful creatures and listening to their melodies, it also brings with it some challenges. The threat of avian influenza (bird flu) is one such concern that demands constant vigilance. Migratory birds, traveling across continents, can act as vectors for the spread of this disease. Although the risk of transmission to humans remains low, outbreaks of bird flu can have devastating consequences on both wild and domestic bird populations.

For protected areas like Tadoba, the arrival of migratory birds necessitates continuous monitoring to ensure the health of both resident and visiting bird species. Regular surveillance, quick response systems for detecting outbreaks, and proper biosecurity measures are essential to preventing the spread of such diseases. In India, the National Institute of High-Security Animal Diseases (NIHSAD) in Bhopal is a key nodal institute for avian influenza, that is involved in systematic surveillance and diagnosis of Avian influenza along with local forest, wildlife, and animal husbandry authorities.

But, bird conservation is not the responsibility of authorities alone. The involvement of local communities, bird watchers, and nature enthusiasts is vital to the long-term sustainability of bird populations. Citizen science initiatives, where local residents and bird enthusiasts observe and report sightings, contribute to valuable data collection. This helps scientists monitor bird numbers, track migration patterns, and detect any signs of disease outbreaks or ecological imbalances.

It is essential to recognize that conservation does not end at the boundaries of a protected area like Tadoba. Many migratory birds rely on areas outside these boundaries, such as wetlands, riverbanks, and agricultural lands, for feeding, resting, and nesting. These habitats, which may not have the legal protections that a reserve like Tadoba enjoys, still play a key role in sustaining bird populations. Hence, conserving these habitats through community-driven efforts, sustainable land use practices, and ecological restoration is vital.

Local farmers and communities near these habitats can play an important role by adopting bird-friendly practices, such as reducing pesticide use and preserving wetlands. Collaboration between forest officials, conservation organizations, and local communities is essential to creating an integrated approach to conservation that spans beyond the reserve boundaries.

So, next time you see birds, remember to thank them for their service to nature and to human well-being.

Dr. Jitendra Ramgaokar

Field Director, TATR

and Executive Director, TATR Conservation Foundation

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CONSERVATION TRANSLOCATION OF TIGERS

October heralded the start of the new tourism season as the Core Area reopened to visitors after a three-month monsoon hiatus. While tourists eagerly captured images of the park's tigers, one magnificent creature began a significant journey to the Simlipal Tiger Reserve as part of a vital conservation translocation initiative.

The Government of India has authorized the translocation of two female tigers from the Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve (TATR) to the Simlipal Tiger Reserve in Odisha. This initiative aims not only to bolster the tiger population in Simlipal but also to enhance its genetic diversity. Following the Chief Wildlife Warden of Maharashtra's permit for capture and translocation, T-158-S3, a progeny of the T-158 tigress, was successfully captured in the Navegaon meadow of the Kolara Range on October 26, 2024, and relocated to Simlipal.

Tiger translocation is a crucial conservation strategy aimed at addressing the decline of tiger populations and enhancing genetic diversity. As apex predators, tigers play a vital role in maintaining the ecological balance within their habitats. Unfortunately, habitat loss, poaching, and human-wildlife conflict have significantly threatened tiger populations worldwide. One of the primary benefits of translocation is the enhancement of genetic diversity. In isolated populations, inbreeding can lead to reduced fitness, lower reproductive success, and increased vulnerability to diseases. Inbreeding has been recorded among Simlipal tigers, with about half of the 27 tigers in the reserve exhibiting pseudo-melanism.

By relocating tigers from stable populations to areas facing critical shortages, conservationists can introduce new genetic material, revitalizing struggling populations. This approach has shown notable success in India, with inspiring examples from Panna and Sariska. Panna Tiger Reserve in Madhya Pradesh, once home to a thriving tiger population, suffered a catastrophic decline due to poaching and habitat loss, leading to complete local extinction by 2009. In response, a comprehensive translocation program was launched, relocating tigers from neighbouring reserves. This initiative aimed not only to increase tiger numbers but also to restore the ecological health of the park. Today, Panna has seen a remarkable resurgence, with an estimated population of around 57-60 tigers, according to the 2022 All India Tiger Estimation. This success has revitalized tourism and local economies while restoring ecological balance.

The recent translocation from TATR to Simlipal marks a significant milestone as the first inter-state tiger translocation from Maharashtra. Earlier this year, two tigresses were translocated from TATR to the Navegaon Nagzira Tiger Reserve, underscoring TATR's ongoing commitment to strengthening tiger populations across various reserves.

As efforts continue to capture the second tigress for translocation to Simlipal, TATR extends its best wishes to the Simlipal Tiger Reserve in its conservation endeavours.

- Anand Reddy
Deputy Director (Core), TATR

REWILDING OF VULTURES IN TATR (PART -III)



On July 4th, 2024, we successfully tagged ten white-backed vultures in Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve using GSM tags. GSM (Global System for Mobile Communications) tags, commonly used for tracking and monitoring, operate on the same network as mobile phones.

Here's a quick look at how they work:

GSM Module: Each GSM tag has a module with a SIM card, similar to a mobile phone, allowing it to communicate with cellular networks.

Location Tracking: These tags estimate location using cell tower triangulation. By connecting with nearby towers, the tag can approximate its position based on signal strength and the tower locations.

Data Transmission: The tag transmits information like location, status updates, or other sensor data over the GSM network to a central server or directly to a user's device.

Power Source: GSM tags are battery-powered, with battery life dependent on data transmission frequency and device power usage.

Applications: GSM tags are widely used in areas such as wildlife monitoring, vehicle tracking, asset management, and personal safety.

Configuration and Management: Tags can be managed remotely via a web interface or mobile app, allowing for setting update intervals, receiving alerts, and monitoring battery status.

Each vulture's tag has a unique number for identification, secured with Teflon threads and a neoprene base to ensure the tag stays stable on the vulture's back.

After tagging, we observed the vultures for ten days to confirm that the tags were properly positioned and comfortable and that no vulture attempted to remove them. Once all conditions were met, on August 3, we used the soft release method to let the vultures fly freely. It was indeed a proud moment to see them taking their first flight to the natural habitat.



GSM tags with specific markings or banded with Teflon threads.

- Bhanu Pratap Singh Rajawat

Conservation Biologist, Bombay Natural History Society

MAGICAL MOMENTS

During an afternoon safari through Pangdi Gate, I had an experience I'll never forget. Eager to spot a tiger, I kept checking every waterhole along the way. Suddenly, I caught a glimpse—a tiger cub by the water! But as soon as I entered, he darted back into the forest, leaving me disappointed. Yet, I wasn't ready to give up. I decided to stay put, giving the cub some space, and waited patiently.

That patience paid off. A few hours later, two tiger cubs returned to the waterhole, cautiously stepping out from the bushes with no mother in sight. What happened next was pure magic—they began to play, right there in front of me. They rolled, tumbled, and chased each other, completely wrapped up in their own playful world, oblivious to my presence.

This wasn't just a thrilling sighting; it was a reminder of the respect and patience needed to truly experience wildlife. By giving them space and staying silent, I was rewarded with a beautiful, intimate moment—an unfiltered look into the lives of these young tigers.

Watching those cubs was more than just exciting; it was a humbling lesson in respecting nature. In that quiet space, I



was shown the wild's grace and beauty, something only patience and respect can reveal. The playful energy of those cubs left me with a memory that will forever capture the true magic of the wild.

- Kishor Poodari
Taxidermist

Shradheya Shri, Atal Bihari Vajpayee Botanical Garden, Visapur

RAW BEAUTY

It was a chilly winter morning in 2021, and the forest seemed wrapped in silence as I entered the Adegaon gate with my guests. The air was still, and everything felt like it was in a deep sleep. But as any wildlife lover knows, the forest is full of surprises. We had barely driven 300 meters from the gate when we heard the sharp alarm call of a sambar deer. It was unmistakable—a predator was nearby!

We quickly scanned the area, our excitement building. Just moments later, there she was—a tigress, stepping out of the dense forest cover. It was none other than T-127, or 'Choti Madhu', as she's known among the locals and guides. My guests were thrilled to see a tiger so soon into the safari, but for me, this sighting was something extra special. Choti Madhu wasn't alone; she was carrying the head of a sambar fawn in her jaws! She must have made the kill recently, fulfilling her hunger after days of hunting. Now, she was bringing back the remaining meal to feed her cubs.

I took a quick picture and kept my eyes on her, following her every movement. She crossed the road gracefully, disappearing briefly into the jungle before emerging again. We continued following her, sensing she was headed to her cubs. Sure enough, she stopped at the Petra Bodi waterhole, glanced around, and gave a soft call. In seconds, three tiny cubs, just three and a half months old, came scampering toward her. The sight of their mother offering them food was



heart-warming and wild all at once—a true window into their world.

Watching this fierce yet tender moment between Choti Madhu and her cubs left an impression that I will never forget. It was, without a doubt, the most unforgettable moment of my career as a wildlife safari guide. Moments like these remind us of the wild's beauty and raw power—experiences that make every chilly morning in the forest

- Sangita Zade

Guide, Khutwanda Gate, TATR

WHAT DOES A TIGER EAT?

Now that we've had an opportunity to go through the physical characteristics of a tiger and its evolutionary history, let's get right into the behaviour and ecology of these majestic predators of Tadoba. If you've been a visitor of Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve, you may have had the chance to have "kaccha chiwda" (dry rice flakes) at the world-famous Bijaram Bhau chai shop. Unfortunately for tigers, they do not have a palate for rice. So, what do they eat? Well, we know that tigers are carnivores and are primarily meat eaters but let's take a deeper dive into what tigers eat, how they eat, and how often they eat.

Tigers are obligate meat eaters. What this means is that they rely heavily on a meat-based diet and cannot substitute their food intake through a vegan diet. They are the largest carnivores in the regions where they occur and they prey upon large-bodied herbivores like deer and antelopes. In India, tigers primarily hunt species like the Indian bison, sambar deer, spotted deer, wild pigs, and other ungulates. They also consume primates like monkeys or langurs, and birds like the Indian peafowl. The tigress T-24 has a reputation for being a crocodile killer as she has documented kills of at least 4 crocodiles from Teliya Lake. Occasionally, tigers also hunt elephant or rhino calves, but never adults. Across most of its geographic range, deer make up 75% of the tiger's diet by mass. In forest fringes, tigers also predate on domestic livestock like cattle and this is a major concern for forest managers as livestock depredation by tigers leads to human-wildlife conflict and reduces the overall motivation to protect our occasionally troublesome national animal.

Tigers hunt for prey approximately once every 4-5 days, depending on how big the catch is. After a successful hunt, they move the kill before feeding. Tigers drag the carcass into cover, often near water. They can move a carcass several times heavier than themselves (like an Indian bison) over



large distances. Tigers use their carnassials (molar teeth) to slice meat off their kill and their tongues have sharp, hard papillae (thorn-like projections) used to shave meat off the bones of prey. They don't consume their prey in a single sitting. Rather, they consume their prey over 2-3 days consuming large chunks of meat every day, resting alternatively. Till all the edible parts of the prey are completely consumed, the tiger stays close to the carcass. Typically, tigers do not eat stomach contents, skin, or bones.

How much do you think they eat? Tigers usually consume large amounts of meat in a single meal. Research suggests that adult tigers consume 18-27 kg of meat in one night. They can potentially eat 1/5th of their body weight in 24 hours. Females usually eat less than males and require about 5-6 kg of meat every day. When a female is with cubs, she requires 50% more food to feed her young.

Interesting factoid: You may have seen pet dogs or cats occasionally consume grass or plants. Tigers have also been observed to consume grasses to clean their guts with an intake of fibre. It helps them with digestion and it also helps them vomit undigested food.

- Yashaswi Rao
Wildlife Biologist, TATR

Grass is in the Details



Amyriad of grasses carpet Tadoba's entire landscape, showcasing an incredible diversity of shapes, sizes, and coloration in their leaves, stalks, and flowers. Beyond being vital to the habitat, grasses display just as much variety and beauty as the birdlife. What's fascinating about grass is that it invites observation from two perspectives: first, the unique look of an individual stalk, and second, the collective effect of thousands coming together in a meadow, open grassland, or along the road. From a moving vehicle, these grasses blend into a soft, glowing blur. Only when you slow down can you truly appreciate their delicate, wiry, unique structures. Taking in such fine details deepens your jungle experience, so slow down and savour even the smallest part!

- Shreya Khadilkar
Visual Designer



TOURISM BEYOND SAFARIS

Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve (TATR) has been one of the front-runners in attracting wildlife enthusiasts, whose prospect of sighting the elusive tiger brings in lakhs of visitors every year. The safari experience, with all its adrenaline and awe, not only placed Tadoba on India's top wildlife destination list but also became a lifeline for local economies. From guides to lodge owners, the ripple effect brings significant income and opportunities for locals. The recent redevelopment of the famous Moharli Gate and the addition of a tourist complex, including a Nature Interpretation Centre, is part of an ongoing effort to enhance the quality of the tourism experience.

While safaris continue to be the heart of tourism in Tadoba, there is indeed more to the visitor experience than just sighting tigers. In recent years, the tourism landscape around the reserve has begun to evolve, with eco-tourism initiatives introducing visitors to local culture, village life, and livelihood opportunities for Tadoba's communities in newer ways. Safaris remain the main attraction, but tourists are discovering a broader world that includes more than the thrill of sightings.

Nothing within the safari experience rivals the excitement of tracking tigers or watching birds perched high in the forest canopy. These safari-related activities still reign supreme in popularity, contributing crucial income to the local economy. Tourism is the lifeblood of the villages surrounding the reserve, providing income for guides and drivers who navigate the jungle, as well as for guesthouse and souvenir shop owners.

One of the most promising developments in Tadoba's tourism sector is the rise of village homestays, offering visitors a unique view of life around the reserve. Visitors who seek more than just a jeep ride through the jungle can opt to stay in traditional village homes, far from the ordinary tourist lodge experience. Homestays offer an intimate glimpse into local life. Guests can spend time with families, participate in farming activities, and witness firsthand the close relationship between the community and the forest. This

personal and immersive experience helps visitors understand life in Tadoba and provides villagers with supplementary income. Homestays are becoming a favourite option for those looking to go beyond the typical wildlife experience.



One of the lesser-known developments in Tadoba's tourism evolution is the focus on bamboo products. Bamboo has long been a vital material for the villages around the reserve, used for building and crafting everyday items. Today, visitors are discovering the beauty and craftsmanship of bamboo products, taking home souvenirs that reflect the region's culture. Local artisans, using techniques passed down through generations, craft baskets, furniture, and decorative items from bamboo. These products provide a connection to the traditional way of life. It also provides a sustainable source of income for the artisans.

As Tadoba's tourism landscape continues to grow, the opportunities for visitors to experience a deeper connection with the region are expanding. While safaris remain the crowning jewel of any visit, village homestays, and bamboo crafts offer additional ways for tourists to engage with the local culture. The shift in tourism has opened new avenues for the local communities, allowing them to diversify their livelihoods, reduce their dependence on forest resources, and share their culture with a global audience. In Tadoba, it's not just about sighting a tiger—it's about understanding the interconnectedness of wildlife, people, and livelihoods.

- Saket Agasti
Social Scientist, TATR



Pragati S. Bhujbalia

MOTHER'S LOVE! Witness a Tender Moment in the Wild. This beautiful shot captures the pure bond between a mother tiger (T-7, popularly known as Choti Tara) and her cub—a rare glimpse into the warmth and affection of the wild.



© Nirmal Ghosh

Mating pair of Karwa:
T-40 and T-93.

THE STORY OF A QUEEN

While wildlife enthusiasts flock to the Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve (TATR) to spot the iconic Royal Bengal tiger, many tigers have started to thrive outside the reserve's boundaries. The Chandrapur district, often called the 'Land of Tigers', is now home to more than 250 tigers, many of whom have dispersed from TATR. This migration has made wildlife safaris in the surrounding forests increasingly popular due to the frequent tiger sightings. Currently, the Karwa round in the Ballarshah range of the Central Chanda Forest Division is buzzing with wildlife lovers, drawn by sightings of a tigress T-40, popularly known as Rani.

Rani's story is symbolic of the broader movement of tigers out of TATR into neighbouring forests. Born in 2015 in the Agarzari buffer zone of TATR, Rani is one of two cubs born to a well-known tigress, T-60, fondly called Sharmili. Her father, T-50, nicknamed Khali, was a powerful and protective figure. Growing up under the care and guidance of Sharmili and the protection of Khali, Rani and her sister became bold and unafraid, even around the tourist vehicles that frequented their territory.

As the sisters matured, they set out to establish their own territories. Rani's sister eventually settled near the Chandrapur Thermal Power Station, while Rani herself ventured into Karwa in the Ballarshah range. Finding suitable territory, she also found a mate and, in 2019, gave birth to three cubs. One of these cubs chose a territory adjacent to her own, signaling that Rani's lineage was beginning to spread across the landscape.

In subsequent years, Rani mated with T-86, a male tiger who was later captured due to human-wildlife conflicts after he killed six people in the area. With T-86, Rani had one cub, but tragically, the cub was killed by another male tiger, T-98, in May 2024 when it was just seven or eight months old. During this time, while her cub was still alive, Rani was also seen mating with two other males: T-75, known as Guru, and T-93, nicknamed Kala. Recently, Rani has been frequently spotted with Kala, and it's expected that she may soon give birth to

her third litter, an exciting prospect for the local wildlife community.

Rani's story is not unique; it mirrors the journeys of other tigers from TATR, like T-144, T-108, and T-86, who have dispersed into the surrounding forests. These stories highlight TATR's role as a vital breeding ground, providing young tigers with the necessary resources and protection until they reach adulthood. As the tiger population within the reserve grows, young adults are compelled to venture into neighbouring forests, drawn by the promise of unclaimed territory and hunting grounds.

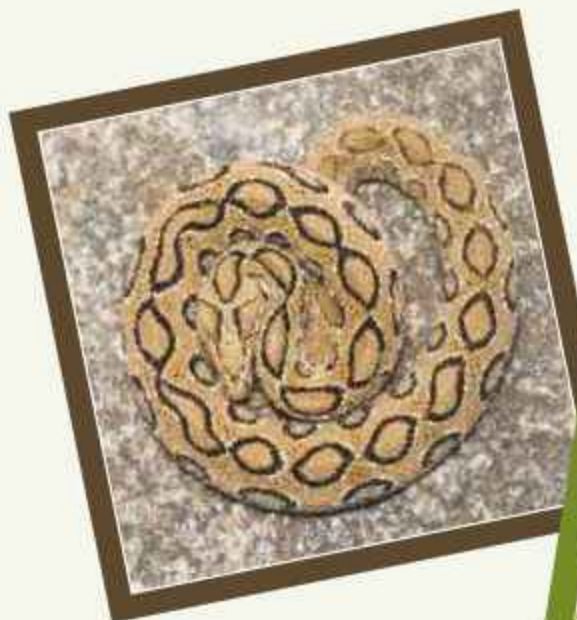
The expansion of tigers into the TATR landscape underscores the importance of these neighbouring forests as a habitat for these magnificent animals. With sufficient prey, water sources, and minimal disturbance, these areas offer tigers an ideal environment to establish territories and raise cubs. Additionally, the movement of tigers like Rani into forests beyond the reserve has enriched local biodiversity and made nearby forested areas equally valuable for wildlife tourism.

This dispersal pattern also sheds light on the need for balanced conservation strategies that go beyond the core reserve zones. Ensuring connectivity between protected areas and maintaining viable habitats in buffer and corridor zones are crucial to sustaining a healthy tiger population. Human-wildlife conflict remains a concern as tigers expand their range, highlighting the need for community awareness and protective measures for people living near these tiger habitats.

In essence, Rani's journey from the TATR to the forests of Karwa reflects a thriving tiger population and demonstrates the resilience and adaptability of these animals. Her story and those of other dispersed tigers illustrate how Tadoba has become a nurturing environment, fostering the growth of this majestic species and transforming the surrounding landscape into a vibrant and crucial habitat for tigers in India.

- Noor Ali Sayyed

Wildlife Biologist, Central Chanda



CC-Vivek Shantini

RUSSELL'S VIPER

Russell's viper is one of the most dangerous snakes in India, counted among the "big four" venomous species responsible for the majority of snake bites in the country. With a yellowish-brown body marked by black, oval-shaped spots and a distinctive triangular head, it's a snake that can be identified by its unique appearance. Despite its often slow movements due to its heavy body, the Russell's viper strikes with incredible speed when threatened.

Belonging to the Viperidae family, this snake is an ambush hunter, typically hiding under dry leaves or piles of wheat and rice waste where rodents—its main prey—frequently visit. When disturbed, it emits a loud hissing sound, similar to a pressure cooker, before it strikes. This behaviour serves as a warning, but unfortunately, it's often too late for the intruder.

A fascinating aspect of Russell's viper biology is its reproduction. Females don't lay eggs; instead, they give birth to live young, each about 15 cm long, typically between May and July. The snake's robust body is covered with strongly keeled scales that give it a rough texture. Its large fangs can penetrate thick cloth and even bags, making it a particularly formidable threat.

Russell's vipers are commonly found throughout the Indian subcontinent and can grow up to 4 feet in length. They are mostly nocturnal and can be difficult to spot due to their excellent camouflage, often leading to accidental bites when people walk through agricultural fields or rural areas at night.

A bite from a Russell's viper requires immediate medical attention. Local remedies or unproven treatments should be avoided at all costs. Quick and proper medical intervention is crucial to effectively manage the potent venom and prevent serious consequences.

- Chinmay Deshpande
Naturalist



CC-Wikipedia

DHAVADA

One of the most striking trees in Tadoba is the Dhavada (*Anogeissus latifolia*). This tree holds a special place in local culture, especially for its edible gum called 'gum ghatti'. My grandmother used this gum as the main ingredient in her famous 'Dinkacha Ladu' sweets. Gum ghatti is widely used in making sweetmeats, as well as in dye processes and the pharmaceutical industry for binding. Interestingly, the Dhavada tree isn't usually tapped for its gum; instead, the gum naturally oozes from the bark's wounds, especially in summer. Local tribal communities collect the gum by hand and then dry it under the sun for several days.

The Dhavada tree is also highly valued for its strong, durable wood, which is ideal for construction, furniture, and charcoal production. The bark and leaves contain gallotannins, which are used in tanning leather, and the leaves yield a black dye.

In traditional medicine, parts of this tree are used to treat snake bites, scorpion stings, wounds, and swellings. Its leaves serve another purpose—they feed Tussar silk-moth worms (*Antheraea paphia*), essential for producing Tussah silk. Additionally, the tree's flowers are an important pollen source for honey bees.

The Dhavada tree stands out in Tadoba's landscape with its smooth, greyish bark on a tall, stately trunk that can grow over 20 meters. Often found in rocky areas, it also helps stabilize the soil and is remarkably drought-resistant. Thanks to its many uses—economic, ecological, and cultural—Dhavada is one of India's most valuable trees.

- Anirudh Chaoji
Senior Naturalist



COMMON EMIGRANT

The Common Emigrant butterfly, named for its migratory habit, is well known for its bright yellow colour, which resembles butter. This resemblance might even be the reason behind the term 'butterfly'. In some regions, people call it 'Dudhi'. My brother used to catch these butterflies during his childhood, drawn to their vibrant colour and soft, delicate wings.

These butterflies love to rest on mud patches, especially in the heat of summer. Using their proboscis, a tube-like mouthpart, they draw minerals from the ground. These minerals play a crucial role in their reproductive process. You can often spot these butterflies in large numbers in green areas where plants like Cassia and Senna grow, as these are their preferred plants. They lay beautiful, white, spindle-shaped eggs on the tender leaves of these plants, forming quite a sight.

One fascinating trait of the Common Emigrant is its ability to change its appearance throughout the year, adapting its looks with the seasons. This butterfly belongs to the Pieridae family, known for its yellow and white wings with dark patches.

Scientific studies on its wings reveal that the wings' top side (dorsal side) has three different scales. Using absorption spectroscopy, scientists found that the wings absorb UV light strongly, contributing to their colour. Under a scanning electron microscope, scientists observed complex designs on these scales, including tiny bead-like structures that give the wings their unique look. X-ray diffraction confirmed that these beads are crystalline, and these intricate structures and light absorption create the butterfly's beautiful colouration. This amazing blend of nature's structures and light absorption makes the Common Emigrant a fascinating insect to study.

- Yogita N. D. Chhapekar

Biologist, Shradhey Shri. Atal Bihari Vajpayee Botanical Garden, Visapur



DESERT WHEATEAR

On a birding trip to Kasarla Lake near Nagbhid, a unique habitat of grassy fields and rocky outcrops, I knew instantly it was the perfect spot to find a Desert Wheatear. Eagerly, I scanned the area, and after walking about 200 meters, I spotted a small bird perched on a rock. Getting closer, I was thrilled to confirm it was indeed a Desert Wheatear!

The Desert Wheatear is about the size of a sparrow. The male has a striking mix of colours, with a dark yellow head and back, a faint brow line, and a tail that's yellowish-white on top with black below. Its wings are dark brown, and both sides of its neck and head are black, while the lower body is mostly yellowish-white. Females, in contrast, are slightly greyish, with pale brown wings and tail feathers, and yellowish-brown feathers around their ears.

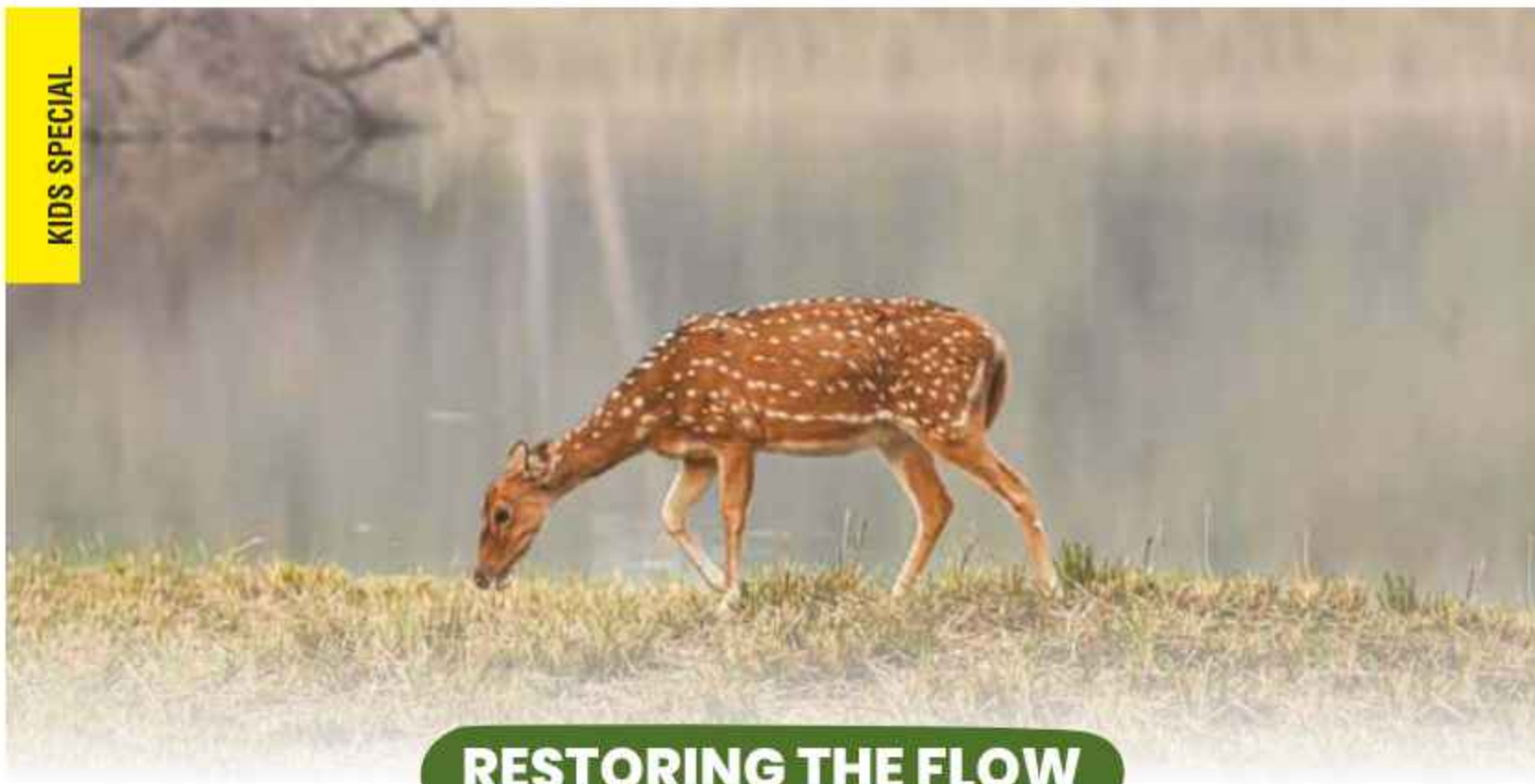
These birds thrive in low desert areas with sandy or rocky terrain and are often found around scrubland, wasteland, or ploughed fields. They forage for insects, sometimes catching them mid-flight. The Desert Wheatear's range includes high-altitude regions like Kashmir, Ladakh, and Nepal for breeding, with migration patterns that bring them southward as far as Sri Lanka during the winter, and sightings as far as Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh.

Desert Wheatears are known for their changing tunes and melodic mimicry, and they give off a "Chi-t-t" call as a warning when danger is near. Their breeding season runs from April to June, during which they create grass-lined nests in holes or under rocks, laying 4-6 pale blue eggs speckled with brown.

Spotting this special bird was a reminder of the unique beauty that India's diverse landscapes have to offer!

- Rundan Katkar

Range Forest Officer, Kolsa, TATR



RESTORING THE FLOW

Entering the gates of the TATR on the 30th of April, 2012 I was exhilarated to visit a new National Park. Coming from Mumbai where cement structures define the skyline and infrastructure shapes daily life, going for safaris was a break from the bustling cityscape, being fully immersed in wilderness, surrounded by trees. However, once I entered one of the buffer gates, I noticed the cement water bodies along both sides of my jeep, blending human design with the natural landscape. While different from what I expected, they offered a unique contrast to the surrounding wilderness. It felt as though these water bodies, though crafted by human hands, were an effort to support the park's ecosystem. I could see the potential for this space to continue evolving and the efforts taken by the forest officials to build these water bodies.

But as the years went by, something beautiful happened. The first signs of a movement toward restoration emerged. The concrete water bodies were gradually replaced with more natural earth-lined water bodies. Gradually, one after another, the cement structures were demolished, and the sites were left open to revert to how they were before.

Instead of the rough and edgy concrete, the new water bodies were integrated into the environment. The edges were made smooth with soil and greenery, giving the wildlife a natural and friendly environment. Soon, shrubs began to appear along the water line, providing shade and protection; the water itself was no longer contained by sterile walls but had taken on the colour of the ground.

Coming to Tadoba now, after years, the change is quite visible. The vegetation has encroached on the water features and the feel of balance is regained. It is a message about the



strength of nature and the need to let it run wild without human intervention. This is an indication that given an opportunity nature has the capability to flourish and grow.

As I recall that visit in the year 2012, I am full of hope. Tadoba's story is not just one of a national park but of a journey towards understanding and respecting the natural world. It is a story of learning to balance human needs with those of the environment, and the realization that true beauty lies in letting nature be, in all its wild and untamed glory.

- Aaliyah Asgar

Age- 17 years, Student, Aditya Birja World Academy, Mumbai

A DOOR TO NEW POSSIBILITIES

In the small village of Sindhi in Rajura tehsil, Chandrapur lives a young artist named Maroti Tekam. Recently 26 years old, Maroti's life took a turn he had never dreamed of. From his humble village, he found himself in the grand halls of Rashtrapati Bhavan, the official residence of the President of India in New Delhi. His art was being celebrated by people from all corners of the country, and for Maroti, it felt like a dream come true. "I had never imagined that I would get such huge exposure," Maroti said, filled with gratitude. "All thanks to Tadoba."

Maroti came from the Gond tribal community, and his journey as an artist began when he was just a boy in the 7th grade. He was drawn to the beauty around him—the forests, animals, and everyday life of his village—and started sketching everything he saw. Even at that young age, he knew he wanted to be an artist. After finishing his 12th standard exams, he took an intermediary examination in painting and later joined a two-year Art Teacher Diploma course in Nawagaon, Sindewahi tehsil. He also completed a one-year foundation course to further hone his skills.

With his new qualifications, Maroti began teaching painting to primary students at the local Zilla Parishad School, but his own passion for art never faded. He would spend hours working on his paintings after school, dreaming of one day sharing his art with the world.

This September, a rare opportunity came knocking. Maroti learned about an art event in Delhi and thought to himself, "I must do my best to showcase my talent on a national stage." With a heart full of determination, Maroti worked day and night for three days to create something truly special. His painting would be a tribute to the peaceful coexistence between his tribal community, the forests, and the tigers that roamed them.

Maroti wanted his artwork to capture the deep bond his community shared with nature, so he incorporated natural elements into his piece. He used real leaves to paint the forest and Mustard to create the curly hair of a tribal woman.

To bring the trees to life, he used the bark of the Neem tree. The painting became a beautiful representation of the harmony between humans and the wild, each detail portraying Maroti's roots and his respect for nature.



When he submitted his artwork to the Tadoba office in Chandrapur, Maroti hoped it would make an impact. His joy was boundless when he received the news: his painting had been selected for the exhibition in Delhi!

On October 17, Maroti arrived in Delhi, filled with excitement and nerves. At the Rashtrapati Bhavan exhibition, thousands of visitors admired his work, and he even got the chance to meet fellow artists from all over India. Though they came from different backgrounds and spoke different languages, the artists shared a common language—their love for art. Maroti was especially thrilled to learn about other art forms, including Gondi art from Madhya Pradesh, which he felt a deep connection to.

This opportunity, provided by Tadoba, was more than an event for Maroti—it was a door to a world of new possibilities. The experience fueled his dreams, and now Maroti aims even higher. His next goal is to complete a two-year Painter Trade course at IIT Chandrapur and take his art beyond India's borders.

Maroti's journey is a tale of passion, perseverance, and transformation. From a young boy with a love for drawing to an artist showcasing his work at Rashtrapati Bhavan, Maroti's story reminds us that even the smallest opportunities can lead to incredible places. With a heart full of dreams and a paintbrush in hand, Maroti is ready to take his art to every corner of the world.

- Anant Sonwane

Communications Officer, TATR



Contribute to 'Tadoba Diaries'

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





MASTERING THE MOVES! Dancing is a learned skill. Young peacocks perfect their dance steps even before they earn their feathers—caught on camera trap!

THE ACHIEVERS (September-2024)

Join us in celebrating the achievements of TATR's top-performing forest guards, our frontline protectors who have led in foot patrolling across their divisions.

We are thrilled to announce the top two achievers for September 2024!



Forest Guard - V. B. Madavi
Beat - Nimdhela
Round - Bhanuskhindi
Range - Tadoba
Division - Core TATR
Duration - 20 Days
Target - 125Km/Month
Actual Patrolling - 269.24 Km



Forest Guard - K. M. Kawale
Beat - Borda
Round - Ghantachauki
Range - Chandrapur Buffer
Division - Buffer TATR
Duration - 28 Days
Target - 125Km/Month
Actual Patrolling - 328.49 Km

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Moharli



Adventure
Agazari

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Ajay Kodape
M. 9730853324



**Camping
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Ajay Kodape
M. 9730853324
Rupesh
M. 7083669491



For Booking
Sanjay
M. 9834689541
Avinash
M. 9158928393

Cycling
Moharli



October transforms Tadoba's forest into a lush, green paradise. After the monsoon, every tree, creeper, stream, and even the animals wear a refreshed look. The endless shades of green can leave you in awe, as each leaf seems to glow with life. Fragrant creeper flowers fill the air with a sweet, earthy aroma, and every water body brims with fresh, clear water—a rare sight for city dwellers. The entire forest seems dressed to welcome the approaching winter, with vibrant contrasts from the orange-yellow coats of tigers to the soft velvet on the antlers of spotted deer.

Although tiger sightings become trickier in October, the reward is experiencing Tadoba's wild beauty. I am fortunate to have seen many tigers during my visits. Hence this season, I focussed on the forest's vibrant ecosystem. Yet, in Tadoba, there is always the thrill of a chance encounter with those iconic stripes, which almost appear to shift to red in October's golden light.

My first October safari treated me to an encounter with a large pack of wild dogs, known locally as Sonkute or Dhole. With their striking reddish-gold coats, these agile creatures are fascinating to observe. Wild dogs are often misunderstood for their hunting methods. Unlike larger predators, their smaller size prevents them from making a quick kill. Instead, they rely on exhausting their prey, often bleeding it out over a long chase. Many find this method unsettling, but it's simply nature's way for these predators.

Listening to the forest echo with the cries of their recent kill is haunting yet powerful—a reminder of the raw, unfiltered reality of the wild. Tigers, however, don't share the same fascination with wild dogs. They often see them as competition, especially as wild dogs sometimes target tiger cubs or disrupt prey in tiger territories. It's not uncommon to see a tiger chase off a pack of dholes with full force if it catches their scent nearby.

Wild dogs are among Tadoba's true treasures. As an endangered species facing habitat loss, they play a vital role in the ecosystem. Protecting them preserves this majestic landscape and maintains the delicate balance of Tadoba's rich wildlife web.

- Sanjay Deshpande

Wildlife Enthusiast,
Sanjeevani Developers, Pune

MY FLIGHT
MY FOREST
MY HOME !



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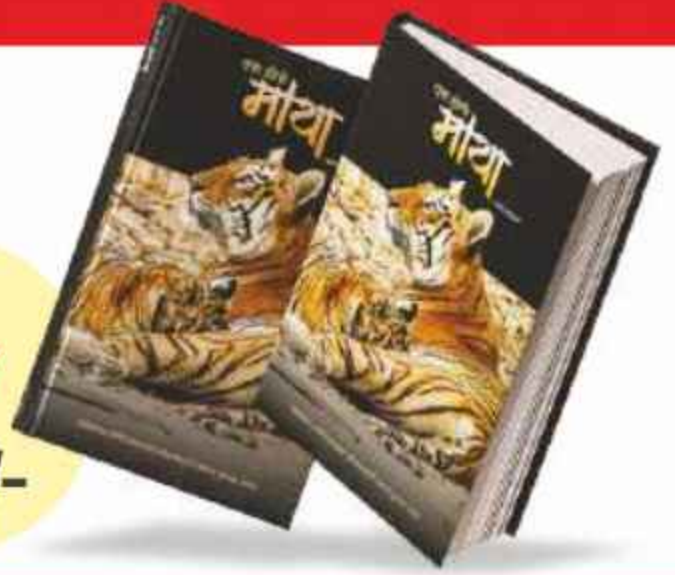


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