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Tadoba

DIARIES

The Official Newsletter of Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve



Jayesh Giradkar

Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve Conservation Foundation, Chandrapur

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TRACKING TIGERS THROUGH RADIO TELEMETRY TOOL FOR CONSERVATION

Dear Reader

With the end of year holiday season approaching, all the national parks and sanctuaries in the country are abuzz with wildlife enthusiasts and tourists with a wish to end this year on a serene note in the lap of nature. Tadoba is no exception, with visitors at its peak. This year, Tadoba has been fortunate to end the year with zero fire incidences, zero poaching cases, abundant rains, and luxuriant growth of vegetation, especially the regeneration of bamboo that gives rise to hope of a new bamboo forest to replace the flowered dead culms scattered across the park.

Added to this is the abundance of sambar, chital and gaur herds. But it is all topped by the addition of more than 40 tiger cubs that would aspire in coming years to either take over the territories within the park or disperse in all directions to establish their new territories. But for that to happen, tigers also must travel vast distances.

The last one is a challenging proposition, even for animals as strong and fierce as tigers!

We need to understand that not every tiger that starts its journey in search of a new territory reaches its destination. The main reason for this happens to be the disconnected landscapes, fragmented forests and human-dominated land uses in the areas that need to be crossed to reach bigger patches of forests or other sanctuaries, which might be their potential new territories. There are numerous hurdles on the way, like the railway lines and highways, electricity lines, vast agricultural fields and an ever-present threat of poachers that can bring the journey to a tragic end.

Yet, many young tigers must make this journey not only for their individual sake but for the future of all tigers. The genetic exchange between and within landscapes is a must to preserve the genetic diversity that will allow the tigers to survive the perils of shrunken and isolated habitats. One of the ways to track the movement of these tigers is to fit them with radio telemetry-enabled collars that are linked with satellites that transmit the vital movement data to the monitoring teams. In the past this data has helped us to identify 26 vital corridors across the country that are used by

tigers across the length and breadth of the country. These corridors are of critical importance to the conservation of tigers. We would have never known this but for the tool of radio telemetry. From 2015 onwards in Maharashtra, a total of 26 tigers have been radio-collared, out of which 13 tigers are from the Tadoba landscape. The GPS data from these animals have helped us understand that tigers not only move through the forests but also hundreds of kilometres of intensely human-dominated areas without getting detected. At the same time, the deaths of these radio-collared tigers also tell us about the intensity of resistance and the estimated number of tigers that die undetected and unnoticed every year in their effort to cross from one area to another.

There is increased awareness now regarding the importance of wildlife corridors, and it has become mandatory to incorporate mitigation structures that help animals cross over the roads, railway lines and irrigation canals. However, we and our designs of development projects have a long way to go to ensure that no animals are killed on our roads and railway lines or are electrocuted due to our electricity transmission lines. The cost of losing tigers forever may be too high for humanity as they are the ones that protect our ecosystems and provide us vital ecosystem services like clean air and water.

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

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TACKLING AIR POLLUTION IN TATR

In recent weeks, Delhi has made headlines for its alarming air quality, with the city's AQI readings reaching dangerous levels. As the issue of air pollution continues to rise in urban areas, it's important to recognize that even the most pristine natural environments like TATR, are not immune to its effects. However, compared to many urban regions, Tadoba enjoys relatively cleaner air, a fact that makes the reserve a sanctuary for wildlife and visitors alike. Yet, even in this peaceful haven, air pollution remains a challenge that requires ongoing attention and effort.

Air pollution in Tadoba is primarily caused by human activities, including the burning of firewood, waste, and emissions from vehicles. Many villagers living in the buffer zone of the reserve still depend on firewood for cooking, although the distribution of LPG cylinders by the TATR administration has significantly reduced the use of firewood for cooking in recent years. However, firewood is still often used for boiling water, contributing to local air pollution.

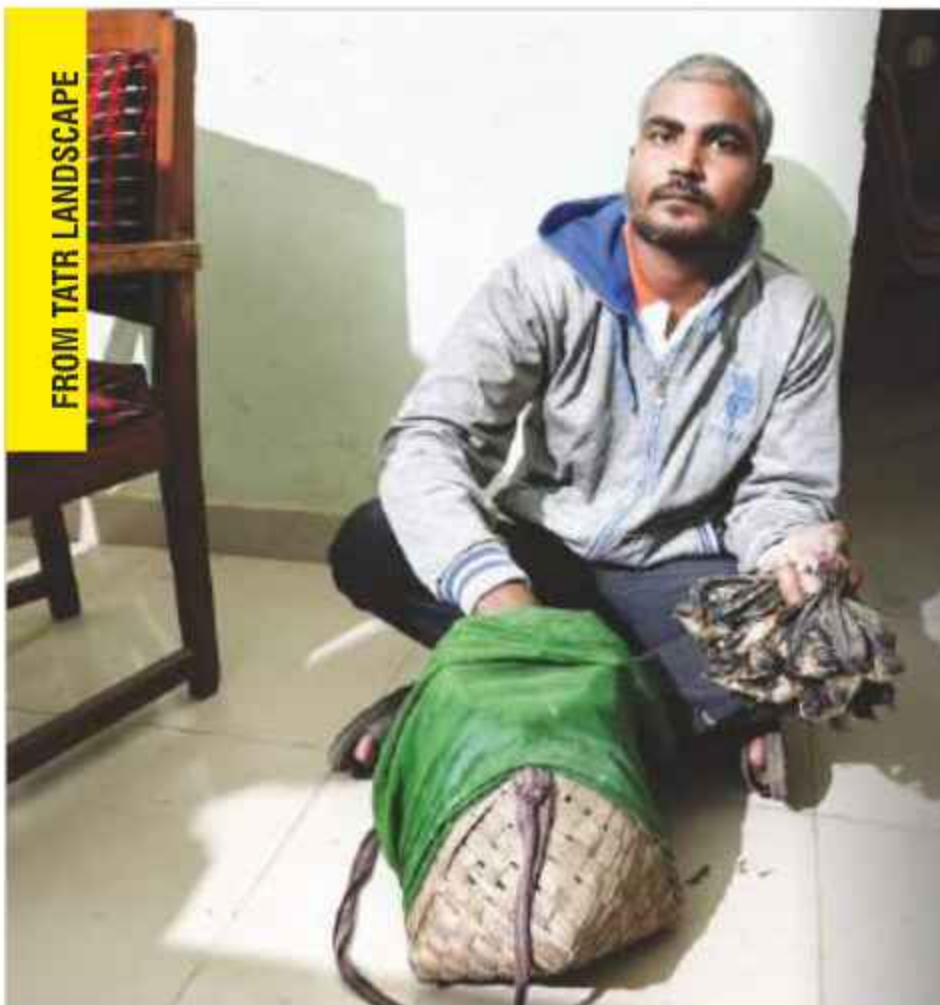
Burning waste, including plastic, sanitary products, e-waste, and clothes, further exacerbates the pollution problem. These practices release toxic gases into the atmosphere, which affect both the health of the local community and the wildlife within the reserve. The Zero Waste Tadoba initiative encourages local communities, resorts, and visitors to segregate their waste, ensuring that recyclable materials are properly processed, while non-recyclable waste is disposed of in an environmentally responsible way. These efforts aim to reduce the harmful impact of waste burning, which contributes to air pollution and poses a significant health risk to both humans and animals.



The pollution caused by safari vehicles remains another challenge. While the reserve has been exploring the use of electric vehicles for safaris, this technology is still in its experimental phase, and the availability of electric vehicles in the market is limited. As a result, the emissions from safari vehicles continue to be a source of pollution, albeit on a much smaller scale compared to larger cities.

Despite these challenges, Tadoba's air quality remains relatively better than many other regions, and efforts to address pollution are progressing. As we move forward, each of us needs to do our part in preserving the environment and reducing pollution. Whether through small daily actions like reducing waste, conserving energy, or choosing sustainable transportation options, every effort counts.

- Anand Reddy
Deputy Director (Core), TATR



THE SWALLOW KILLER



Working in the forests gives you a deep sense of belonging and a responsibility toward wildlife. You can't ignore even the slightest possibility of harm to any species- birds, animals, or plants. The ongoing struggle between harmful elements and those who strive to protect nature has been happening for ages. We recently executed an operation that resulted in the arrest of an individual responsible for killing thousands of birds.

We received a tip-off about a fisherman in Chandrapur selling Red-rumped Swallows for Rs. 10 each. These birds are purchased, particularly during the winter, for use in traditional remedies for ailments like rheumatism. We decided to set a trap and catch the culprit. As planned, I called him, pretending to be a buyer. "Tumhare pass taarwali hai kya?" (Do you have the bird that sits on the wire?), I asked him. With some initial hesitation, he accepted that he indeed had the birds in a big quantity. I convinced him that I was a genuine buyer and called to meet him at a specific location on a highway near Ballarshah at 9 pm. An important point to note here is we at the forest department never induce people to commit crimes, but we try to find out if anyone is involved in a crime. My call was a part of those efforts.

The stage was set for action. Under the leadership of ACF Adeshkumar Shendge, our team laid the trap at the meeting point. The team also included RFO Naresh Bhaware, WPSI member Mukesh Bhandkar, Forest Guard Komal Ghuglot, Varsha Pipre, Sudhir Bokde, Anil Chaudhari, and labourer Bitesh Bawane. Everyone scattered to their positions while I

stood on the highway, waiting for the suspect.

At around 9 pm, I spotted a motorcycle with a bag hanging from it heading towards me. All of us were alert. The motorcycle stopped, and I approached the rider. "Do you have the stuff?" I asked. He nodded, and within moments, the entire team sprang into action, overpowering and arresting the man. He was visibly shocked by the sudden turn of events. We quickly checked his bag and found 60 Red-rumped Swallows, all alive but with their feathers removed. A subsequent raid of his house led to the seizure of 18 more living birds and six dead ones stored in a refrigerator. We also found a gunny sack full of feathers and a net used for trapping the birds.

During interrogation, the suspect confessed to having killed over 2,000 Swallows in the past two years. He also revealed that there were others involved in this illegal trade. The method he used was one passed down from his father. They would lay a large net in fields near the Wardha River and spread Jawar (sorghum) on it. They would then place 8-10 captured Swallows on the net, with their wings tied to wooden sticks to prevent flight. The food would lure the birds, and once a large number had gathered, the hunter would pull a string, causing the net to close and trapping the birds.

We received the names of other individuals involved in this trade and are now tracking them. A case was filed against the culprit. He was granted bail the following day.

- Noor Ali Sayyed
Wildlife Biologist, Central Chanda

WHEN OUR EYES LOCKED

One warm afternoon, my guest and I spent the first half of our safari wandering through the buffer forest, a part of the tiger reserve that shares its borders with the nearby villages. The air was filled with the sounds of nature, but there was no sign of any big cats. As we drove along, we casually chatted, unaware of the unfolding drama. Suddenly, our vehicle halted as a herd of more than 100 cattle made their way down the road. It was an impressive sight, but I couldn't help but think that with so much movement, the chances of spotting a big cat were slim to none.

We watched the cattle graze, unaware of any imminent danger. But then, something caught my attention. Two cows on the edge of the herd suddenly jerked away, as if sensing something unseen. A moment later, the words "Wagh aala, Wagh aala" (tiger has arrived) rang out through the forest, sending a chill down my spine. The adrenaline kicked in as we quickly closed the 50 meters between us and the herd.

I looked to the right, and there she was. A tigress, her eyes locked with mine. It was a surreal moment—both a fleeting encounter and an intense connection. The herd, oblivious to the danger, moved on unscathed, while the tigress, with a



regal glance, silently retreated back into the depths of the forest.

The experience was a reminder of the untamed beauty and the silent presence of the wild. In that moment, it felt like time had stopped, leaving us with a profound respect for the majesty of the tiger and the wilderness around us.

- Mahek Vyas
Tour Operator

THRICE LUCKY

Last month, I was guiding an afternoon safari in the Junona buffer area. My guests weren't particularly hardcore wildlife enthusiasts and were mainly focused on tiger sightings. During the first half hour of our safari, I took the opportunity to explain how the forest can surprise us if we keep our eyes, ears, and minds open.

After 3 pm, as we approached the Navegaon Chauki hill, the Junona forest decided to offer us a surprise. I noticed two dark shapes running towards our vehicle. To my astonishment, I realized they were Honey Badgers—one of the rarest species in Tadoba! It was a pair. What we hadn't realized was that they were mating in a bamboo thicket by the roadside. As we unknowingly drove past, the pair, clearly irritated by our intrusion, charged at our vehicle. One of them, likely the female, gave up midway, but its partner chased us for 10-15 meters before disappearing back into the bamboo. We could still hear it calling out to its mate.

The Honey Badger is a nocturnal creature, so I was stunned to witness this pair in broad daylight. I had previously seen Honey Badgers in the early morning and evening in the same Junona forest, but this was a first in daylight—my third lucky sighting.

When I explained to my guests how rare this encounter was, they too were thrilled by the unexpected turn of events.



- Rahul Mangam
Guide, Junona Gate, TATR

HOW DOES A TIGER SCORE A MEAL?

In the last iteration of Tadoba Diaries, we talked about the feeding behaviour of tigers – what they eat, how they eat, and how often they eat! Unfortunately for tigers, they can't barter money for food. So how does a tiger score a meal? If you've seen KGF 2, you might remember a scene where Vanaram corrects some kids on how a tiger hunts its prey. A tiger does not pounce on prey and rely on brute force to bring it down. Instead, a tiger's hunting strategy is a blend of strength, technique, and finesse.

Tigers are obligate carnivores, so hunting is integral to their survival and therefore hunting in tigers has evolved to become one of the most effective predation strategies in the animal kingdom. The hunting strategies of tigers are diverse and depend on factors such as the type of prey, the terrain, and the availability of resources. Tigers primarily hunt using a 'stalk and ambush' method. What this means is that unlike the cheetah, who chases down prey using an intense burst of speed, or dholes who rely on pack hunting strategies, tigers rely on patience and stealth to get close enough to their prey. The hunt starts with a tiger stalking its prey. Stalking involves a tiger blending into its environment and becoming as small and compact as possible, carefully inching closer to the prey. Once close enough, the tiger lies in wait to strike at the perfect moment. Once the prey is in range, the tiger launches at it in a sudden and explosive burst of energy, surprising its victim. As soon as the tiger grabs its prey, it goes for the victim's throat. So unlike dholes, who nibble and gnaw at their prey even while chasing, tigers are very clinical with their kills. They latch on to their prey with their sharp claws and grab its throat with their large canines, pressing down on the jugular vein and asphyxiating the victim. Gasping for air, the prey finally goes limp and dies.

Tigers primarily hunt at night, relying on their keen sense of sight and smell to detect and pin down prey. While it's not as common as the 'stalk and ambush' strategy, occasionally tigers rely on the 'chase and pursuit' strategy where tigers use a burst of speed over a short distance to bring down prey; often weak or injured individuals. Tigers are also proficient



swimmers and in certain landscapes like the beautiful wetlands of the Sunderbans, tigers dive into the water and swim to catch fish and other prey species.

But even with their impeccable hunting strategies, only 10-20% of hunting attempts end in a successful kill (Goes to tell you how quick an average deer actually is!). This is because tigers also face certain challenges, which makes hunting complex and dynamic. First, hunting is a zero-sum game. One individual's gain is another's loss and therefore, tigers face intraspecific (competition with other tigers) and interspecific (competition with other carnivores like leopards or dholes) competition. Second, hunting success is a function of prey availability. In some landscapes where prey numbers are scarce, hunting becomes even more challenging. Lastly, hunting also entails direct physical confrontations with ungulates often larger than their own size. This puts tigers at risk of injury caused by the antlers of a sambar deer or the horns of an Indian gaur. Injuries weaken a tiger's odds of hunting success and a theory suggests that such injured tigers often become cattle lifters, causing human-wildlife conflict.

Interesting factoid: It's a common myth (mostly from Bollywood movies) that tigers only eat prey if they've hunted the animal. This is not true. Tigers occasionally scavenge on a carcass if they come across one in the wild. They also steal kills from other carnivores like leopards or dholes!

- Yashaswi Rao
Wildlife Biologist, TATR



Scarlet Splendor

Some birds show off a multitude of colours, all twisting and turning to form a tapestry. Where as there are some which embody a single colour and become almost synonymous with the hue. For example, an Oriole is yellow and an Indian Roller is blue. Red however, stands out in the Red Avadavat also aptly called as a Strawberry Finch. The sight of the resplendent male basking in the sun is one to behold. The warm rays making the red glow a magical bronze. This small little bird lounges around with its peers, almost perpendicular to the ground, perched on slender stalks of grass. Despite the bright red, you would almost miss them. Then something will set them off and they all take flight together, almost purging the shrubbery of off its ornaments. Do keep a lookout for these little red birds!

- Shreya Khadilkar
Visual Designer



EMPOWERMENT OF COMMUNITIES THROUGH FOREST RIGHTS ACT

The forests of India hold far more than ecological significance—they are, for millions, landscapes breathing life and livelihood. For generations, forest-dwelling communities have looked to these rich expanses for sustenance, culture, and identity. Yet historic marginalization has meant that these communities had no formal rights to the forests they lived in for centuries. The Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006 was a landmark legislation to rectify this imbalance by extending legal entitlements to ancestral lands and forest resources for communities dependent on them.

Mendha-Lekha in Gadchiroli, Maharashtra, is a great example of how the FRA can support both conservation and livelihood goals. This small village garnered attention throughout the country as being the first Gram Sabha to obtain Community Forest Resource Rights (CFR) under the Act. The village not only regained its forest but also initiated sustainable harvesting practices regarding bamboo and tendu leaves. This income helped Mendha-Lekha to invest in development projects like schools and health centres.

This success reflects the FRA's potential when implemented appropriately, with community participation and state support. It offers a template for achieving the dual goals of conservation and livelihood enhancement. Moving from Mendha-Lekha to the Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve (TATR) in Chandrapur, Maharashtra, the story of FRA has been very complex and interesting in its implementation. In the buffer zones of TATR, some villages such as Sitarampeth, Kondegaon, and Mudholi have received Community Forest Resource Rights. These communities who have been granted CFR rights are currently in the process of realizing those rights, drafting rules, and making plans for implementing sustainable harvesting practices for minor forest produce and developing tourism activities in their CFR forests.

Recognition of CFR rights also ensures the protection of

traditional knowledge and cultural practices. These sustainable developmental projects can provide economic stability to the local communities and ensure the long-term conservation of forests. Making local communities the custodians of their traditional forests ensures better control over harmful practices such as overgrazing, commercial logging, and external threats. Nevertheless, success stories are not in abundance inside the core areas of TATR. The relocation of villages from ecologically sensitive zones has been an occasion for a debate between conservation imperatives and community rights. To cite an instance of this, Kolsa village, situated in the core area, was resistant initially and demanded the land title under the FRA. The village emphasized the need for equitable solutions that uphold the FRA provisions for voluntary relocation while ensuring the protection of critical tiger habitats.

TATR has recently reported increased human-wildlife conflicts with an increasing tiger population. It's imperative that TATR's conservation goals include the well-being and participation of local communities. Recognizing forest rights is a step by authorities to empower local communities. The journey of FRA in and around TATR is far from complete. However, the potential is undeniable. Several positive stories from around India and the world remind us that the empowerment of communities is key to achieving long-term conservation goals. The success of the FRA depends not only in its implementation but also on providing post-recognition support to communities where the state plays a crucial role. Tadoba's forests are a great example of human-wildlife coexistence where human habitations are an integral part of the forest ecosystem and within these shared spaces, the Forest Rights Act emerges as a beacon where rights and conservation can coexist harmoniously.

- Saket Agasti
Social Scientist, TATR

- Sharayu Jakhotiya
PhD Candidate, University of British Columbia



THE WILD BALLET! Grace, power, and play—Tigress T-7, popularly known as Choti Tara's cubs, show off their moves in a stunning jungle showdown!"



David John Ives

NEW QUEEN OF TELIYA! T-163, also known as Collarwali, strides forward with her cubs, ruling her kingdom after defeating T-24, popularly known as Sonam—nature's fierce display of survival and dominance.



Banda Arvind

BORN TO ROAR! Tigress T-115, lovingly called Bijli and her cubs, striking a perfect pose for a family photo.



CHALA MAJHYA TADOBALA!

The new season of the unique initiative of TATR launched in 2015 has just begun with the Mul and Tadoba range. It aims to create awareness of wildlife conservation among the thousands of school students in the buffer and territorial forest division of Chandrapur district. This initiative will cover 2500 students from 115 schools in buffer villages of TATR and 500 to 1000 students from corridor and territorial villages.



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COMMON KRAIT

The Common Krait (*Bungarus caeruleus*) is one of the most venomous and medically significant snakes found in India, especially in regions like Tadoba. With its smooth, glossy black body, yellowish underside, and thin, white, or yellowish bands, the krait is easy to identify. It has a narrow, oval-shaped head, round pupils, and hexagonal scales on its body. The tail is relatively short compared to other snakes.

Kraits are nocturnal, meaning they are most active at night. During the daytime, they seek shelter in cool, hidden spots, such as piles of bricks, animal burrows, or even inside houses, under carpets or furniture. They are excellent hunters, feeding on frogs, small rodents, lizards, and even other snakes, including other kraits.

Females lay 8-12 eggs from March to May, and these eggs hatch in about 60 days. The female stays with her eggs during incubation. The baby kraits are around 10 inches long at birth, and adults can grow up to 70 inches in length.

The Common Krait produces one of the most potent venoms among snakes. Though its bite is typically painless, it can lead to severe consequences due to the venom's effect on the nervous system, causing paralysis. The small size of its fangs often means that the bite is not immediately felt, which can delay treatment. As a result, many krait bite victims are unaware of the danger until symptoms appear, sometimes too late. Antivenom is available, and anyone bitten by a krait should seek immediate medical attention.

Kraits are often confused with the harmless wolf snake, but it is essential to recognize their potential danger and exercise caution.

- Chinmay Deshpande
Naturalist

CHAROLI

Early summers in Tadoba are my favourite time of the year. The spectacular flowering and fruiting trees offer a welcome break from the harsh afternoon heat. While I often watch local kids raiding the many mango trees, there are two other fruits that make this season enjoyable for all of us—Temru (Tendu fruit) and Char (Charoli fruit).

The Charoli tree (*Buchanania lanzan*) is a deciduous tree native to India and parts of Southeast Asia. It's best known for its small, tough seeds, which contain kernels used in Indian cuisine, especially in sweets like Kheer. The kernels are rich in proteins, fats, and minerals, and their flavour resembles that of almonds and pistachios. Because of this, the Charoli tree is also known as the Cuddapah almond. Historically, the kernels had economic value, with local tribes using them for bartering salt and grains. Nowadays, they are recognized for their market value. The heartwood of the tree is used in construction, and it has medicinal benefits, particularly for treating indigestion and diarrhea.

However, for the children in Central Indian villages, the real attraction is the small, sweet-sour, fleshy fruit. These kids, like little monkeys, leap from one tree to another in search of the shiny purple fruits. Though each fruit is small and has little pulp, gathering five or six is enough to savour the delightful taste.

Interestingly, the Charoli tree also has a historical connection to Gautam Buddha. After attaining Buddhahood, he spent a week under a Rajayatna (a type of Charoli tree) during his spiritual journey.

- Anirudh Chaoji
Senior Naturalist



TAILED JAY BUTTERFLY

The Tailed Jay butterfly (*Graphium agamemnon*) is a stunning spectacle, often found gracefully fluttering around giant Ashoka trees. Its striking black wings, adorned with vibrant green spots and streaks, make it one of the most recognizable members of the Swallowtail family (Papilionidae). This butterfly is commonly observed during the post-monsoon and summer seasons, bringing life and beauty to its surroundings.

The giant Ashoka tree serves as a haven and a nursery for the Tailed Jay. Female butterflies are often seen circling these trees in search of tender leaves, where they lay their eggs. The eggs, initially creamy-white with a smooth spherical surface, gradually turn light yellow as they develop. After 3 to 4 days, the transformation begins as a tiny, beautiful larva emerges, nourished by consuming its eggshell. In its early stages, the caterpillar primarily feeds on tender leaves of its host plant, later moving on to mature leaves as it grows. This feeding stage lasts approximately 8 to 10 days, during which the caterpillar prepares for its next incredible transformation.

Once fully grown, the caterpillar creates a protective casing around itself, forming a pupa, also known as a chrysalis. During this stage, the butterfly does not consume any food, remaining still and steadfast on any nearby surface. Inside the chrysalis, a magical transformation takes place. After 12 to 14 days, the fully formed butterfly emerges, adorned with vivid colors and remarkable patterns. It patiently waits for its delicate wings to dry before taking its first flight, embarking on a new journey of pollination and beauty.

- Yogita N. D. Chhapekar
Biologist



ISABELLINE WHEATEAR

The Isabelline Wheatear (*Oenanthe isabellina*) is a rare and intriguing bird in Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve (TATR), primarily due to its migratory nature. Similar to the Desert Wheatear, this small passerine bird migrates between its breeding grounds in Pakistan and its wintering sites in northwest India. The Isabelline Wheatear is typically found in stony plateaus, valleys, and semi-desert environments, making TATR's mining patches and grasslands, such as the Tirwanja mining area and Gorja grassland, ideal habitats.

Measuring 16-17 cm in length, this bird exhibits a distinctive appearance. The upper parts are pale sandy-brown, tinged with an isabelline colour- an earthy blend of grey-yellow, fawn, and cream-brown hues. The lower back is isabelline, while the rump and upper tail-coverts are white. The tail feathers are brownish-black with narrow buff edges and tips, along with large white bases, especially in the outer tail feathers. The Isabelline Wheatear also has a creamy white streak above its eye, pale brown ear coverts, and a pale cream chin and buff throat. Its breast is sandy or isabelline buff, and its belly is creamy white. The bird's underparts, including the tail-coverts and wing-coverts, are light and pale, with contrasting dark bases.

Originally classified within the thrush family, Turdidae, the Isabelline Wheatear is an adaptable species that thrives in a variety of habitats. In the TATR and Chandrapur landscape, it can be found in areas with open, semi-arid terrain. The bird's occasional presence in these habitats makes it a rare, but fascinating, addition to the biodiversity of the region.

- Rundan Katkar
Range Forest Officer, Kolsa, TATR



THE TRIPLE CLASH

This story of my safari in Keslaghat in Tadoba is a truly remarkable and unforgettable wildlife encounter. At the end of the safari hours, we were enjoying some birds at a waterbody. As the sun began to set, the tranquility of birdwatching was suddenly interrupted by the alarming call of a sambar deer. On closer inspection, we observed a dramatic scene: a mother sambar deer was fiercely protecting her fawn from a pack of nine wild dogs. In a desperate attempt to save her young one, the mother deer led her fawn into the water, hoping to escape the predator pack.

Meanwhile, me and my guests spotted something even more unexpected. Sitting on the bund of the lake, visible through binoculars, was a tigress T-29, popularly known as K-Mark, the dominant female of the area. She was known for her fierce rule over the region along with her three male cubs.

The wild dogs quickly noticed the tigress and began issuing high-pitched alarm calls. However, K-Mark was undeterred by that noise. Instead, she moved slowly toward the deer and wild dogs, her focus unshaken. Her first attempt to catch the sambar failed as the deer retreated deeper into the water with its fawn. However, after a brief distraction from the dhole pack, the tigress made a second attempt. This time she was successful in catching the fawn.



Realizing her failure to protect the fawn, the mother deer fled the scene. The wild dogs remained at a distance, watching in awe. K-Mark dragged her prize from the water and disappeared into the forest with the fawn in her mouth, likely to enjoy her meal in solitude.

The thrill of the moment wasn't over yet. I knew that the tigress would call her cubs to join the feast. So we decided to wait for some time. We were awarded for our patience and K-Mark emerged from the forest, searching for her cubs. As she called them in a soft voice, three cubs appeared from the bushes. Once reunited, when they walked together they looked like an army of tigers. She led them back to the kill, allowing them to share in the spoils of her hunt.



This unforgettable spectacle, was a once-in-a-lifetime experience, leaving all of us in awe of the raw power and beauty of the animal kingdom. The moment would remain etched in our memories forever.

- Mohan Raj
Naturalist, Red Earth, Zari

PILLARS OF ZERO WASTE TADoba

The Zero Waste Tadoba initiative is a pioneering project led by TATR with the goal of making Tadoba waste-free in the near future. Over the past three years, the project has visibly transformed the surrounding villages, bringing local communities together to maintain cleaner and healthier environments. It has also changed the lives of the Eco-Coaches employed from these communities.

Deepa Nannaware, a resident of Bhamdeli village, works as an Eco Coach or Paryavaran Prashikshak. After completing her higher secondary education, she married and moved to Bhamdeli. Deepa has always aspired to be a working woman, contributing financially to support her family. She initially worked with an NGO on a women-specific project and also learned how to drive. However, she had to leave her NGO job as it required her to be away from home for extended periods. Not one to remain unemployed, she was approached by the Zero Waste Tadoba project team, who recognised her capabilities, and she eagerly took on the new role.

While Deepa has been with the project for a year, Shalini Gajbhe, also from Bhamdeli, joined only two months ago. Shalini had dreamed of completing an ITI course in dress designing after finishing her 12th grade but had to abandon this goal when she married and moved to Bhamdeli. To support her family, she joined the Zero Waste Tadoba project.

Deepa and Shalini are two pillars supporting the project, which operates in the three villages surrounding Tadoba: Moharli, Agarzari, and Dewada. Each household is provided with three bins for dry, wet, and hazardous waste. Deepa and Shalini visit these homes, explaining the importance of waste segregation and how it should be done. They also conduct training sessions for resort staff around Tadoba on how to compost wet waste. As the project's ambassadors, Deepa and Shalini lead efforts to raise awareness about cleanliness and environmental conservation.

Under this initiative, the dry waste collected from the three villages is brought to Moharli, where it is further sorted. Recyclable items are sent for recycling. The project has earned a substantial amount from selling plastic, glass bottles, cans, and other recyclable materials. Wet waste from Moharli is transported to a composting tank, and in the last three years, over 18 tons of compost manure have been produced from it. The project has the potential to earn three lakh rupees annually.



Most notably, every Tuesday, when tourism in the core zone of Tadoba is closed, safari guides, gypsy drivers, and villagers come together for a cleanliness drive in the village.

"I feel so happy when I see the change around me, and I'm proud to have positively contributed to it," says Deepa. She finds the greatest satisfaction in having changed the mindset of the villagers, directly contributing to environmental conservation. "I love animals and birds. I'm happy that my work helps protect them from plastic waste," says Shalini.

- 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.





PUSH UPS! A male tiger is captured on a camera trap while stretching its muscles. Apart from physical exercise, this scratching of the tree also communicates the size of the tiger, its territory marking, and the sharpening of claws.

THE ACHIEVERS (October-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 October 2024.



Forest Guard - S. A. Wasure
Beat - Nimdhela
Round - Bhanuskhindi
Range - Tadoba
Division - Core TATR
Duration - 21 Days
Target - 125 Km/Month
Actual Patrolling - 337.79 Km



Forest Guard - S. M. Siddiqui
Beat - Dewada
Round - Aagarzari
Range - Moharli Buffer
Division - Buffer TATR
Duration - 23 Days
Target - 125Km/Month
Actual Patrolling - 332.23 Km

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Like
Never
Before!



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Site**
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For Booking
Suresh Mangam
M. 9657935941



For Booking
Sanjay Junde
M. 9834689541
Avinash Rathod
M. 9158928393

Kayaking
Moharli



Adventure
Aagarzari

For Booking
Ajay Kodape
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Aagarzari &
Mednapur

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For Booking
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Avinash
M. 9158928393

Cycling
Moharli

MATERNAL INSTINCTS

The dense thicket of shrubs where a majestic tigress T-82, popularly known as Junabai, lay resting with her two cubs was our observation point for the day. A small window through the bushes offered us fleeting glimpses of her—a mother in her sanctuary. Tigresses with cubs instinctively choose such secluded spots, shielding their little ones while venturing out for hunts.

Junabai must have been exhausted. Hunting through the night to provide for herself and her cubs, combined with the constant vigilance for their safety, takes a toll. Rest was essential for this devoted mother. While Junabai slumbered, her cubs were wide awake, playfully tumbling about in the shadows. Despite sensing our presence, she slept, trusting that we posed no threat—a rare privilege for wildlife enthusiasts like us. We waited patiently, hoping she might wake and lead her cubs to a nearby waterhole. Tigers, after all, can sleep for hours, testing the patience of even the most seasoned watchers. But patience is the hallmark of wildlife observation, and we were veterans of this waiting game.

Suddenly, faint alarm calls echoed through the forest, accompanied by the distant howls of wild dogs. In an instant, Junabai was on her feet, her powerful body moving with lightning speed as though she had never been asleep. She stepped onto the road in front of our vehicle, her intense gaze locking onto her cubs as if instructing them not to move. Her ears twitched, fine-

tuned to every faint sound, assessing the direction and distance of the wild dogs' calls—known adversaries even for a tiger. Wild dogs, attacking in packs, are formidable foes, capable of injuring even the fiercest predator.

Without hesitation, Junabai made her decision. She circled the area, scanning for threats, her maternal instincts pushing aside her exhaustion. In that moment, we witnessed a 'Super Mom' in action—a tigress ready to face danger head-on to protect her young. Her determination and courage were awe-inspiring, showing the unyielding strength of a mother's love.

I strongly believe that Junabai, the tigress, is not just a symbol of strength but a living legend of maternal devotion.

- Sanjay Deshpande
Wildlife Enthusiast,
Sanjeevani Developers, Pune



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MY MOM
MY HOME !**

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