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Tadoba

DIARIES

The Official Newsletter of Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve



Nilanjan Coomar

Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve Conservation Foundation, Chandrapur

₹ 30/-

NEW BEGINNING: NEW CHALLENGES

Dear Reader

Tadoba family wishes you and your families a very happy New Year 2024! I am especially happy to note here that this newsletter, Tadoba Diaries has completed two years and 25 issues with your love and support. I express my sincere gratitude to all the content contributors, tourists, our frontline staff, photographers, and the executive editor and communications officer of Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve, for bringing out the issues with updated information, interesting stories and stunning photographs meticulously selected from the generously submitted pool of photographs by professional and amateur photographers. On behalf of the team I would like to assure you that we will continue to strive hard to improve upon the content and bring the best to you in the new year.

The year gone by has been eventful in more than one way. All India Tiger Estimation figures were declared and have maintained an upward trend in most of the tiger landscapes of the country. Maharashtra has recorded an increase in tiger numbers from 312 in 2018 to 444 in 2022. Tadoba and the surrounding block of around 11,400 km² are found to be home to 319 tigers including the tiger reserves of Tadoba, Indravati, Kawal, and corridors connecting them. Tadoba and adjoining forest divisions have also recorded an increased number of tigers, especially outside the tiger reserve.

The year was one of the best years with regards to monsoon and we had more than adequate rains. Also, it was the best year concerning fire protection as we had almost zero fire incidences in the reserve.

However, the year ended on a somewhat sombre note of losing the once dominant male tiger T-44 in a battle for territorial supremacy with T-126 and an inconclusive search for T-12, an iconic and most famous tigress of Tadoba.

This new year is beginning on a positive note in terms of mitigating man-animal conflict. The number of cases of human casualties due to tiger attacks has been lowest in the last five years (2018:28, 2019:27, 2020:32, 2021:43, 2022:51, 2023:26).

Although the number of cases, at 26, is not an acceptable number for casualties, it is a number that is indicative of a positive change in terms of reducing the fatal cases of conflict if we put the number of figures for the last five years

in perspective. This is the result of efforts being taken by the forest department like running a spirited and focussed awareness campaign for the vulnerable communities, active use of Primary Response Teams at the village level, pre-emptive identification of problem tigers and their capture and achieving the quickest response times for any conflict situations.

However, there is no room for complacency as the number of tigers continues to see an upward trend with ever-increasing human activities.

Reducing the conflict situations, bringing down the number of casualties to zero or close to zero, and protecting the crop of farmers from wild herbivores are going to be the major challenges in the coming year. A state-wide rollout of individual solar fencing schemes through the state's DBT portal is in the offing. Advanced methods based on Artificial Intelligence are being deployed in the field for early warning regarding the presence of large carnivores close to human habitations. We hope to build on these to have a real impact on the problems and improve the situation.

Management of bamboo flowering is also going to be a major challenge in the months to come, especially in the very hot and dry summer. The bamboo in the forests across the district, including within the reserve, is undergoing gregarious flowering. Flowering is a unique phenomenon in bamboo that occurs at long intervals and is specific to particular species. Our forests at Tadoba and the adjoining landscape have *Dendrocalamus strictus* spp and almost every clump of bamboo has flowered. The entire bamboo is destined to die and fall on the forest floor after the flowering and profuse seeding, leaving behind clumps of dead and dry bamboo which is extremely inflammable and a great fire hazard for other vegetation and wildlife inhabiting the forests.

As we gear up to tackle these challenges in the upcoming year, we earnestly hope for your continued support, just as you have graciously provided so far. Together, we can triumph and safeguard our precious forests and wildlife.

Dr. Jitendra Ramgaokar

Field Director, TATR
and Executive Director, TATR Conservation Foundation

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A MUSICAL MEDITATION

-Sawani Shende
Classical Singer

The famous classical singer, Sawani Shende, was recently in Tadoba, and Team Tadoba Diaries spoke to her at Taaru Vann Resort about her safari experience.

Excerpts from her interview:

Q: Was this your first trip to Tadoba?

A: It was not only my first trip to Tadoba but also my first-ever wildlife safari, and I am glad to share that it was a lifetime experience for me! I had four safaris and thoroughly enjoyed all of them. We were so lucky that on our very first safari, we sighted two cubs of tigress T-82, popularly known as Junabai. The next day, we spent one and a half hours watching another bold tigress, T-184 Veera, and her two cute cubs. The male cub was so bold that it came onto the road, sat in front of our vehicle, and struck various poses for us to capture.

Q: How did you feel watching a tiger in the wild for the first time?

A: I could not believe my eyes! It was an awesome experience. I had seen tigers hundreds of times on television, but observing a real tiger in its natural habitat was like a dream come true. The cubs were quite big, and the tigress we saw was even bigger. Now, we are thrilled even with the thought of how big a full-grown male tiger would be!

Q: What did you like the most in Tadoba?

A: I loved the biodiversity that Tadoba offers. Apart from the abundance of wildlife, one can experience different kinds of forests in this reserve - bamboo forests, dense forests, grasslands, meadows, etc. I appreciate the way discipline is maintained here. I think not allowing mobiles in the forest is a revolutionary step. It allows you to get away from your

regular materialistic world and engage with nature without any distractions. Another thing I highly appreciate is the clean washroom facility. I am extremely impressed with the cleanliness even in the washrooms in the middle of the forest. It is indeed a great solace, especially for female tourists. Many thanks to Tadoba management!

Q: How do you look at this experience as a classical singer?

A: It was a kind of meditation for me. Tadoba offered me great insight. Classical music emerges from nature itself. The sound of the leaves, the smell of the jungle, the whistles of the birds - it all has a calming effect which reflects in your performance. You can feel all those colours, patterns, and vibrations of nature in classical music.

Similarly, music also impacts nature. We used to do *riyaaz* on the ground floor at my mother's place. A Hibiscus tree in the neighbour's compound bent towards our home and showered all its flowers in our compound, leaving not a single flower for the neighbour. It happened for five years. Then we built a music room on the first floor, and the same tree erected itself to approach the music room! Even today when I do *riyaaz* on my terrace every morning, I can see many birds silently sitting on a wire and listening. Even the plants on my terrace garden are always fresh and healthy. This is the connection between nature and music.

Tadoba reintroduced this connection to me. At the end of our afternoon safari, we were near Tadoba Lake. In the twilight, I could feel the calmness and serenity of nature. It was so soothing that I closed my eyes, tuned my Tanpura in my mind, and felt like singing ragas like *Puriya Dhanashree* or *Marwa*. I was literally in tears!

- Team Tadoba Diaries



ferocious and floofy!

Dholes or wild dogs have a particularly fluffy, dark-tipped tail, which perfectly contrasts with the rest of their rust-colored body. The tail moves with its body like a ribbon almost and is a little reminiscent of a soft feather quill bouncing about as it is scratched vigorously on paper. It would be little surprise, if a Dhole thinks of his tail, like humans think of their hair. Long, luscious, and just simply a thing of pride. To then have this very tail cut off, even after being hunted (in exchange for a reward) to facilitate more tiger populations goes to show the distorted reality of hunting as a sport in the early 1900s. Thus, unfortunately, with very few numbers left in the wild, the luxuriant cashmere tail of Dholes is a sight rarer than even a tiger, in the jungles of India.

- Shreya Khadilkar
Visual Designer

BALANCE OF NATURE

Those were the days when the Queen of Tadoba, the majestic T-12, lovingly known as Maya, had two cubs, Surya and Meera. As we set out on our safari, the anticipation in the air was palpable. We hoped to catch a glimpse of Maya with her adorable cubs, a rare treat for any wildlife lover. Our journey took an unexpected turn as we neared the Fashilaga area, and there she was – Maya, walking regally on the road!

But something was different. Maya's gait betrayed a purpose beyond a leisurely stroll. It didn't take long for me to realize that she was on a mission – she was stalking! The excitement among my guests soared as we imagined witnessing a live hunt, with Maya closing in on a spotted deer or a majestic sambar.

However, the thick bushes lining the road concealed Maya's intended prey. We strained our eyes, trying to peer through the foliage, waiting for the dramatic scene to unfold. And then, out of nowhere, a sudden rustle in the underbrush caught our attention. To our astonishment, a leopard emerged, darting towards a Behda tree with remarkable agility. Maya's target was revealed – she was stalking the leopard!

The leopard, perhaps underestimating the prowess of a tiger, hastily climbed the Behda tree. But nature, in all its



unpredictable glory, had a twist in store. The descending bark of the tree, as it turned out, was unsuitable for the leopard's escape. Recognizing this, the leopard swiftly changed its strategy, leaping from the Behda tree to a smaller Kuda tree nearby. The branches of the Kuda tree were fragile, providing a nimble and quick escape route.

Maya, undeterred by our presence, followed the leopard's every move. Determined, she attempted to climb the Kuda tree, but the leopard's newfound strategy proved foolproof. It ascended to the topmost branch, a sanctuary beyond the reach of a tiger. Maya, after a valiant effort, conceded defeat and gracefully retreated.

- Vikas Choudhari
Guide, Navegaon Core Gate



DUNG DETECTIVES

I teamed up with Abhinav and Alex from the National Centre for Biological Science for a collaborative project with a grand mission: to decipher the diet secrets of Tadoba's VIPs – the tiger, leopard, wild dog, chital, sambar, and gaur. We started our first sampling during monsoon season when the forest was transformed into a breathtaking spectacle.

Lush greenery adorned every corner, and the vibrant hues of flowers painted the landscape. The canopy provided a cool respite, and the melodious symphony of birds created a serene atmosphere but unleashed torrents of rain that turned the jungle into a lush, watery world making it difficult to move in. Little did I know, the real adventure was about to unfold at the other end of the food chain – literally.

Tadoba, with its changing seasons – monsoon, winter, and summer – is a sort of jungle runway show. But instead of models, we were dealing with samples. Yep, animal poop! The jungle's little black book of who-did-what.

Now, my job was to grab samples of their poop during the monsoon, like some kind of fecal detective. Searching potential sites, assuming I would encounter fresh samples, following tracks, and also looking for butterflies that landed on fecal samples to suck the minerals out of them, indicating they are fresh samples. Although it sounds like fun, it was not. Soon, I ended up with a question: why am I not seeing many samples? Before the start of monsoon sampling, I boasted about how often we see animals in Tadoba, even had many pictures of a tiger pooping (clicked for fun). Little did I know that the monsoon season, the one I preferred to work in due to no tourists and less traffic on the road, would present a big challenge. A few weeks passed, and all of us were tense about not finding enough samples, but then the mystery unfolded by nature itself.

The dung beetle – the unsung hero of my story. These little ones had a serious need for speed, beating me to the good stuff every time. It was like a jungle race, and those beetles had the inside track.

At first, I felt the pressure. I mean, who wants to be outsmarted by a dung beetle? Not me! But, as it turned out, those tiny ones were pros at snagging the freshest poop stories before I even got there. Absolute dedication!

One day, Abhinav and I were out in the field after the gaur, which is basically the Kardashians of the jungle – big, bold, and leaving their mark everywhere. Abhinav worked extensively on herbivores; he could observe the behaviour of the gaur and predict when dung would drop. We stayed in the vehicle, observing the gaur while keeping our collection kit ready.

Lo and behold, the gaur delivered, and we were all excited about our fresh find. But, and there's always a 'but' in the jungle, within minutes, we discovered the real VIPs of the monsoon poop party – the dung beetles. These little fellas wasted no time making a grand entrance, doing a little poop ballet of their own.

It was like a tiny disco on the jungle floor, with dung beetles doing the cha-cha and the tango, claiming their turf. I couldn't help but laugh. Who knew poop could be so entertaining?

The biggest lesson learned here was in the jungle, even the little guys, like beetles, in this case – steal the show. It's a wild world out there, full of surprises, poop races, and unexpected dance-offs. Who says science can't have a sense of humour, especially when it involves the jungle's backside?

- Prajakta Hushangbadkar
Wildlife Biologist, TATR



SIGHTING OF THE YEAR

A Naturalist's wishlist tends to be both biodiverse and optimistic. Personally, I never imagined encountering an animal that resides prominently on that list, but Tadoba generously fulfilled that daydream! Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve dominates my calendar, occupying a significant portion of my wildlife season. Despite embarking on 80-85 safaris annually since 2016, the unpredictability of each safari is the enchanting essence of wildlife magic.

On a typical day in Tadoba, Srikanth Sir and Prabjoth Ma'am from Orchid Jungle Camp accompanied me, creating a tranquil safari experience. Entering through Khutwanda with Shahrukh, my consistent safari companion, we explored the customary waterholes in pursuit of the elusive striped beast. However, it turned out to be one of those serene days when even the deer seemed to take a collective break! A quiet safari unfolded, devoid of significant events, not even an alarm call, until it culminated in the sighting of a lifetime.

In the last 30 minutes of daylight, with the sun setting, our customary pause at the junction where Khutwanda road meets the tar road became extraordinary. While we were hoping for some tiger or leopard movement, a pair of Honey Badgers suddenly emerged! One hurried away while the other remained, calmly locking eyes with us. Moments like these defy description; they are meant to be lived. The sighting of a Honey Badger in its natural habitat has undeniably made my year. What an incomprehensibly incredible sight it was!

- Raviraj Soman

Sr. Naturalist, The Mammoth Project, Mumbai

WILD WONDERS OF TADоба

Exactly a year ago i.e. in Jan 2023, embarking on our safari in the heart of Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve, my family and I were filled with anticipation and excitement. As our safari journey unfolded, the jungle seemed to welcome us with open arms. Spotted deer gracefully darted across the road, and a symphony of bird songs echoed as we entered the lush greenery. The air was thick with the scent of the jungle, a blend of earthiness and freshness of air that heightened our senses. With the realization that this was our last safari of this trip, the stakes were high, and the hope of encountering T-12 Maya added an extra layer of excitement.

As we entered the core zone, the jungle vibes kicked in. Spotted deer were playing tag, and birds were having a party in the trees. We saw all sorts of birds, like drongos and parakeets, doing their thing. But the coolest surprise was a leopard just chilling on the road. Our Naturalist, Mr. Haresh Naidu said leopards are usually shy, but not this one. She marked her territory like a boss and vanished into the trees. It was like a sneak peek into the secret lives of jungle cats! It was a brief encounter, but the memory of the leopard marking its territory lingered, leaving us in awe of nature's wonders. Despite the initial disappointment of the leopard's quick disappearance, we continued our expedition, hoping for a rendezvous with Maya. Our naturalist shared insights and



Haresh Naidu

stories of TATR, keeping our spirits high.

We heard some jeeps up ahead got tiger vibes, so we waited, eyes wide open. No luck with the big cats, though. But our Naturalist had a genius idea – let's explore the path where big tigers usually go to the water. Off we went, ready for some jungle magic.

Our jeep stopped by a small pond surrounded by bushes and tiny hills. It felt like we were in a jungle fairy tale. Then, guess what? Orange fur alert! Maya, the Queen herself, strolled out like she owned the place. It was unreal! Maya strutted between the jeeps, not bothered by us at all. Maya headed to Pandharpauli, and the sambars started flipping out, making alarm calls. Seeing a tiger is awesome, but hearing animals freak out live? Mind-blowing! Maya disappeared into the woods, leaving us starstruck.

- Samarth Yallapragada

5th grade, Oakridge International School
Gachibowli, Hyderabad.



Ajay Kodape

CO-EXISTENCE IN THE WILD

My month-long stay at TATR during the COVID-19 pandemic was a great learning experience and a fascinating journey of discovery. I met a lot of people right from labourers to top officials. Each interaction opened a new door of knowledge for me. Every day the jungle unveiled a new secret and amazed me.

I was on the panel of examiners for the safari guides gradation exams. The guides were to be given grades as per their scores and their pay per safari was to be decided accordingly. Our panel used to interview 50-60 guides every day. One day, we finished the interviews and started our return journey from Madnapur buffer gate towards Moharli. I was travelling with the then Chief Naturalist Anirudh Chaoji, Wildlife Biologist Prajakta Hushangabadkar, and Eco-Tourism Manager Ajay Kodape. As we were passing through the core jungle, we decided to have a quick look at the Pandharpawani waterbody, where tigress T-12 ruled. She had four cubs then.

We reached Pandharpawani-2 at around 6.30 in the evening. There was no sign of a tiger's presence. Peacocks were grazing leisurely on the edge of the water. A sambar was standing in the water. Our driver said, "No point in waiting here. Look at this sambar and those peacocks. They are so cool and calm. That means the tiger can't be around." All agreed and we decided to check the other water body Pandharpawani-1. Hence the driver turned the vehicle to leave the place. While all were looking ahead, I was still looking back at the waterbody from the window. Before the vehicle could take speed, I noticed a tiger-like figure on the side of the island in the middle of the water body. This area was not visible when we were looking for Maya and her cubs for the last 10 minutes. From the grace of his sitting posture, I could guess that it was a tiger. I shouted "Tiger!". Prajakta sitting next to me immediately looked in the direction and confirmed that it was indeed a tiger.



While our driver was reversing the vehicle, the tiger got up and started walking towards the grass on the island. It was an approximately one-and-a-half-year-old cub. The other three team members in the vehicle could not see it. Hence the driver took the vehicle to the other side of the water body. By that time, the cub had disappeared into the grass. Within a few seconds, the second cub got up from behind a rock in the dry part of the water body and started walking towards the bank. Meanwhile, the first cub appeared from the grass on the island and joined the second cub. Both of them disappeared into the grass on the bank.

While we were looking at them, Ajay whispered from the back seat "There is one right in front of us!" All of us looked in that direction. On the opposite side of the bank where the cubs had gone, was sitting her majesty Maya! She was looking at us all the while we were observing her cubs. She was sitting gracefully under a tree right in front of us! She looked so composed, mature, and beautiful! I was mesmerized!

It was her third litter and she had a total of four cubs. We could see two. The other two were possibly in the grass behind her. We kept on observing her. She also did not move her eyes from us. Meanwhile, the sambar in the water was gone. After some time, we said goodbye to Maya. She kept looking at us while we left her beloved place.

I was extremely thrilled with the fact that there were five tigers (Maya and her cubs) in the close vicinity. Yet the sambar was fearlessly standing in the water and went back safely after quenching its thirst. None of the tigers attacked it, simply because they were not hungry.

It was a reminder of the co-existence in the wild, where animals don't hoard like human beings but live in harmony with their surroundings.

- Anant Sonawane
Communications Officer, TATR



Gaurav Chaitre

FLYING TIGRESS! Tigress T-158, aka Babli, gracefully takes to the skies at Navegaon Meadows, responding to the mysterious whispers of the grass. Majestic and airborne, she embodies the true spirit of the wild!



Arif Ayyub Ali

FRUIT OF TEAMWORK! Tourists hit a jackpot recently when they got to see four tigers feasting on an Indian gaur in the Nimdhela buffer. Tigress T-16 popularly known as Bhanuskhindi along with her three sub-adult cubs killed a full-grown gaur and enjoyed the fruit of their teamwork. A cub is seen here proudly claiming its trophy.



ATHLETES IN TADoba

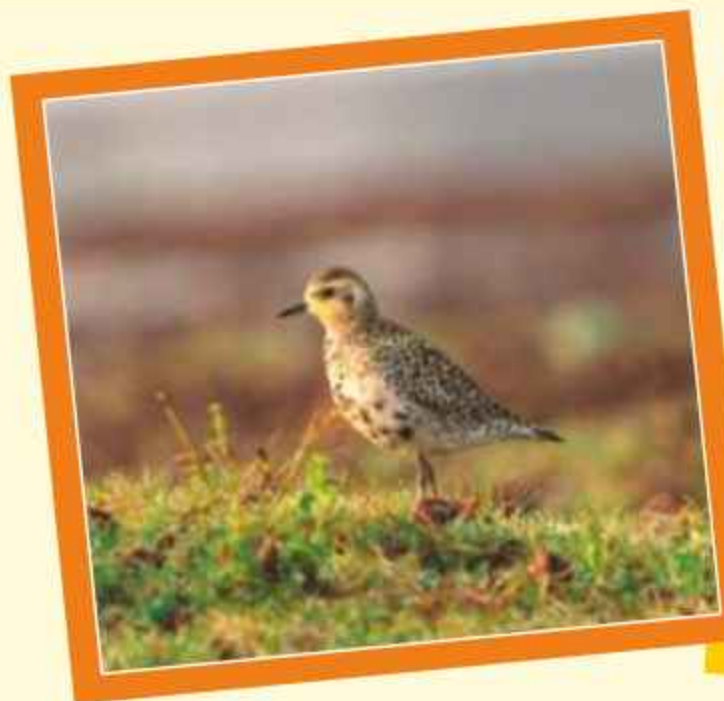
Athletes who took part in the National Sports Competition at the Sports Stadium in Visapur from December 26th to 31st, 2023, had the delightful opportunity to experience the Tadoba Safari. Under the guidance of Hon. Sudhir Mungantiwar, Minister of Forest, Culture, and Fisheries, the participating athletes were generously granted a complimentary tour of Tadoba by the TATR.

A total of 1060 players, along with 101 coaches, team managers, and parents from 25 states, wholeheartedly engaged in this enriching experience. As a gesture of

appreciation, the participating players received the exclusive Tadoba Welcome Kit, featuring a T-shirt, a cap, a Tadoba information booklet, a Tadoba Diary magazine, a key-chain.

The safari proved to be a highlight for the athletes, allowing them to witness wild animals, including tiger and black leopard, up close. The joyous expressions on their faces reflected the excitement and gratitude for this unique and memorable experience amidst the natural wonders of Tadoba.

- Prafulla Sawarkar
Education Officer, TATR



PACIFIC GOLDEN PLOVER

On the crisp morning of March 12, 2023, I was treated to a rare spectacle at Junona Lake near Chandrapur. Engrossed in photographing the avian residents, I, accompanied by my friend Anand Kanade, received an unexpected delight when he spotted a distinctive species through his binoculars – the Pacific Golden Plover! It was the first record of its sighting in the Chandrapur district.

Smaller and more slender than its European counterpart, the Pacific Golden Plover boasts long legs, wings, and a prominent bill. Breeding adults exhibit a pristine underbelly with a narrow white flank stripe and subtle dark markings. Non-breeding individuals showcase plain underparts and a golden-tinged pale supercilium.

Known as a winter visitor, this species frequents the coasts spanning from Pakistan to Bangladesh, including the islands of Lakshadweep, Maldives, Sri Lanka, and the Andamans. Often found in short grass, paddies, plowed fields, muddy river banks, and lakeshores, the Pacific Golden Plover has become a common sight along the region's coastal areas.

Notable for their tameness, these plovers tend to run from perceived threats rather than take to the air. They often roost along coastlines and make periodic flights to grassy areas for feeding.

Distinguished by its fluty and sharp calls, the Pacific Golden Plover's vocalizations are notably crisper than those of its European counterpart. The most distinctive calls include rapid "tu-ee" or "chu-it," adding a melodic touch to the ambiance.

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



ANGREJO KE JAMANE KA TREE

As you approach Moharli village, the landscape on either side of the road is adorned by the unassuming yet significant presence of Karanj trees (*Pongamia pinnata*). Originating from India and stretching across Southeast Asia to Australia, these trees gained popularity during the British era, particularly adorning railway stations. The shade they offer proved ideal for providing respite to weary travellers during the scorching Indian summers.

If you've participated in a Maharashtra Diwali celebration, you may recognize the name "Karanj" from the sweet filled with coconut batter. Interestingly, the Karanj tree has gained prominence due to two vital uses. The seed oil, known as Pongame Oil, has been extensively researched for bio-diesel production and therapeutic applications.

Belonging to the pea family, this legume tree boasts inflorescences of fragrant flowers, drawing honey bees in abundance. Beyond its aesthetic appeal, the Karanj tree's seeds are a powerhouse of insecticidal and antiseptic properties. Farmers have long harnessed its insecticidal prowess, making it a natural and effective pest controller in agricultural fields.

In the realm of Ayurveda, the healing properties of Karanj have been harnessed for treating various skin ailments, including boils and eczema, owing to its anti-inflammatory characteristics. As the simple yet remarkable Karanj trees line the roads, they not only offer shade but also stand as a testament to the multifaceted contributions of nature to both agriculture and traditional medicine.

- **Anirudh Chaoji**
Senior Naturalist



ECO-WARRIORS ON A SAFARI ADVENTURE

In a celebration of both nature and education, the young champions of cleanliness from Moharli, Agarzari, and Dewada were recently treated to an unforgettable safari adventure. These kids are instrumental in carrying the banner of waste management in and around Tadoba. This remarkable outing not only offered a thrilling glimpse into the mesmerizing world of wildlife but also ignited a newfound passion for environmental awareness. Set against the breathtaking backdrop of the Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve, these enthusiastic kids embarked on a safari trip like no other. Their journey through the lush wilderness led to remarkable encounters with the diverse fauna that calls this pristine landscape home.

Among the awe-inspiring wildlife sightings were the elusive leopard, swift wild dogs, the majestic Indian gaur, stealthy mugger crocodile, graceful Sambar deer, regal nilgai, and the enchanting spotted deer. The sky was equally alive with the presence of vibrant bird species, including the red avadavat, plum-headed parakeet, brown fish owl, green bee-eaters, flame-back woodpecker, and the exquisite Indian roller. A particular highlight of the adventure was the sighting of Taru, the renowned tiger, in the buffer region of the reserve. This thrilling encounter left an indelible mark on the children's hearts, fostering a deep appreciation for the importance of conservation efforts.

However, this excursion was not just about observing wildlife; but was also an educational journey. The young participants learned about animal behaviour, the unique trees of Vidarbha, and the crucial role played by lesser-known species such as snakes and spiders in maintaining the

ecosystem's delicate balance.

In addition to exploring the natural world, the children delved into the history of their ancestors and discovered the economics of conservation. They realised how protecting tigers and preserving the environment can lead to livelihood generation within Tadoba, benefiting both people and wildlife.

This initiative was designed to ignite environmental awareness among young adventurers, inspiring them to become passionate advocates for nature. They learned the significance of implementing eco-friendly practices such as waste segregation and avoiding littering in public spaces—principles that align with the Zero Waste philosophy of the 5Rs.

As a practical demonstration of sustainability, cloth bags were distributed, highlighting their importance over plastic bags. Geometry boxes, generously provided by the Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve, served as both educational tools and cherished mementos. The children revealed this enriching experience, leaving with hearts full of gratitude for the Forest Department and the park management team.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to the officials of the Forest Department for their invaluable contribution in nurturing the next generation of nature enthusiasts and eco-warriors. Together, we are sowing the seeds of a greener, more sustainable future for Tadoba and beyond.

- Charul Parihar and Priya Jaware
Eco-coach, Project Zero-Waste, TATR



LINGO AND KARKOLN

In the heart of the Gond tribal lands, where ancient trees intertwined their branches and wildlife roamed freely, lived Pahandi Pari Kapar Lingo, guardian of the Gond people. Lingo was renowned among his people for his unmatched hunting skills, a necessity in a community that depended on the forest for sustenance. However, Lingo was not just a hunter; he harbored a deep respect for nature and its inhabitants.

One day, as the sun cast dappled shadows through the thick canopy, Lingo set out on a solo hunting expedition. The air was thick with the scent of earth and the distant calls of unknown creatures. Deep into the forest, Lingo's keen eyes spotted movement – a colossal wild boar named Karkol, its tusks gleaming like polished wood.

Instinctively, Lingo froze. Instead of reaching for his bow, he observed Karkol cautiously. There was a strange energy in the air, a connection between man and beast that transcended the usual predator-prey dynamic. Lingo took tentative steps forward, offering no threat. To his surprise, Karkol responded in kind, acknowledging Lingo's non-aggressive approach.

In the silent language of the forest, a profound understanding unfolded between the two beings. Karkol, it seemed, was no ordinary boar but a guardian, a divine messenger of the forest spirits. The wild boar spoke through an unspoken language, revealing its purpose: to test the intentions of humans and to impart crucial wisdom about the delicate balance between

mankind and nature.

Karkol shared stories of ancient times when humans and wildlife lived in harmony, emphasizing the need for sustainable practices and a reciprocal relationship with the forest. Lingo listened intently, absorbing the lessons conveyed through the eyes and gestures of the wise creature before him.

As the conversation unfolded, a bond formed between Lingo and Karkol. It became clear that this encounter was not about conquest but about mutual respect and coexistence. Karkol, satisfied with Lingo's understanding, bestowed upon him the responsibility of being a guardian of the forest.

Lingo returned to his tribe not just as a skilled hunter but as a changed man. He shared the tale of his encounter with Karkol and the invaluable teachings he had received. The Gond tribe, inspired by Lingo's transformation, embraced a new ethos – one of living in harmony with nature, understanding the interconnectedness of all living beings, and fostering peaceful coexistence between humans and wildlife.

The story of Pahandi Pari Kapar Lingo and Karkol became a timeless parable, a guiding light for generations of Gond people who recognized the profound wisdom hidden within the forests they called home.

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

-Mandar Pingle

Deputy Director, Satpuda Foundation

Contribute to 'Tadoba Diaries'

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

AMBASSADOR OF CHANGE



In our initial meeting, I was truly impressed by his extensive knowledge of wildlife, his eagerness to acquire new skills, and, most importantly, his confidence. It wouldn't be an exaggeration to label this local Gond young man, as the quintessential ambassador of the transformative impact that Tadoba has had on the lives of local communities. A once reserved and financially struggling youth, Ajay Kodape has evolved into today's eco-tourism manager, community leader, trainer, and entrepreneur.

Despite being born and brought up in Agarzari, a village within the buffer zone of the Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve, Ajay hardly had any interest in wildlife. Born into a family with three sisters, his parents worked as daily wage labourers, managing only a single acre of agricultural land, insufficient to sustain the family. Ajay completed his ITI in Nagpur, preparing to work as an automobile mechanic, concurrently pursuing a Bachelor of Arts. However, his devotion to family and village life led him to resist the allure of city employment.

The turning point materialized in 2013 when the TATR management announced exams for safari guides. Seizing the opportunity, Ajay passed the exam, earning a spot in the training program. During this time, under the guidance of Senior Naturalist Anirudh Chaoji, he came across fascinating information about nature, igniting a profound passion for wildlife. A natural enthusiast, he diligently studied forest signs, observed wildlife behaviour, and posed insightful questions, quickly emerging as the top guide in his batch, earning a weekly income of Rs. 500 to 600.

His exceptional talent caught the eye of Sachin Shinde, then Range Forest Officer and now Divisional Forest Officer. In 2015, Ajay was appointed as the Eco-Tourism Manager of

Tadoba, providing him with a monthly salary that significantly boosted his confidence. Actively involved in launching eco-tourism activities such as a butterfly garden, campsite, adventure park, and boating in the buffer zone, Ajay now manages these endeavours alongside other local youths.

With an improved financial status, Ajay constructed a new concrete home for his family, acquired a Gypsy through a loan for safari excursions, and is currently planning to establish a homestay for tourists. Venturing into agriculture, he successfully cultivates black rice and has plans to delve into mushroom farming.

Ajay's prowess extends beyond the wild; he is adept at wildlife photography and runs his own YouTube channel. Earning the trust of the management, he has become the preferred guide for VIP guests at Tadoba. Ajay humbly expresses that his preference for accompanying VIPs is not rooted in their celebrity status but in the invaluable opportunity, it provides him to learn from them.

Crucially, as Ajay has blossomed personally, he has played a pivotal role in uplifting members of the local community through eco-tourism. He has guided several youths in his village to become tour operators and assisted others in becoming safari guides. Ajay has even extended his training expertise to the guides in the Melghat and Navegaon-Nagzira tiger reserves. His journey embodies the harmonious coexistence of personal growth and community development through the lens of wildlife conservation.

- Anant Sonawane
Communications Officer, TATR



HIGH ALERT! The camera traps unveil the nocturnal magic of the jungle. A proud porcupine displays its formidable quills, ready to defend against any potential danger. Captured in Tadoba's wild embrace.

THE ACHIEVERS (November - 2023)

Kindly join us in commemorating the accomplishments of the most outstanding forest guards at TATR. These frontline warriors of the forest department have demonstrated exceptional dedication by conducting extensive foot patrols in their respective divisions.

We are delighted to announce the top two achievers for the month of November 2023.



Forest Guard - S.B. Dohatare
Beat - Zinganat-I
Round - Rantalodhi
Range - Karwa
Division - Core TATR
Duration - 25 Days
Target - 125 km/Month
Actual Patrolling - 209.90 Km



Forest Guard - Ku. M. T. Buradkar
Beat - Moharli-II
Round - Moharli-II
Range - Moharli (Buffer)
Division - Buffer TATR
Duration - 26 Days
Target - 125 km/Month
Actual Patrolling - 336.67 Km

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**Boating
Site**
Sitarampethi

For Booking
Surendra Mangam
M. 8657935941



Kayaking
Moharli

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



Adventure
Agarzari

For Booking
Ajay Kodape
M. 9730853324



**Camping
Site**
Agarzari &
Madnapur

For Booking
Ajay Kodape
M. 9730853324
Rupesh
M. 7083669491



Cycling
Moharli

For Booking
Sanjay
M. 9834689541
Avinash
M. 9158928393



In the Madnapur-Kolara buffer of Tadoba, there exists a tigress who may not boast a grand frame or eye-catching features like her more famous counterparts—Maya, Tara, or Sonam. Yet, for the past six years, she has quietly commanded the vast expanse of her territory, shaping the destinies of countless families who call this region home. She is T-82 lovingly called Junabai, and her story is a testament to the uncelebrated heroes of the wild.

Despite the lack of fame that some of her fellow tigresses enjoy, Junabai's presence is felt deeply by those who inhabit the Tadoba region. Her quiet charisma and unassuming demeanor have turned the Madnapur-Kolara buffer into a thriving ecosystem, not just for wildlife enthusiasts and tourists, but for the local residents who have come to regard these majestic creatures as part of their extended family.

It is the unique bond between tigers like Junabai and the people living around Tadoba that has transformed this area into a haven for these magnificent creatures. The coexistence between the wild and human populations is a delicate dance, one that Junabai has mastered with grace. The villagers have learned to love and care for these tigers as if they were their own kin, fostering an environment where both humans and wildlife can thrive side by side.

As I pen down these words, the bittersweet reality of nature becomes apparent. News has reached me of the loss of one of Junabai's sub-adult cubs, a victim of the territorial struggles inherent in the wild. It's a poignant reminder that the beauty of nature is often accompanied by the harsh realities of survival. Yet, in the face of tragedy, Junabai continues to rule her domain, a symbol of resilience and the cycle of life in the untamed wilderness.

The story of Junabai and her kin serves as a reminder of the delicate balance that exists in nature, where beauty and tragedy coexist. As we mourn the loss of one life, we must also celebrate the enduring spirit of Junabai and her contribution to the rich tapestry of Tadoba's ecosystem. It's a privilege to witness this wild saga unfold, a tale of survival, coexistence, and the untamed beauty that defines the soul of Tadoba.

- Sanjay Deshpande
Wildlife Enthusiast,
Sanjeevani Developers, Pune



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