

Jungle Rhythms



 $\label{eq:linear_continuity} \textbf{In Search Of Mohan} - \textbf{The White Tiger of Rewa} \\ \textit{Nirmalya Chakraborty}$

My Appointment with Leopards
Sagnik Sengupta





Shekru in Sahyadri
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WILD FIRE – I: Tadoba-Andhari Tiger reserve

CA Vijay Kamat





WILD FIRE – II: Simlipal Biosphere reserve



Living with Pythons

Nirmal Kulkarni



EARTH DAY SPECIAL



In Search Of Mohan – The White Tiger of Rewa

Nirmalya Chakraborty

Unknown to many, Jungle Rhythms explores the pristine forest's of central India in search of the precise location where Mohan – the first wild tiger was found..



Sanjay-Dubari Tiger Reserve, where our story begins is spread over an area 1674.511 sq. km., consists of Sanjay National Park and Dubri Sanctuary and buffer areas taken from Sidhi and Shahdol districts. Named after the village – 'Dubri', the park is situated on the north eastern part of the state of MP and is bordered by Guru Ghasidas National Park in south, of which it was a part before formation of Chattisgarh in the year 2000. It is part of Bandhavgarh-Sanjay-Guru Ghasidas-Palamau landscape and has been identified as one of four potential tiger meta-populations landscapes.

The terrain of Dubri sanctuary is almost plain while that of Sanjay national park is hilly.



Various perennial rivers flow through the reserve viz. Gopad, Banas, Mawai, Mahan, Kodmar, Umrari etc. Rivers Gopad and Banas flow into the river Son to form Son Gharial Sanctuary which is one of the five places in the world where the critically endangered gharials are breeding in the wild. Although these rivers are perennial, but becomes almost dry during the summers with very little water. Most of the Nallas are also there, and which also become dry during the pinch period. This is the confluence of the Banas and the Sone. A hilly pristine land



The park is classified as North Indian moist deciduous forest sub group 3C with sub type Sal moist Sal bearing forest CZ with sub division moist peninsular Sal (e). The general type is 3C/CZ(e). This type of Sal forest occurs mostly in Gondwana system. This type manifest under growth along with bamboo.

The Flora: Sal (Shorea & robusta), Saja (Terminatia tomentosa), Dhauda (Anogeissus Latifolia), Salai(Bosswalia Serrata), Bija(Petrocarpus marsupium), Dhobin (Dalbargia Peniculata), Haldu (Adina cardifolia), Tendu (Diospyros melanoxylone), Harra(Terminalia chebula), Bahera (Terminatial belerica), Arjun (Terminalia arjuna), Kusum (Schleichera oleosa), Semal (Bombox ceiba), Mahua (Maduca indica), Amla (Emblica officinales), Tendu (Diospyros melanoxylone), Kari (Saccopetelum tomeutosum), Mahua (Maduca indica), Gilchi (Casearia graveoolens), Tinsa(Ougeinia Ojeninesis), Amaltas (Cassia fistula), Khair (Acacia cutchu), Palas (Butea monosperma), Gilchi (Casearia graveoolens), Tinsa(Ougeinia Ojeninesis), Amaltas (Cassia fistula), Khair (Acacia cutchu), Palas (Butea monosperma) etc.

Under Growth: Dhawai (Wood fordia fruticosa), chind (Phoenixacaulis), Harsingar (Nyctanthes arbortrisfis) Satawar (Asparagus adscendens) etc.

Grasses: The principal grasses met within this type area Bhurbhusi (Eragrostis tenella), Gonud (Themeda quadnvalvis), Doob(Cynodon dectylon), Lampaspo, Phuli (Apluda alvis) etc.

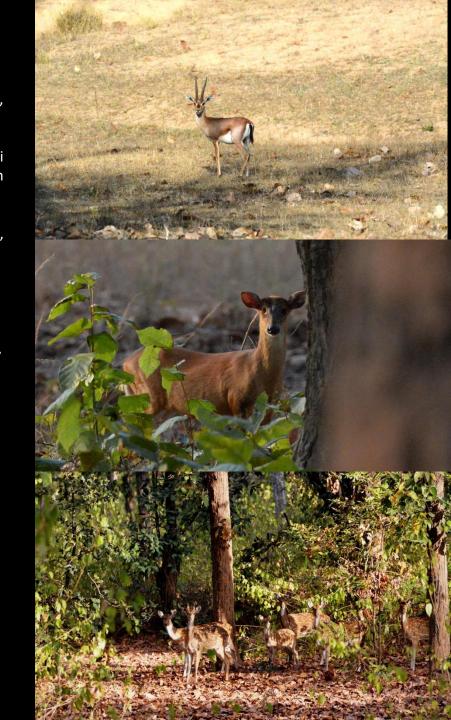
Climbers: Mahuline (Bauhinia Bahlii), Bendo (Spatholobas roxburghii), Nagbel (Cryptolepis buchanani) etc.

The park is known for its rich and varied flora and fauna comprising rare and endangered species.

Mammals – Tiger, Leopard, Spotted deer, Hyena, Sambar deer, Wild boar, Sloth bear, Wild dog, Nilgai, Chinkara, Civet, Porcupine, Monitor Lizard, Rhesus macaque, Hanuman langurs, Indian field mouse, Squirrel etc.

Birds – Golden Hooded Oriole, Racket-tailed drongos, Rufus-Treepie, Lesser Adjutant, Red-headed vulture, Indian white-rumped vulture, Peacock, Bulbul, Wagtails, Blue kingfisher, Teetar, Crimson breasted barbet, Indian pitta, Egyption vulture, Herons, Egrets, White-necked stork, White ibis, Whistling teal, kites, Eagles, Harrier, vultures, Partridge, Sand pipers, Pigeons, Doves, Parakeets, Owls etc.

Reptiles – Chameleon, Skink, Garden lizard, Snake, Bengal monitor, Cobra, krait, Scaled viper, Rock python, Rat snake, Russell viper, scaled viper etc.



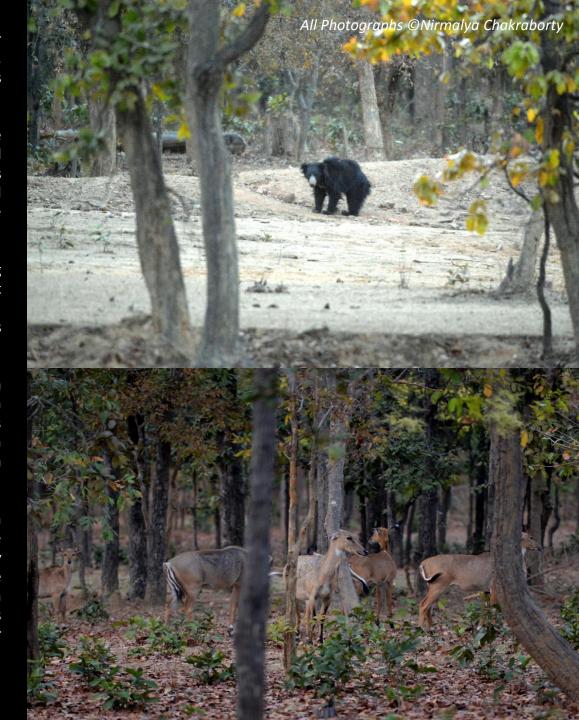
The park's dry deciduous forests holds a major proportion of sloth bear population in India. Unfortunately, degradation of habitat by humans has been severe in this forest type.

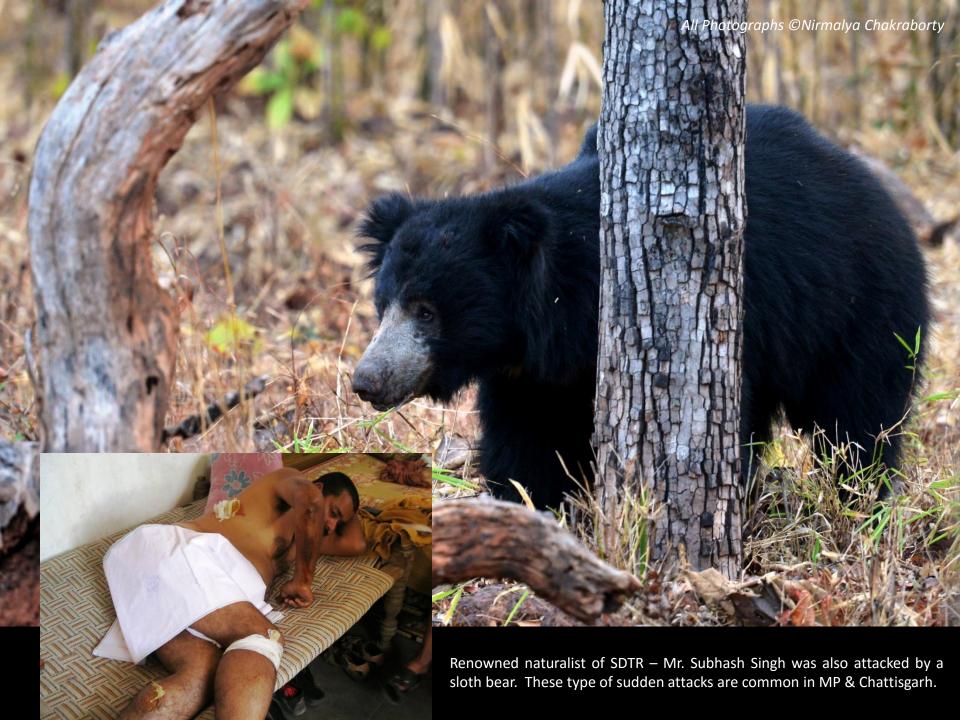
In SDTR, sloth bear cubs are born in secure dens where the mother bears secluded themselves for several weeks to nurse and protect the newborns. Cubs stays with their mother for up to two-and-half years and even rode piggyback for several months while she moved about foraging.

The sloth bear is an ant and termite eating (myrmecophagus) bear. It is the only bear species that seems to depend almost entirely on these social insects for its protein requirements and thus, in this respect, it is unique among bears.

Sloth bear attacks are very common during the mahua season when the bear come in direct contact with humans ~ women and youth. Most sloth bear attacks can be classified as 'defensive' attacks. When a human intrudes into its space suddenly, a bear may sense a danger to its life and respond by attacking.

According to Robert Armitage Sterndale, in his *Mammalia of India*: [The sloth bear] is also more inclined to attack man unprovoked than almost any other animal, and casualties inflicted by it are unfortunately very common, the victim being often terribly disfigured even if not killed, as the bear strikes at the head and face. Blanford was inclined to consider bears more dangerous than tigers.









All Photographs ©Nirmalya Chakraborty

Fires incidents, grazing and illicit felling, lopping appear to the cause absence of regeneration of this beautiful forest. The land of under stocked, blanking areas are effected by soil erosion as in sheets rill & small gully stage. Bamboos are present in most of the sal forest area. There are no grass meadows of any significant size in the area.

To prevent uncontrolled fires, controlled fires are lite by the forest department to burn the dry leaves on the forest floor and expose the ground for new vegetation during Monsoons.



In 2014 NTCA had asked all the chief wildlife wardens (CWLWs) of tiger range states to take urgent measures for preventing wild animal mortality due to train hits. "Railway tracks pass through several tiger reserves and areas rich in wildlife. Time and again, there are reports of wildlife mortality including tigers, elephants, deer, wild boars, rhinos and other species due to train hits. This has been reviewed at the level of minister of state for environment and forests and urgent measures are reiterated," said an advisory issued by NTCA. NTCA had suggested several measures. They include identification of sensitive stretches along the railway tracks based on ongoing Phase-IV monitoring of wild animals, deploying personnel for sharing information about presence of wild animals between forest department and the railways on a day-to-day basis, a monthly joint review by senior officials at division level. Nothing happened. Katni-Singrauli section of the railway line passes through critical tiger habitat of Sanjay-Dubri Tiger Reserve.



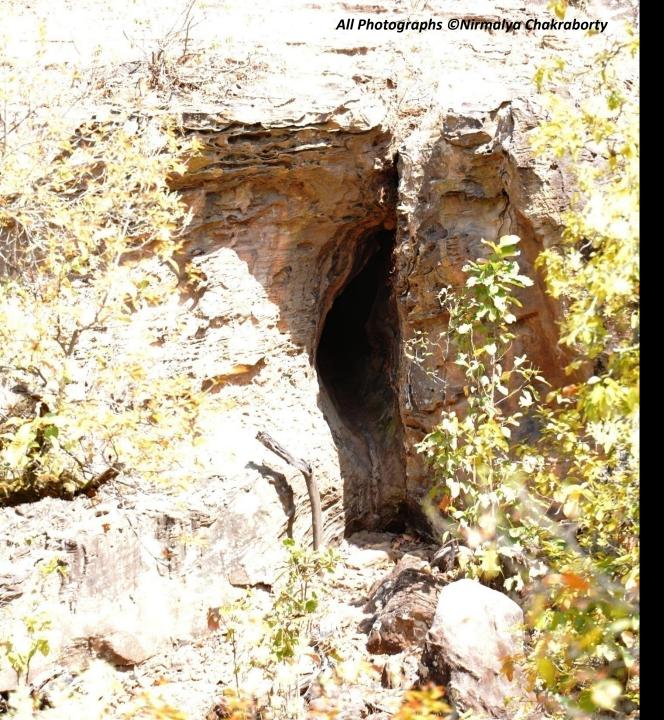




We were tracking movements of bigcats along the jungle track of Dubri range of the tiger reserve. We then suddenly found a set of pugmarks heading straight ahead. We followed it very cautiously. The pugmarks lead up a hill and then went down into a dry river bed laden with a carpet of fallen dry leaves. There she was was! Kamli - T11 – The radio collared tigress with a lotus mark on her forehead! Our tiger found!



Mohan was the founding father of the white tigers of Rewa. He was captured as a cub in 1951 by Maharaja of Rewa, whose hunting party here in SDTR found a tigress with four 9-month-old cubs, one of which was white. All of them were shot except for the white cub. After shooting a white tiger in 1948 the Maharaja of Rewa had resolved to capture one, as his father had done in 1915, at his next opportunity. Water was used to lure the thirsty cub into a cage, after he returned to a kill made by his mother. The white cub mauled a man during the capture process and was clubbed on the head and knocked unconscious. He was not necessarily expected to wake up, and this was his second brush with death. He recovered though, and was housed in the unused palace at Govindgarh in the erstwhile harem courtyard. The Maharaja named him Mohan, which roughly translates as "Enchanter", one of the many names of the Hindu deity Krishna.



The Sanctuary is thus of special importance as it is the birth place of Mohan, The world famous White Tiger of Rewa. The Mohan was caught by his highness Maharaja of Rewa State in 1951 from the Forest Compartment No.214 at the Badgadi Nala caves, situated near village Pankhora in the Bastua range of the Sanctuary. After Mohan there have been further reports, all unconfirmed of sighting of White Tiger. The gene of whiteness however is expected to be surviving in the area.

<- This is the Badgadi Nala caves from where the white cub was rescued.

We travelled this area intensively looking for bigcat presence. Good leopard movement was found.

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My Appointment with Leopards

Sagnik Sengupta

Believe it or not: Forty years ago, half a dozen of these leopards had descended from nearby Kumbhalgarh National Park nestling in the Aravalli Hills and into the rocky mountains of Bera looking for better hunting grounds. Though it was the village of Bera that became famous but there are actually over a dozen leopard sites that surround Bera in a radius of 10 km providing an unusual sight of leopards walking elegantly on rocky slopes.



These leopards who first came here found that the rocky mountains had two distinct advantages. Firstly it offered a vantage point from where they could be monarch of all they surveyed. Secondly, the mountains here had many caves that were interconnected. So when they had their litter, they could enter the cave from one point, and exit through another.

The leopards of Bera in Rajasthan have been living in harmony with humans for decades. Since they inhabit dry rocky mountain slopes, the food is scarce. They survive on wild hares and porcupines and sometimes langurs — though very often that becomes a very difficult proposition. Their food of choice actually is dogs and heads of cattle from the nearby villages.

Whenever the leopards kill cattle, after an autopsy, the villagers are amply compensated under the Van Dhan Yojana. Also, for some strange reason, every temple in the neck of these mountains has an idol of the leopard next to the main deity. Thus proving beyond doubt that leopards hold a very special place in the religious ethos of these villagers. There is also a village - Peherwa, where leopards are known as Babaji's Leopards as they come and sleep next to the temple priest in his temple compound.



This forests are also home to Leopards, crocodiles, nilgai, hyena, jungle cat, Indian grey mongoose, sloth bear, owl, osprey, egret, pond heron, Indian robin, black shouldered kite, parakeet, common sandpiper, house sparrow, sarus crane, large cuckoo shrike, pelicans, ruddy shelduck, greylag goose, pelicans, Asian openbill stork, common sandpiper, grey-headed canary fly-catcher, Indian pond heron, black ibis, red throat-ed fly-catcher, and oriental magpie robin. besides others.

I would not have believed it had I not seen it for myself. Leopards are one of the toughest animals to spot, and I have not seen any during my numerous visits to National Parks – tigers are actually easier to meet. And Bera is not just home to just a few leopards who have lost their way – they are all over.

It was our first day morning, we were checking the few hillocks wherein these leopards have their caves our driver cum guide Natwar Singh and able person has amazing pair of eyes who spotted a female climbing down the hillock and came running to the vehicle and said "woh dekho woh dekho" for the first few seconds we couldn't even locate the location she was sitting as the rocks make a perfect camouflage for them though it was a short sighting but really was thrilled.

The next day we left at 6.30am in the chilling winter wind and went to a place called Jagtalla wherein a female was with her three cubs of around four months, we waited for the first rays of sun and alas she came out with her cubs and sat in the rocks for almost forty five minutes giving us to capture her and her cubs in all possible moods.

Again we came back in the evening and saw her with her cubs but this time she was very alert and we came to know from some locals that a male was around since afternoon and soon as the sun was setting down the huge male started approaching the cave and the brave lady in order to save her cubs had a fight with the male and retreated inside her cave limping propably she was injured but didn't allow the male to enter the cave. We returned hoping to see her next morning but alas she was not there and the local shepherds said that most probably she has moved from the current location to a hillock behind in order to save her cubs from the male.

I wish her that she regains her territory and would love to see her cubs grow and when I come back next time would definitely see them grown up.

During my two nights stay, I was fortunate to spot a mother leopard with her three cubs. Although they were not very close, I could clearly see them walking along a ridge – stopping in between, playing on trees, and showing their love to one another in a way only mothers and children can. After sunset they walked into the darkness of the forest, my guide exposed the two diamonds shining in the spotlights on them – these were the shining eyes of a male leopard on a peak. Even from a distance, they shone like stars.

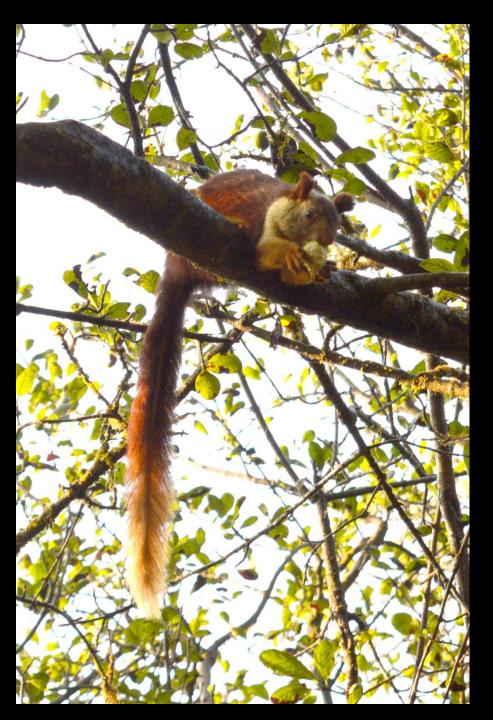


What is the future of these leopards?

My host Thakur Devi Singh Ji from "Leopards Lair" is proud of a 100% record for his guests – I am glad the average was not spoiled with me. As a host Thakur Devi Singh Ji and his wife Devyami Singh Ji is conscious about the future of these spotted cats and we had a great discussion on them when we were invited for the dinner in the first night at their Haveli.

The area of concern for me after visiting Bera is the construction work going beside the hillocks the Home to these Leopards for the double railway track between Jaipur and Mount Abu as well as the North-West Express corridor connecting North to JNPT, which may result in future that these leopards shift their bases from here to some other locations due the excessive disturbances which will occur due to the expressway.

God's own country does not necessarily come draped in greenery, cloud-topped mountains and murmuring streams. "Our God [read leopard] is visible, wanders on these rocky hillocks and lives with us," says a proud resident of Jawai.



KEEP ALIVE SHEKRU IN SAHYADRI

JITENDRA M. MARATHE and DIPANJAN GHOSH

The Indian or Malabar Giant Squirrel is one of the world's most beautiful squirrels. Delicate, cute and shy, this creature is the indicator of the health of forests it lives. The species is endemic to India and is chiefly found around isolated ranges in peninsular India from tropical moist evergreen to dry deciduous and mixed deciduous forests (Figure 1) of Western Ghats, Eastern Ghats and Satpura Hills at elevations of 180 m to 2300 m above sea level that are widely separated from each other. Commonly known as 'Shekru' in Marathi, the Indian giant squirrel is the State animal of Maharashtra. It is protected in Bhimashankar Wildlife Sanctuary. However, in wild Shekru is restricted mainly in Matheran, Mahabaleshwar, Tamhini, Mulshi, and in some other areas of the Sahyadri Range of Maharashtra.

Shekru has two or three toned thick body furs with shades of black, brown and deep red. The colour of the dorsal part, including head and back, varies from deep red to brown.

Cheeks, chest, front of the forelimbs and the belly area are creamy white to pale orange in colour. There is a distinctive white spot between the ears. The eyes are bright, dark or light brown. Their ears are short and round. They have prominent and widened hands with an expanded inner paw and large powerful claws used for gripping tree bark and branches.

The head to body length of Shekru measures about 25 – 45 cm and weight ranges between 1.5 to 2.0 kg. The tail is bushy, 20 – 40 cm long, and also strong. The colour of the tail is light brown to creamy white on the tip. Both male and female animals are almost similar, but females can be distinguished from males by their three sets of mammae.

Taxonomic hullabaloo

Due to the dispersed distribution throughout India as well as presence of different colour forms of this taxon from its range, Indian Giant Squirrel is separated into seven different geographical races, each distinctive in the colouration of its upper-parts. However, there is some disagreement between taxonomists regarding how many subspecies belong to the *R. indica* lineage and in the same time some taxonomists consider that some of these subspecies ought to be elevated to be considered as independent species.





The most current data indicates that there are only three remaining subspecies having some synonyms associated with these subspecies, namely, *Ratufa indica indica* (synonyms are *R. i. bombaya*, *R. i. elphinstoni*, *R. i. purpureus* and *R. i. superans*), *Ratufa indica centralis*, and *Ratufa indica maxima* (synonyms are *R. i. bengalensis* and *R. i. malabarica*).

A tree dweller by birth

The Giant squirrels spend most of their time in trees, where they gather their food. The diet constitutes seeds, fruits, flowers, bark, petiole and leaves from different plants, both in the deciduous and evergreen forests of peninsular India.

In addition, Shekru feeds on small insects and bird eggs which reflect its omnivorous nature. While on feeding, the squirrel often goes to the tip of branches and collects the food items with its mouth and moves to the thick horizontal branches by holding the food mostly in the mouth and sometime in the forelimb (Figure 3). Giant squirrels also use their large tail as a counter-weight, maintaining their balance.

The Indian Giant Squirrel is a diurnal and arboreal species, generally stays high in the forest canopy. It rarely leaves the tree and that only happens when it chases other squirrels during the breeding season. Actually the loud rattling call, often repeated, usually reveals its presence in the forest. Any unusual sound or unfamiliar sight sets these squirrels calling in all directions. They share with monkeys the habit of scolding, barking and raising an alarm when any suspicious object is sighted.

Its large tail is used to keep poise on trees and it allows moving about quickly, running and jumping surprisingly on thin branches at a great height in the forest. Interestingly, Shekru can move from one tree to another with jumps up to 6 meter. Its bushy tail can also function as a kind of parachute, slowing a squirrel's descent which does happen sometimes. When in danger, it often freezes or flattens itself against the tree trunk, instead of fleeing.

They build large globular nests called 'dreys' with leaves and twigs, placing them mostly at the highest point on the tall profusely branched trees that offer a good location including cover that provide them maximum security. These nests become conspicuous in deciduous forests during the dry season. They also use tree holes as shelter. An individual may construct several nests in a small area of forest (home range) which is used as sleeping quarters, with one being used specifically for giving birth and nursing the young.

Giant squirrels are typically solitary animals, being seen only rarely in pairs during the breeding season. Males actively compete for females during the breeding season and pairs may remain associated for longer periods of time. It is seen that an individual shivers its bushy tail while approaching a member of the opposite sex. Breeding occurs throughout the year, or several times during the year.

Due to their very shy and secretive nature, reproductive behaviour of Giant squirrels is not known with certainty. The number of offspring is 1 or 2, but may be as many as 3. The average lifespan of Indian Giant Squirrel is 20 years (in captive condition), though the longevity in the wild is unknown.

The Uncertain future

By nature, they are habituated to live inside the dense natural forest. But nowadays, the Malabar Giant Squirrels have faced a threat as we need to expand our for cultivation or for rapidly growing lands industrialization, monocultural plantation, indiscriminate felling and logging of trees, construction of dams and the reasons alike are no less important in making those poor creatures homeless. In the last few years, this crisis has become more obvious. Consequently, Shekru has been facing a dire crisis in collecting foods, in seeking their mates or in bringing up their little ones. Woes to their fate, these cute animals are killed at a random by the poachers in the Eastern Ghats. However, the Indian Giant Squirrel is a Schedule-II animal, according to Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 and it is protected by law in India.

Precisely to say, all the aforesaid facts do not prompt a quick conclusion that the Government of Maharashtra has not taken any measure to secure a natural surrounding for those squirrels where they may roam and breed freely. Rather the latest record has disclosed the truth that their number has been increased marginally in Bhimashankar. In spite of all these, we have to admit that all the attempts measured by the Government are scanty enough for the hour. All the conscious people who, apparently seem to be careless about these creatures, need to be active again in securing a friendly environment for them.

PICTURES:

Figure 1: Malabar or Indian Giant Squirrel (*Ratufa indica indica*) is the largest tree squirrel species on Earth (Photo: Dipanjan Ghosh).

Figure 2: Eating ravenously by sitting on a strong horizontal branch (Photo: Dipanjan Ghosh).

Figure 3: The first appearance of Shekru in the Matheran forest, Raigad, Maharashtra (Photo: Dipanjan Ghosh).

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Jitendra M. Marathe is presently doing his postgraduation in Biodiversity from Savitribai Phule Pune University. He is an avid wildlife photographer and for the last few years he is photographically documenting wildlife and insects of Maharashtra for the support of conservation.

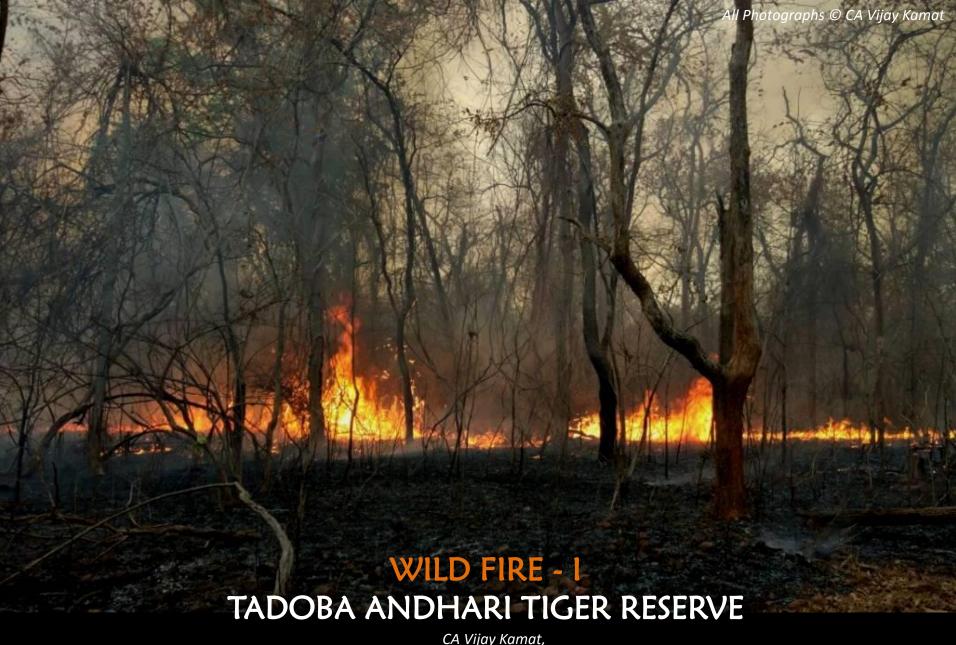
Dipanjan Ghosh is a popular science writer and nature-lover. He is also associated with various governmental and non-governmental organizations in India and abroad as a science educator.



ZONE OF CONFLICT

May 11, 2017: Five FDCM labours had gone for answering Natures call at around 5.45 am in a forest patch at Panchdhara around the Tadoba camp office. Two of them were done and the other three were sitting close by when the dominant male tiger — Matkasur came near them.. as soon as the labours saw the tiger they stood up and started to move away that's when the tiger pounced on the deceased - Mandal Choudhary... The remaining two shouted for help. On hearing their shouts the other labours rushed for help and started chasing and shouting at the tiger. The tiger counter charged them as well.. he then picked up the labourer again and took him inside the bushes...

A very sad case indeed. Hope the family feels the support they need. Working in a tiger kingdom has it's own risk. Jungle Rhythms salute to all such people who live such lives to save our natural heritage.



CA Vijay Kamat, Member of Local Advisory Committee - Pench Tiger Reserve (MP)



".... we saw some dry leaves (on fire) that got up in the air & landed on the dry grass around the Telia Lake side & immediately they caught the fire, we immediately stopped the gypsy, three of us (guide, gypsy driver & myself) got down & tried to stop the fire from spreading ... but of no use ... because of the heavy winds & in no time the fire spread in a big area of about 15-20 mtr radious ... it was out of control, we rushed to the gate, informed the gate in-charge who cooly said, we know that & we have informed the field director about the same.....



All Photographs © CA Vijay Kamat

Fire removes low-growing underbrush, cleans the **forest** floor of debris, opens it up to sunlight, and nourishes the soil. Reducing this competition for nutrients allows established trees to grow stronger and healthier. ... Established trees have to compete with undergrowth for nutrients and space. The intense heat of these fires also strip the nutrients and minerals out of many burning plants, restoring the soil's composition and creating amore fertile growing area for new species.



"..... Telia lake was big as complete vetivera grass got fully burnt..... But will convert the fire beneficial for herbivores in Telia by little watering will induce very luxuriant flush...... "



Sanjib Sarangi



"..... We noticed a big patch of jungle is burning and a wind is blowing at moderate speed. The temperature probably crossed 45 degree centigrade. Immediatedly, we conveyed the local Range Officer of the nearby Thakurmunda Range office. to rush with his team and we started the operation of creating the fire lines. After 15-20 minutes, few field forest staffs turned up and joined us. Along with manual firelines, the forester used the Leaf Blower for controlling the further spread...... "



from last decade. Sanjib Sarangi is a development practitioner currently working with Indian Grameen Services as Assistant Vice President and Head, Natural Resource based Livelihood Initiatives, based out of Bhubaneswar, Odisha.



'Living with Pythons' is a nationwide initiative started in 2017 by herpetologist and researcher Nirmal U Kulkarni to create awareness and instill appreciation about India's 3 Python species. These include the Indian Rock Python (Python molurus), Burmese Python (Python bivittatus) and Reticulated python (Malayopython reticulatus).

Together, these snakes represent some of the largest snake species of the world. While the Reticulated python is now acknowledged as one of the largest snakes in the world, the Burmese python is a near threatened species in its range in Burma. Illegal skin trade and habitat loss have taken a heavy toll and one ray of hope is forest of North East India where few populations survive. The species found in India commonly, the Indian Rock python has a high mortality rate due to human reptile conflict and habitat loss.

'Living with Pythons' aims to thus promote acceptance, awareness and understanding about these python species through conservation outreach and field based herpetology techniques. The initiative aims to achieve these objectives through on field discussions, engagements with communities, youth and actively working with on field Forest Department personnel.



It will also contribute to creating awareness on the issue of human- snake conflicts that are key to python survival in human dominated rural and urban landscapes.

Beside which the initiative proposes to address a need for a common protocol for Python rescue and release, as it will help minimize and address issues relating reptile-human conflict and provide vital answers to this growing challenge especially in urban India.



"My interest in pythons was fueled due to the large number of rescues I did of these species from homes as well as from snake charmers in my formative years as a snake handler. Further on whilst working for short terms at the Katraj snake park and the Madras Crocodile Bank Trust, these snakes held me in awe for their sheer size as well as strength. Reading about pythons in tales and anecdotal references across wildlife books, scientific literature and notes by naturalists became an unconsciously pursued hobby." - Nirmal Kulkarni 6, Hiru Naik Bldg Dhuler, Mapusa, Goa-403507. India. Email- livingwithpythons@gmail.com Ph- 09673531636.





AMOGH GAIKWAD, 14years, Thane





Jr. Kg & Sr.Kg students (age 4/5 years) from Kidzee school, Barrackpore [Submitted by: Banasree Chakraborty]



Dear Editor,

While all people are busy in projecting the bright side of the story of conservation, as Rocky Balboa said, 'let me tell you all something that you already know, life ain't all sunshine and rainbows. Its a very mean and nasty place', in other words, I portray the dark side of conservation, I show its failures.

Statistically speaking, the number of tiger deaths in India rose from 26 in 2015 to a distressing 50 in 2016. With the death of Prince at Bandipur, Karnataka, the issue of poaching is again brought to the fore; it would be trending on social media for a few days, only to be driven down to oblivion once more.

It is ironic that several people who scream conservation at the top of their lungs are the ones who love to don animal fur. At a time when we talk about settlements on Mars, people are still incapable of co-ordinating with nature to live in liaison with it.

Supply is directly proportional to demand. Hence, I condemn the unethical people who demand animals and their products. The longer we keep eating turtles, the more they get caught; the longer we demand ivory, elephants die; the longer we demand medicines and talismans, the more tigers get poached. It is easy to blame the poachers and evade the truth ourselves, but not without paying the price of a mute creature's life.

The captivation of Ustad reignites the same question, is the authority really concerned about what it looks after? The total number of documented wildlife deaths in India stood at 132 in 2016, further putting a question mark on the success of the several measures of the government.

Two hundred years ago under the rule of the imperial powers, there were innumerable and indiscriminate killings of our feathered, furred, and scaled friends. Two hundred years later, there's not much that has changed. As we talk about how many animals we have saved with our programmes, let us also not forget to talk about the lives we failed to save, let us not only highlight our success but also underscore our shortcomings.

The Indian population of 1.21 billion makes it almost impossible on the part of any person to induce conscience into each and every individual; the onus lies upon one and all to rejuvenate our ingrained ancestral values and ethics of worshipping nature, not destroying it.

According to a recent survey by National Geographic's, poaching and game hunting shall invariably cause the extinction of beautiful and fantastic animal species such as the black rhino, the Asian elephant, the pangolin and innumerable others, driving them slowly into utter damnation.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the leading wildlife conservation organisation, teamed up with four other peers, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) Secretariat, the International Criminal Police Organisation (INTERPOL), the

World Bank, and the World Customs Organisation (WCO) to form an International Consortium on Combating Wildlife crime in the year 2010. The point, however, is to take stringent measures in order to eradicate to evil of illegal hunting. Strikingly, the number of organisations are aplenty, but there is an apparent and unfortunate lack of international laws on an issue that can be combatted only with the help of legitimate steps. Until and unless that is done, it is nowhere close to a possibility that deaths of animals shall stop. Several Princes shall die, several Ustads will be captivated, all on the whims and fancies of the most dangerous animal on the planet.

Quoting Paul Rodriguez on an ending note, 'hunting is not a sport. In a sport, both sides should know they are in the game.'

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