



National Tiger Conservation Authority

s t r i p e s

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July-September 2021



**NEW SPECIES IN TIGER RESERVES
EXPLORING MISHMI HILLS BIODIVERSITY
WHEN TIGER CHARGES**

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FROM MEMBER SECRETARY'S DESK

National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) has always been at the forefront of tiger conservation work in India. One of the most essential components of our tiger conservation efforts is The All India Tiger Estimation (AITE) exercise taking place at an interval of every four year since 2006. An effort was also made to successfully estimate the Leopard population within the forested tiger habitats in tiger occupied states of the country during AITE 2018-2019, the largest wildlife survey in the world till date. The fifth cycle of AITE 2022 is currently underway and NTCA along with the experts from Wildlife Institute of India have conducted a countrywide training workshop of trainers who will impart training to other forest officials in their respective areas for robust data collection.

I would also like to congratulate the 14 tiger reserves in India that have received Conservation Assured| Tiger Standards (CA|TS) accreditation. CA|TS is a globally accepted conservation tool that sets minimum standards for effective management of tigers, and encourages assessments in relevant conservation areas.

The SARS-CoV-2 has caused unprecedented impact on mankind. In this issue of STRIPES, we have also focused on the exemplary contribution made by the forest frontline staff during the challenging times of ongoing pandemic towards tiger conservation. Commemorating the Global Tiger Day 21, NTCA felicitated forest frontline staff, acknowledging their dedication and commitment in safeguarding our forests and wildlife.

I am hopeful that the readers are going to find this issue of STRIPES interesting and informative.

Dr. S P Yadav

Additional Director General, Project Tiger &

Member Secretary, National Tiger Conservation Authority



Global Tiger Day 2021

The Global Tiger Day is celebrated annually on 29th July as a way to raise public awareness and support for the conservation of tigers and their natural habitats. The day was founded in 2010 at the Saint Petersburg Tiger Summit, Russia with an aim to address the imminent extinction threat faced by the iconic big cat. The Heads of Government of Tiger Range countries came together and signed the St. Petersburg Declaration on tiger conservation.

Considering the Covid-19 pandemic situation, a virtual event was organised at the Ministry of Environment Forest and Climate

Change (MoEFCC) on 29th July 2021. Speaking at the event Shri Bhupendra Yadav, Hon'ble Minister of Environment Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) stated that the approach of Government of India for the conservation of flora and fauna of the country has been inclusive of scientific & traditional knowledge along with people's participation.

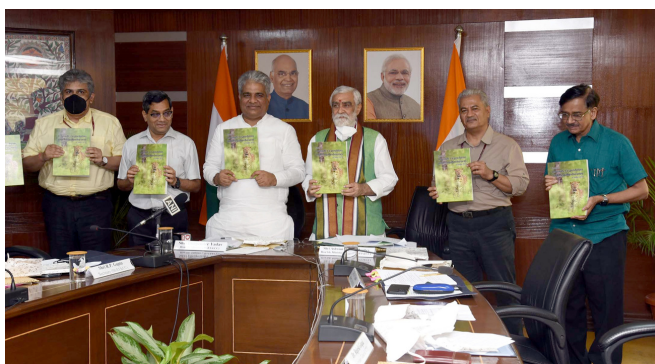
The event was also addressed by Shri Ashwini Kumar Choubey, Hon'ble Minister of State, MoEFCC who emphasized on the age old tradition of living in harmony with nature and all its sentient beings and urged

everyone to come together and join hands to save our tigers and their natural habitats.

To commemorate Global Tiger Day 2021, the forest officials from across the country participated in the virtual event.

Key Highlights:-

Release of All India Leopard Estimation Report



Shri Bhupendra Yadav, Hon'ble Minister of Environment Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) released the report 'Status of Leopards, Co-predators and Megaherbivores-2018'. The report is a testimony to the fact that conservation of tigers leads to the conservation of entire ecosystem. Leopard population was estimated within the forested habitats in tiger occupied states of the country during an All India Tiger Estimation 2018, the largest wildlife survey in the world. This report assesses the status of leopards from camera trap data and occupancy surveys conducted in 2018-19 across 20 States of India where tigers occur, using partially explicit capture recapture framework. Camera traps were placed at 26,838 locations spread across 141

sites and surveyed an effective area of 1,21,337 sq.km. In total the camera trap captured 34,858,623 photographs of wildlife of which 51,777 were of leopards. The report provides a first large scale baseline for many taxa and species against which future trends in their population can be monitored and specific conservation actions can be initiated in a timely manner. The overall leopard population in tiger range landscape of India in 2018 was estimated at 12,852 (SE range 12,172 - 13,535). This is a significant increase from 2014 figure that was 7,910 (SE 6,566-9,181) in forested habitats of 18 tiger bearing states of the country.

Release of a special edition of National Tiger Conservation Authority's (NTCA) quarterly newsletter-'STRIPES'

'STRIPES' a quarterly newsletter of National Tiger Conservation Authority, highlighting tiger conservation related initiatives and best practices of tiger reserves was released. July edition being a special issue to commemorate Global Tiger Day 2021.



Attainment of Global Conservation Assured|Tiger Standards (CA|TS) accreditation standards by 14 Tiger Reserves in India



CA|TS has been agreed upon as accreditation tool by the global coalition of Tiger Range Countries (TRCs) and has been developed by tiger and protected area experts. Officially launched in 2013 CA|TS sets minimum standards for effective management of target species and encourages assessment of these standards in relevant conservation areas. CA|TS is a set of criteria which allows tiger sites to check if their management will lead to successful tiger conservation. CA|TS is organised under 7 pillars and 17 elements and 163 criteria of critical management activity. In India, the implementation of CA|TS was initiated by NTCA in collaboration with Global Tiger Forum (GTF) in the year 2015. Only recently, a decision was taken by NTCA to extend the implementation of CA|TS to the Tiger Reserves in the country. The International Executive Committee (consisting of CA|TS International Experts) has now approved for CA|TS accreditation of 14 Tiger Reserves namely-Manas, Kaziranga, Orang, Satpura, Pench, Kanha, Panna, Valmiki, Dudhwa, Parambikulam,

Mudumalai, Bandipur, Anamalai and Sundarbans.

Felicitation of forest frontline as 'Bagh Rakshaks'

The novel coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 and the disease it causes in the humans (COVID-19) has impacted humanity in a manner and magnitude unprecedented in the recent past. By taking cognizance of these situations, the Government of India took a proactive step to classify forest and wildlife protection under 'essential services' during the lockdown. While our society recognized the contribution of health workers and police force during the national lockdown, forest workers' contribution of safeguarding our natural heritage remained largely unacknowledged. In view of this, the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) has received nominations of forest frontline from across India's Tiger Reserves who have shown outstanding contributions in the field of tiger and forest conservation. The frontline workers were felicitated as 'Bagh Rakshaks' for their extraordinary contribution in the field of tiger conservation. Acknowledging their outstanding efforts, a short video was also released.



Global Tiger Day 2021 on Social Media





Virtual Capacity Building program for Senior Officials from Tiger Range Countries

From 17 to 21 August 2021

At New Delhi, India

Capacity Building Workshop for senior officials of tiger range countries

India is known for many long-standing, successful milestone initiatives to strengthen its wild tiger conservation agenda, which includes several national and international efforts. Apart from bilaterals with neighbouring Tiger Range Countries (TRCs), India is also a founder member of the only inter-governmental, international body for tiger the Global Tiger Forum (GTF), which is headquartered at New Delhi. While India, owing to its concerted efforts has more than 70% of wild tigers, the situation in other TRCs, especially those in South East Asia, continues to be grim, warranting exposure to

successful practices. Being in a leadership position on the tiger front, it is in the fitness of things for India, to embark on demonstrated actions in the said context, through the inter-governmental panel of the GTF. This is much required at this juncture for strengthening the in-situ tiger conservation across several TRCs.

In the above context, the National Tiger Conservation Authority supported the Global Tiger Forum towards organizing a virtual capacity building workshop from 17th-21st August 2021 for senior officials of some

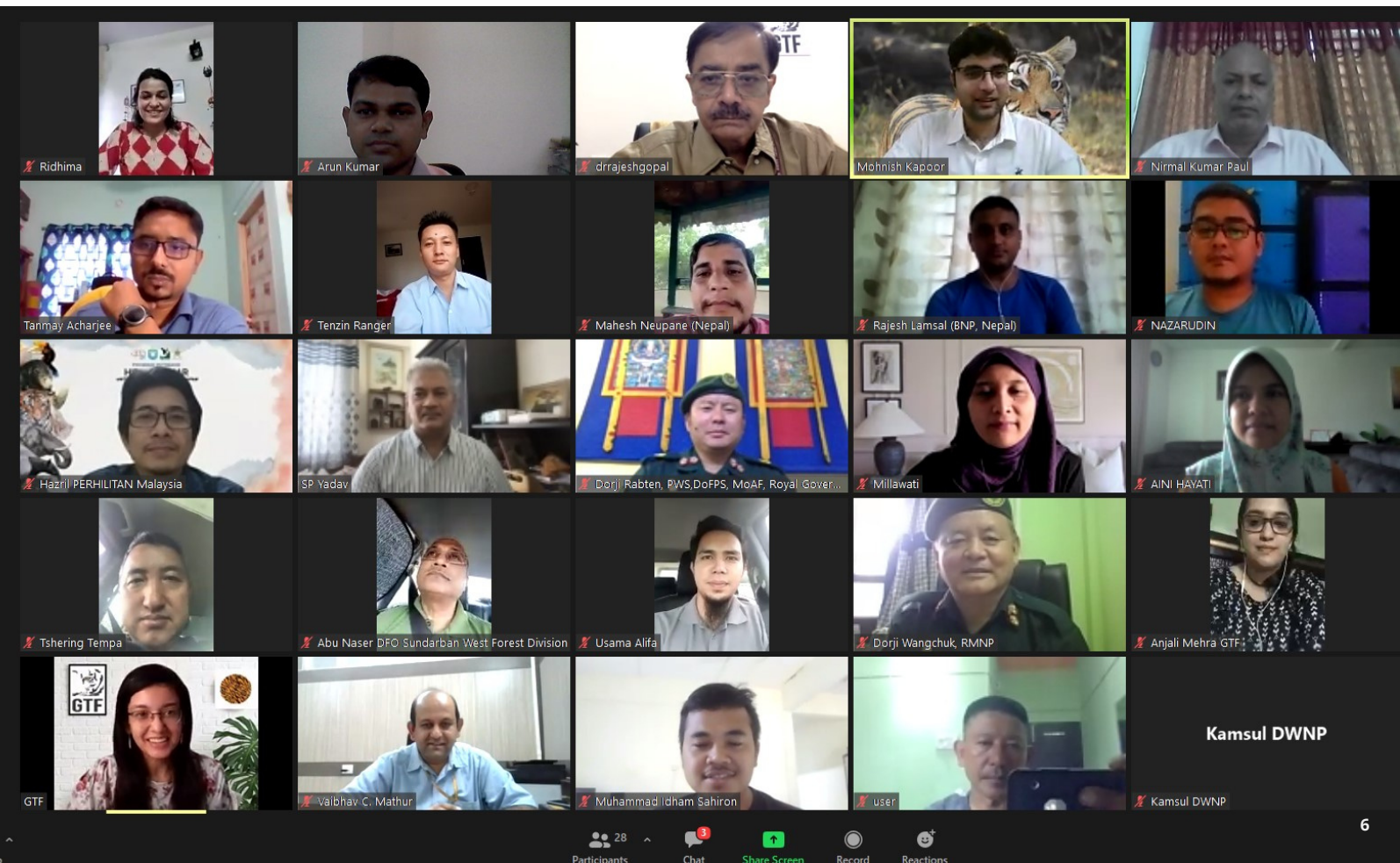
TRCs of South and South East Asia (Bangladesh, Bhutan, Malaysia and Nepal). Apart from sharing of best practices and field experiences, the workshop aimed towards strengthening south-south cooperation and better understanding of on-ground and region specific solutions to conservation issues.

The virtual workshop was well attended, with as many as 39 participants from Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal and Malaysia.

The agenda and module included thematic areas related to wild tiger conservation, highlighting successful field practices, learning and contemporary challenges, vis-a-vis conservation of tiger, co-predators, prey and habitat amidst various anthropogenic

stressors at national and trans-national levels. Broadly the module covered the following themes:

- Global Tiger Status
- Project Tiger in India and institutionalisation of the tiger agenda in the country
- Tiger dynamics and demography
- Wildlife Protection and combating illegal wildlife trafficking
- Wildlife monitoring
- Tiger conservation planning
- Active tiger and prey management
- Community stewardship and engagement
- Landscape scale engagement
- Resource mobilization
- Linkages to climate change and disease regulation/ pandemic prevention



NEW SPECIES IN TIGER RESERVES

**First photographic evidences of rare/endangered species in
Tiger Reserves**



FISHING CAT

PANNA TIGER RESERVE



INDIAN WOLF

RAJAJI TIGER RESERVE



MISHMI TAKIN

KAMLANG TIGER RESERVE



RED GORAL

KAMLANG TIGER RESERVE



PANGOLIN

SARISKA TIGER RESERVE



LESSER FLORICAN

TADOBA TIGER RESERVE



(Photographs by: Cheshta Singh)

Exploring Mishmi Hills Biodiversity

- Cheshta Singh, Field Director, Kamlang Tiger Reserve
- Deepti Gupta, Phd Scholar, Wildlife Institute of India

The landscape of north-eastern India is a highly diverse and species-rich area. There are many species which are not systematically surveyed in this region. This has led to a far lesser number of records of species than what are actually present in this region. Over the last two and a half decades, advancements of various non-invasive techniques such as camera trapping has strengthened the sampling procedures and approach to reliable scientific data with

reduction of time, efforts and cost. Camera traps have nowadays become very useful to study cryptic and elusive species.

The protected areas in India are the remaining repositories of biodiversity. Notified in the year 2017, Kamlang Tiger reserve, Arunachal Pradesh belongs to the larger landscape of Eastern Himalayan biodiversity Hotspot. It is situated in Lohit district, Arunachal Pradesh and extends over

an area of 783 sq km, with core area of 696 sq km and buffer area of 87 sq km. The reserve has a rugged terrain with an altitudinal gradient of 500-4500 msl. The reserve harbours many perennial rivers like Lang, Lathi, Kamlang, Sinabara, Tawa among others. The protected area is also home to many wetlands, the most iconic wetland of which is the Glaw lake.

Camera trapping exercise is being carried out every year by the tiger reserves under the annual Phase IV monitoring protocol of National Tiger Conservation Authority. This area lacks systematic scientific surveys majorly due to extremely complex terrain and hence is very less known for its biodiversity. It was for the first time that an area falling in Anjaw district within the reserve was camera trapped and hence it was not to our surprise to record presence of rare and elusive fauna.

In this context, it was reassuring to record Red goral and Mishmi takin for the first time in Kamlang Tiger reserve. Red goral (*Nemorhaedus bailey*) is listed as Vulnerable under IUCN Red List. A female was captured with fawn which is a sign of breeding range in the area. This animal is found at high elevations ranging from 2000-4500 msl. Mishmi Takin (*Budorcas taxicolor*) was also captured as a group of three individual including a calf at an altitude of 3470m. Its population trend is decreasing mainly because of hunting for bushmeat consumptions and habitat destructions and considered rare in this region. Apart from this, we captured Barking Deer (*Muntiacus muntjac*), Yellow-throated Marten (*Martes*

flavigula) and Hoary-bellied Squirrel (*Callosciurus pygerythrus*) from the camera traps deployed in this region of KTR. Non-charismatic species like these, owing to their non-popularity are very less surveyed and hence are listed as either Least Concern or Data Deficient. The presence of these species represents the successful conservation efforts of the Arunachal Pradesh Forest department and the local communities. However, there are some concerns regarding the sustainability of these efforts.

These areas have traditionally been used by the Mishmi inhabitants here as hunting grounds for most wildlife. Not only most of the ungulate species are used as sacrifices in their rituals but also some are hunted down for pure purpose of game. Also areas close to the sanctuary are prone to Jhuming practice (slash and burn type of agriculture). Apart from this, rampant deforestation, poaching of wildlife are contributing to massive habitat fragmentation and global warming may also have changed the natural range of some of these species.

It is therefore of utmost importance to sensitize the local communities to save and conserve the wildlife. Kamlang tiger reserve among other nearby protected areas together form a part of one of the Biodiversity Hotspots in India. Conserving this landscape along with its flora and fauna is in the larger interest of all of us.



Training of Trainers (ToT) for All India Tiger Estimation 2022

The All India Tiger Estimation (AITE) exercise is one of the most crucial components of our national tiger conservation efforts. This country wide exercise has been taking place at an interval of every four years since 2006 in active collaboration between National Tiger Conservation Authority, Wildlife Institute of India, forest departments of tiger range states and conservation partners. The fourth iteration of the survey conducted in 2018-19, was most comprehensive till date in terms of both resources and data amassed. This is the world's largest effort invested in any wildlife survey till date with respect to coverage of

forested habitats, foot survey, total area sampled by camera traps, no. of man-days invested etc. There is hardly any parallel of such a focused species-oriented program like Project Tiger across the world, which started with 9 Tiger Reserves and has increased to 51 tiger reserves currently. India has now firmly established a leadership role in tiger conservation, with its practices being looked upon as a gold standard across the world. The monitoring program initiated in 2006 uses remote sensing, geographic information system, and global positioning system technology in combination with high resolution spatial data and field data, based

on standardized protocol of walking carnivore and megaherbivore sign survey trails and line transects and camera trapping to effectively monitor tiger, other predators and prey populations. The fourth cycle of All India Tiger Estimation, 2018 used an Android based application (M-STriPES) to collect data from the field which made data collection more robust and analysis easier.

The fifth cycle of All India Tiger Estimation for the year 2022 is ongoing. National Tiger Conservation Authority along with the experts from Wildlife Institute of India are conducting a countrywide training of master trainers. These master trainers will impart training for All India Tiger Estimation 2022 to other forest personnel in their respective areas. The fifth cycle is going to be completely digital and paperless. The estimation will be done with the help of M-STriPES application. Field Directors, Nodal

Officers and Technical staff from 18 tiger range states and managers of tiger bearing forests attended the regional Training of Trainers (ToT) workshop conducted in the following four tiger reserves:-

- Mudumalai Tiger Reserve : 15 tiger reserves from 5 tiger range states (Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh)
- Ranthambore Tiger Reserve: 17 tiger reserves from 5 tiger range states (Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Odisha and Maharashtra)
- Rajaji Tiger Reserve: 6 tiger reserves from 4 tiger range states (Uttarakhand, Bihar, Jharkhand and Uttar Pradesh)
- Manas Tiger Reserve: 9 tiger reserves from 4 tiger range states (Assam, West Bengal, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram)





(Photographs by: Gobind Sagar Bharadwaj)

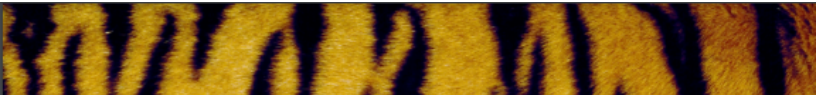
When Tiger Charges

■ Dr. Gobind Sagar Bharadwaj, IFS

Around a century ago, tiger as an undisputed potentate ruled the vast forested areas of our country. It was like an emperor who had a little tolerance for the trespassers in his kingdom, and attacked to punish those who either intentionally or inadvertently got confronted to it. Such incidents were a source of inspiration to legendary Jim Corbett who composed such write-ups that are relished even today. Then gradually with the shrinking forest area and burgeoning might and gun power of man this monarch was restricted to few protected areas of our country. With exceptions like Sundarbans, incidents of tiger attack on man are sporadic. The mass slaughter of this mighty animal in the bygone era witnessed by its generations has somewhat subdued its savagery for humans, but sometimes this inherent quality does gushes out when it is alarmed by human disturbance in its pristine

world. Here I am giving an account of few such tiger charging incidents that happened in recent past.

It was a pleasant morning of March 2008, when we were circling the Rajbag area of Ranthambhore in quest of tigress Machhli and her three young female cubs. Our anxiety got over when a driver of tourist vehicle told that the family was sitting in the middle of the road near Sukhi talai area. In 10 minutes we were there and yes the family was still there to welcome our lone vehicle on that side of the road, a rare luxury at Ranthambhore. There were few vehicles on the other side of the road-curve not visible to us. My friends Sanjay Shrisimal and Manoj Bhagwat were with me and we all started photographing the cubs that were in close proximity to us. The mother tigress was a bit far, almost on the curve of the road and faced



opposite side. Suddenly I realized that she had lowered her head, chin touching down and had taken a crouching position. The tip of her tail was also wagging, perhaps in anxiety and altogether her gait was hinting towards her intentions of giving some quarry a charge. As we were lost in our anticipation of seeing some action packed sequence suddenly Phoolchand emerged from behind the road-curve. No doubt it was he who made Machhli alert and his sudden arrival attracted the attention of one of the cubs as well. I was worried; Phoolchand was dangerously close to the family.

Phoolchand (now late, may his soul rest in peace), a name that was not new to frequent guests of Ranthambhore during those days. A plus fifty dedicated forest guard and then in-charge of Rajbag area, who was always on patrol defying his tired legs. From 5:30 am in the morning till 7:00 pm in the evening and sometimes even at night Phoolchand kept a vigil on Machhli and her cubs. With no Sundays and occasional emergency leaves he used to spend more time with this family than his own and thus shared a special bond with this tigress and her cubs. His love and commitment was clearly shown when in 2004, after being seriously injured in a mob attack by forest offenders he opted to serve in this area.

That day we were a witness to his emotional follies. He was hardly 12-15 meters away from the tigress, I was beckoning to him to retreat but he was smiling instead. Intermittently he was also talking to the tigress that continuously had an eye on him. After five minutes Machhli suddenly popped-up and sprinted behind Phoolchand.

In fraction of seconds tigress and Phoolchand both vanished behind the road-curve leaving behind a cloud of dust and next thing we heard was screaming and shouting of tourists thumping the vehicles on that side to distract Machhli. Soon Machhli was seen coming back a bit limping and looking tired after this unpleasant episode. She came near to our vehicle and sat down, seemed to be in a vicious mood; so vexed that she even snarled at me an expression she had never shown me before in her more than eighty sightings of her done by me.

Later we went to see Phoolchand who was safe and sound, though looking pale and weak. I scolded him for such childish behavior and he replied with his usual smile, though artificial this time, "*Sahab yeh to pehle bhi kai bar ho chukka hai*" (Sir, this has happened several times in the past) and his flirting with the tiger family continued. Some people never waver in their belief and Phoolchand did have reasons for his firm belief, as Ranthambhore was never ill famed for man-eaters or fatal confrontation of tiger and man. In a long history of Ranthambhore only two incidents of human attack by tiger are newsworthy. Once in 1992 when a boy was attacked and killed by Bassandhara tigress during Ganesh Chaturthi fair that entices millions of people in the park. The other was in the year 2005 when one of the mature cubs of Berda tigress strayed out of park and killed a villager Shankar from Maikalan village while he was irrigating his fields at night. Both these incidents were accidental and circumstantial and both the tigers were not man-eaters. Even in Bhandhavgarh National Park in the year 2004 a tiger attacked a tourist vehicle and

injured some French tourist but that incident was also an outcome of some circumstantial reasons. The killing of two forest staff (Rampal and Gheesu Singh) and two villagers by T24 alias Ustad and its subsequent detention five years back by the Park authorities generated a lot of heat among wildlife lovers in social media.

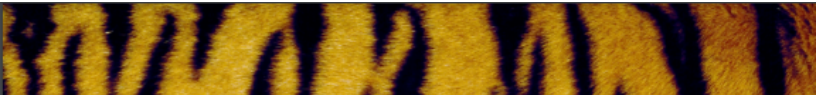
Certainly the news related to tiger attack on humans give us goosebumps, but an incident of tiger attack that actually happened with me in 1997, changed my perspective towards life and is worth mentioning.

It was a sultry forenoon of 30th June in Boondi, with mercury soaring high to around 45 degrees Celsius, I was in the office. My colleague, Lalit Bora, Assistant Conservator of Forests (ACF) came to me and broke the news that he had admitted a villager in the hospital. The villager was mauled by a tiger in a village called Dablana, around 30 kms from the district headquarters. I was quite surprised as this place was quite far away from Ramgarh wildlife sanctuary. I inquisitively questioned Lalit, whether the misdemeanor was a tiger or a leopard, as only a few weeks back, a man-eater leopard had killed a child in the Indergarh Range of Bundi Forest Division. Lalit as well as the staff of the area confirmed the presence of a strayed tiger in the village. Further when I was informed that my DFO boss, Panna Ram Siyag, had already left for the village along with a Range Officer and two guards, zeal and enthusiasm kindled in me, and like a novice probationer, along with a .32 caliber revolver, I made my way off to the village to extend a helping hand in locating the tiger. On my way I met a person who informed me



about the chaotic scenario in the village and probable location of the tiger. I reached the village at about 12:00 noon; a large gathering of villagers was already present near the bank of the river Mej. The Police Inspector of Dablana, forest staff and villagers told me that the tiger was probably hiding behind the *Ipomoea carnea* bushes along the bank of the river. With a bit of fear and hesitation, along with the forest guards and police constables, I decided to have a lookout for the tiger. We started our search very silently and cautiously scouring the area for its pugmarks or any evidence, which may give us the clue of its location. After a futile search for an hour we came back to the same point where the villagers had gathered. The energy soaking heat of the afternoon and our inability to locate the tiger made us feel frustrated. We rested for some time in the scanty shade of the trees and discussed with the villagers the likely location of the tiger. At one moment of discussion, I even thought that after seeing such a huge crowd of villagers, the tiger might have gone back to the forest yet I continued my search for the tiger.

This time along with the Police Inspector of Dablana and a group of eight people I went to the area where people thought that the



tiger was lurking. That area was full of wild bushes of *Prosopis juliflora* interspersed with trees of wild date palm, *Phoenix sylvestris*. Police officer and myself were leading the group and were a bit ahead of others. We were carefully scanning the area to spot the furtively camouflaged stripped beast, and meanwhile we were even looking for jungle crows (now called large billed crows) that are a striking indicator of the presence of a predator with a kill and an alarm call of any bird, but only dead silence of the hot afternoon pervaded the area. All these circumstances made me a little careless and I was just casually looking towards the Ipomoea bushes keeping a safe distance from them in an impression that if the tiger is in the area it is definitely lurking behind the bushes. Suddenly a constable shouted from behind 'Sahib woh raha'(there it is). His words had a charging effect on me and I started scanning the bushes very keenly with an impression that the constable had seen the tiger hiding behind the bushes, but I could not see it. The moment I turned my face to the opposite direction to ask the police officer, instead of him I was confronted by a full-grown crouched tiger hardly 20 meters away from me. I was immediately paralyzed with fear and as soon as I had an eye contact with the tiger, it roared like a thunder, and all the men behind me fled to save their lives. A shiver ran down my spine as I was all alone and too close to that ferocious carnivore. All my senses betrayed me and I stood still like a statue. Within a next few seconds the tiger leaped towards me with its distended claws towards my face. As a reflex action I immediately turned my back towards the tiger and within a fraction of second it pounced on me with full momentum.

Tiger's paw hit my left side of the shoulder with huge force and I crashed and was dragged on the ground. The attack was so thumping that an instantaneous scream came out of my mouth. A wave of severe and unbearable pain was felt on my back as well as on my left part of the chest. Now I was helplessly lying prone on the ground beneath the dangerous beast, covering my head and neck with both my arms, a vain attempt to protect my nape from the dagger like canines of the furious cat. Even after a decade I still remember the warmth and foul smell emanating from its mouth. Perhaps it was panting over me. I remained in that position, with the tiger on my back for the next 3-5 seconds, but those seconds seemed like ages to me. Those ghastly moments conjured up personified death in front of me, and I just prayed for an instant and painless death. In a fraction of second faces of my loving parents, newly wed young wife and all near and dear ones flipped like the pages of a memory book in my mind. In such a plight I waited for the next action of the tiger that would render me a deathblow, but instead the tiger retreated back to the same spot from where it pounced on me. I was profusely bleeding from my back; my left hand and shoulder seemed to be paralyzed and there was immense pain in my left half of the chest. I was gasping for breath but my broken ribs were making breathing painful and uneasy. I was lying in a pool of blood with the tiger in front of me. I tried to stand up but my knees gave way; frightened, I tried to crawl with my right arm but could do only a meter or two. After few minutes the tiger vanished in the thick bushes of *Prosopis juliflora*. Meanwhile, two forest guards and a villager mustered enough courage to drag and carry me to a



safer place. A crowd of villagers surrounded me. I was immediately rushed to the district hospital of Bundi. Fortunately a wireless message was already conveyed to the district administration, which facilitated prompt action and a surgery was conducted in time. I remained in hospital for around 13 days, but complete healing of wounds took around two months.

The thought of the incident did give me nightmares, but it also compelled me to rethink about the nature of the tiger that is often considered as barbaric and ruthless.

That tiger could have easily killed me but it didn't, as man is not on its menu. A tiger only kills and devours a man accidentally, or unless it happens to be a man-eater, which of course has some circumstantial reasons. For me that tiger was a gentle cat, which warily expressed its displeasure on my close proximity to it, probably stone pelting by the villagers might have angered it. It was just a warning slap to me, which meant, "Keep aloof". This behavior of the tiger aroused a passion for wildlife in me, particularly in large cat that spared my life.



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and Climate Change