



VOL. 05

# Wild Untamed

## 5TH EDITION

JANUARY 2022

- Painting the Valley Red
- The Olive Ridley Turtle
- Kamlang Tiger Reserve

- The White Tiger
- A King in Exile

FIGHT

PROTECT

CONSERVE





# CHIEF EDITOR'S NOTE

**Indrajit Sengupta**  
Chief Editor, Wild Untamed

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Dear Readers

Greetings from "Wild Untamed" an initiative of STS.

This edition marks the begining of a calendar year, and the 5th edition of our magazine. So before we go too much further, we'd love to know what you think.

Around 15 months ago, we launched our 1st edition with many successful conservation journey and stories from different green parts of our planet.

In this issue, we have stories from the magnificent Singalila National Park to unexplored forests like Kamlang Tiger Reserve, Nauradehi Wildlife Sanctuary, Wonder of Natute the White Tiger, an extraodinerry journey of Raja-the king of sundarban & his keeper, Deep into the life of a dedicated Dog Handler, Self-inspired individuals and dedicated organisations working day & night for wildlife conservation at Odisha, Philibit, Sundarbans, inspiring story of a boy-Colin who taught us that anything can be achived and story of a true warrior of the Mother Nature.

We know you are reading: Our last issue sparked a lot of discussion and showed us that we must continue to strive to deliver the most thoughtful, insightful and inspiring window possible into our shared natural world.

Now we want to hear from you: Send us a letter or an email, a note on Facebook or a message on whatsapp. Let us know how we're doing and tell us what you'd like to see more.

It's your magazine, after all.

Thank you.





# EDITOR'S NOTE

**Anupa Roy**  
Editor, Wild Untamed

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Greetings Dear Readers.

There has been a bit of a gap since the last issue due to unforeseen circumstances. However, we are here with our fifth issue.

This issue has given me so much, I have learnt so many things, I have got to know about so many amazing individuals who are doing outstanding work. It just makes me realize that if one is truly passionate and dedicated to something, then there is nothing that cannot be done.

The work of wildlife and conservation is complicated, challenging and not without its pitfalls. However perseverance and commitment are what I have understood from the people who are in this field. True inspiration for the rest of us.

I genuinely hope that when you read about the people, their work, the places they work in, you will be as moved.

Thank you.





# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

**Indranil Sengupta**  
Asst Editor, Wild Untamed

Dear Readers

I'm indeed feeling elated announcing that finally Wild Untamed, our much-acclaimed and globally circulated venture in the form of e-magazine and hard copy version has emerged through its 5th edition. By now, it has made a mark in the perspective of Protection and Conservation of Wildlife, Battling for Nature, Creating intimate bonding between Man & Nature, Securing Natural Habitat and Procuring Rights of Existence and Education. Recognisable exemplary references throughout the globe in forms of Initiatives, Personnels and Instances are gradually evolving up and taking subsequent places in our magazine. In this edition, some fabulous and extraordinary features in terms of application, implication and magnitude have also been admiringly adopted.

From the magnificent Singalila National Park to unexplored forests like Kamlang Tiger Reserve, Nauradehi Wildlife Sanctuary,

from the Wonder of Nature, the White Tiger to an extraordinary journey of Raja, the king of the Sundarbans & his keeper, from Deep into the life of a dedicated Dog Handler, Self-inspired individuals and dedicated organizations working day & night for wildlife conservation at Odisha, to Pilibhit, Sundarbans, inspiring story of a boy-Colin who taught us that anything can be achieved and story of a true warrior of Mother Nature have augmented this very edition remarkably special in its own kind.

I further render my heartfelt gratitude to Pijush Chakraborty, Himanshu Yada, Aditya Das, Krishnendu Chakraborty and Phil Davis for their exotic and fascinating photography.

I fervently wish, like all the previous editions you would wholeheartedly welcome, grace and greet this edition also.

I Earnestly wish you all a very safe, secure and healthy life ahead.

Thank you.



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**CHIEF EDITOR:-**

**Mr. Indrajit Sengupta**

**EDITOR:-**

**Ms. Anupa Roy**

**ASSISTANT EDITOR:-**

**Mr. Indranil Sengupta**

**ADVISOR:-**

**Mrs. Sweata Rai**

**PUBLISHER:-**

**Saving Tiger Society**

# PHOTOGRAPHS

**Aditya Das**

**Phil Davis**

**Himanshu Yadav**

**Krishnendu Mukherjee**

**Pijush Chakraborty**

**Indrajit Sengupta**

Front cover page photo courtsey by:- **Vivek Sharma**.

Feature page photo courtsey by:- **Himanshu Yadav**.

Back cover page photo courtsey by:- **Himanshu Yadav**.

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## PAINTING THE VALLEY RED

Bright colored flowers that paint the whole valley in shades of red. Can you guess what they are? Yes, rhododendrons, one of my dreams come true! There are 80 species of rhododendrons in India, and 18 of those are found in Singalila National Park on the border of West Bengal, Sikkim and Nepal.



A large rhododendron tree overflowing with flowers



A large rhododendron tree overflowing with flowers

Singalila has three biomes- temperate coniferous forest, temperate broadleaf and mixed forest and subtropical coniferous forest. We were visiting the second biome, the temperate broadleaf and mixed forest. The many species of plants in this biome include huge lotus-shaped magnolias dotting the valleys like snow, thick bamboos swaying gently in the breeze and magnificent oaks growing tall into the sky. But the rhododendrons stole the limelight.

Known as Guras in the Nepali language, these flowers that bloom in summer are a Himalayan bird's paradise! They can't get enough of it. Nothing else matters, all that birds see in this season are those bright pink flowers.....

### BOLD BLACK BIRDS!

Native to the Indian Subcontinent, the white collared black birds are found in subtropical or tropical moist montane forests and high-altitude shrub lands. They are named after the distinct white band, or 'collar', on their throats, which is more prominent in the jet black males rather than the dull brown females. Watching these bold birds dance about on the flowers was simply amazing!



Loud Laughingthrushes

## LOUD LAUGHING THRUSHES!

Laughing thrushes are birds aptly named after their loud call which sounds as if someone is laughing. The black faced laughing thrush is a shy bird of mid to high elevations. A wonderfully patterned bird, it is named after its black and white face. It is found in Eastern Nepal, North East India, Bhutan, Myanmar and Tibet. These loud birds were much more colorful than I had expected, and they took just as much interest in eating nectar as insects!



## MARVELOUS MYZORNIS!

This bird, marvelous to look at, is actually a member of the warbler family! The fire tailed myzornis is the only bird in its genus, and can be found in high-altitude thickets. Its name comes from its fiery red tail, which can be seen easily when the bird flies. Its green color and red tail help it camouflage perfectly with the rhododendrons, making it an uncommon sight to behold. Seeing this marvelous bird playing peek-a-boo with the flowers was a dream come true!

## MYSTERIOUS MINLAS!

### Blue Winged Minla-

Known earlier as the blue winged siva, this bird is found in subtropical or tropical moist montane forests in South East Asia. Its name comes from the blue feathers on its cream colored body.



### Red Tailed Minla-

This is the only bird in the genus minla. It is found in the Indian subcontinent, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam. It is a small babbler and can often be seen hanging upside down from branches and climbing trees just like a nuthatch. Observing these mysteriously shy beauties steal the spotlight for a few seconds was astounding!



## STRIKING SUNBIRDS!

Fire Tailed Sunbirds are nectar-feeding birds, and rhododendron is one of their favorite flowers! Native to South-East Asia, they prefer to live in oak and coniferous forests with a rhododendron understory. The male sunbird, is just as drab as the females in winter, but when summer arrives, it's a whole different story. Sporting shades of many different colours, the males go about trying to impress the females (and, unknowingly, birdwatchers like me) with their striking plumage! What a transformation!



Wily Warblers

### WILY WARBLERS!

The buff barred warbler, named after the distinct buff colored bars on its wings, is a species of leaf warbler. It is found in boreal and temperate forests. This warbler can be commonly seen hopping with glee among the pink rhododendrons, with its beak and throat covered in pollen! The wide smile of joy always spread on this wily bird's face when among the flowers was pretty contagious!



Youthful Yuhinas



Stripe Throated Yuhina

### Stripe Throated Yuhina-

This yuhina has three clear stripes on its throat, hence its name. It can often be seen feeding in groups, sometimes in groups of yuhinas and sometimes with mixed hunting parties.

### Rufous Vented Yuhina-

Primarily seen in the Eastern Himalayas, this yuhina is named after its rufous vent and nape. It prefers oak stands with a dense rhododendron understory, and can be seen on the rhododendron flowers in small groups in this season!

Gazing at these youthful birds continuously darting in and out of the flowers, completely enjoying themselves, was very satisfying!

Rhododendrons and the birds that feast on them are the pride of the Himalayas. Unfortunately, due to deforestation for industrial activities, these pleasant habitats are fast disappearing, and so are these wonderful birds with them. Let's help preserve these flowers that are the joy of Himalayan life. Just like Mr. Edwin Curran says, "Rhododendrons are the music of the ground, spoken from the Earth's lips without a sound."



# TEXT & PHOTOGRAPHS BY



## Reva Duraphe

**Age: 13 years, studying in standard 8 in The Orchid School, Baner, Pune, Maharashtra.**

An avid traveller in the forests and national parks of India since she was 7, Reva is a passionate birder and wildlife enthusiast.

She got interested in birding at the age of 4 and became a keen observer of nature.

Her grandfather and then her father used to take her to various places around Kolhapur and Pune and show her birds. Later she got into serious birding under the guidance of Mr. Rahul Rao, who is a famous and gifted birder from Pune.

She is the youngest participant to have completed the certificate course in Ornithology by Ela Foundation Pune (Dr. Satish Pande) which helped her understand other aspects of birding like nomenclature, mythology, parts and uses of their anatomy etc. and conservation. Owls incidentally have always been her most favourite birds!

She has seen 490 species of birds and 40 species of mammals in the wild in India. She is invited to schools to give talks on her trips where she tries to educate young kids with regards to not only birds and animals, but conservation, ecology, and biodiversity too.

Her photographs have been selected to be displayed at various exhibitions. She takes young kids on short birding trails. Recently she conducted two week-long workshops titled "Colourful Wings of India" for kids aged 8 to 14 which saw participants from Haryana, Delhi, and Chhattisgarh as well.

She has travelled to 18 National parks in India and has visited Kenya for its rich wildlife too.

Apart from bird-watching Reva loves travelling, reading, painting and photography.

Her current favourite books are the Mahabharat and the Lord of the Rings.

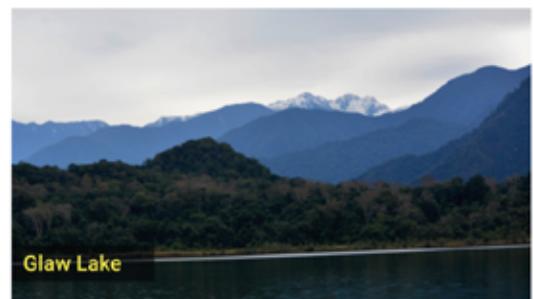


## Kamlang Tiger Reserve - An Unexplored Abode of Arunachal Pradesh

The Eastern Himalayas of North-East India are home to some of the world's most incredible species variety. Arunachal Pradesh, often known as the hill state of North-eastern India, is home to some of the world's most diverse biogeographic zones. The landscape's richness and peacefulness are completely enthralling.

The Kamlang Wildlife Sanctuary, which was established in 1989, was designated as India's 50th Tiger Reserve in March 2017. It's situated in Lohit District of Arunachal Pradesh and it covers a total area of 783 square kilometers, including a core area of 696 square kilometers and a buffer area of 87 square kilometers. It is one of the region's furthest-eastern tiger reserves. The Kamlang Reserve Forest area borders it on the west and north, an unclassified state forest area (USF) borders it on the east, and Namdapha National Park borders it on the south.

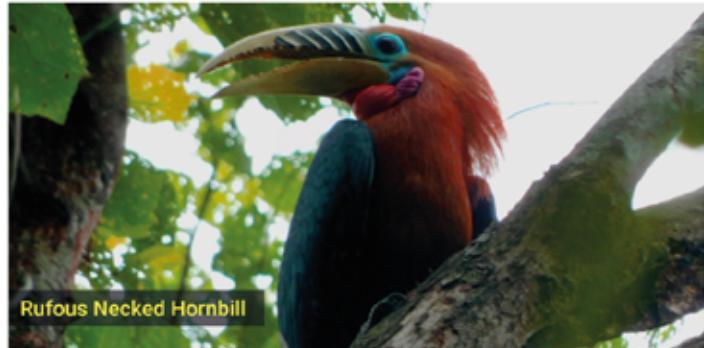
The local inhabitants are Digaru and Mizo Mishmis. They claim to be descended from "King Rukmo" from "Mahabharat." These people, in reality, primarily believe in an invisible God whom they refer to as "*Suto Phenhenyon jamalu*". The tiger reserve is defined by perennial water body features that support biodiversity. The tiger reserve principal water bodies include the Lang, Lati, Tawah, Kamlang, and Lai.



The tiger reserve can be approached by Namsai Wakro road. Wakro is a small town and circle Head-quarter under Namsai Sub-Division. It is about 70 km away from Namsai town. Nearest Railway station – Tinsukia, Airport – Dibrugarh.

As the height ranges from 500 meters to 4500 meters above sea level, the vegetation propagation of the tiger reserve alters considerably with an increase in altitudinal gradients. Kamlang Tiger Reserve contains an abundance of biota and species richness that are yet to be studied and explored. This is a tiger reserve that practically encompasses two of Arunachal Pradesh's most well-known districts, Lohit and Anjaw. The lake cum wetland, which is located at 1200 meters above sea level, is one of the most noteworthy assets. It's one of the most important lakes in the area, as well as a popular tourist destination in the winter.

Three large cats have been recorded in the tiger reserve so far (*Panthera pardus*) Leopard, (*Panthera tigris*) Royal Bengal Tiger and (*Neofelis nebulosa*) Clouded Leopard. The tiger reserve also protects a number of endangered ungulate species, including the Mishmi Takin (*Budorcas taxicolor taxicolor*), the Eastern Hoolock Gibbon (*Hoolock leuconedys*), the Binturong, (*Naemorhedus baileyi*) Red Goral, the Himalayan Serow (*Capricornis sumatraensis thar*), the Golden Cat (*Catopuma temmincki*), and the Marbled Cat (*Pardofelis marmorata*).



Rufous Necked Hornbill



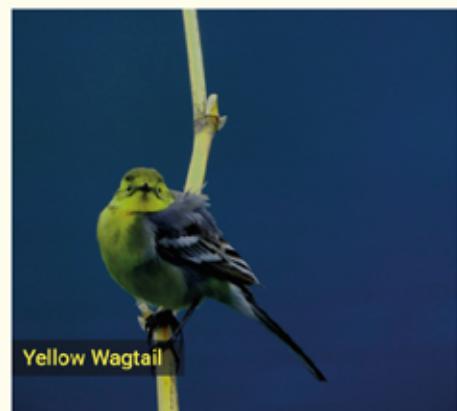
Yellow Throated marten

The forest also consists of 155 species of Butterfly diversity, 105 species of birds like (*Aceros nipalensis*) Rufous Necked Hornbill, (*Buceros bicornis*) Great Hornbill, (*Rhyticeros undulatus*) Wreathed Hornbill, (*Anthracoceros albirostris*) Oriental pied Hornbill, (*Podiceps cristatus*) Great crested Grebe, (*Lophophorus sclateri*) Sclater's Monal, and (*Dicrurus paradiseus*) Racket Tailed Drongo.

Kamlang TR is also home to one of the critically endangered bird species *Ardea insignis*; White Bellied Heron. Some other endangered species consist of *Itaginis cruentus*; Blood Pheasant, *Tragopan temminckii*; Temminck's Tragopan, and *Polylectron bicalcaratum*; Grey Peacock Pheasant. To far, the Kamlang Tiger Reserve has been home to 15 different species of herpetofauna.



Thai Cat Snake



Yellow Wagtail

*Canarium resiniferum*, *Terminalia chebula*, *Gmelina arborea*, and *Amoora wallichii* are the most common trees found in the tiger reserve. *Sappria Himalayan* and *Paris polyfyra* are two endemic and endangered flower species found in the tiger reserve. To comprehend and describe the floral diversity of Kamlang TR, extensive and detailed scientific investigations are required.

Also recently a team of researchers has discovered a new species of non- venomous snake in named *Pareas kaduri*. It was discovered in the thick evergreen forests of the Kamlang Tiger Reserve in Arunachal Pradesh during a field expedition undertaken by the researchers in July 2019. The new species was named after National Geographic photographer and wildlife filmmaker Sandesh Kadur to recognize his contribution towards conservation of biodiversity of the Himalayas.



by the BSI, which was accompanied by examination of herbarium samples. It was previously only mentioned without indicating the type in the original article from Kachin Hill, Myanmar (Burma).

So far, the tiger reserve has reported 49 orchid species, with two species belonging to two genera and the remaining 47 species belonging to 23 genera. The two ground orchids are members of the Neottioideae family, while the epiphytes include 28 Sympodial species from 10 genera and 19 Monopodial species from 13 genera.

The Kamlang Tiger Reserve still has a lot of undiscovered scientific wonders. The only method to document them would be to do thorough research. Also, severe undulating terrains and massive gorges make it difficult to access the locations, which is both beneficial and hindering in some ways. Because of the tough terrain, even incidences of poaching or hunting are uncommon. We rarely hear about such news, and we only hear about it seasonally. Yes, working in Kamlang is difficult since the foliage is so dense that it is difficult to see any species. But, in such a forest, if you spend enough time making discrete observations, you might see something you've never seen before.



to it. So this is another place where the pristine Glaw Lake is still protected, and many people are captivated by its beauty.

The lake is currently understudied, but a slew of new researches are on the way that will provide critical data and assist wildlife and residents.

It will be really difficult to put Kamlang Tiger Reserve into few words. To understand how Kamlang Tiger Reserve heals, one must come here and spend the time necessary.

### Text & Photographs by



**Aditya Das**

Biologist

Kamlang Tiger Reserve & Wildlife Sanctuary  
Wakro, Arunachal Pradesh, 792102

Another recent discovery of a new species of geckos of the genus *Cyrtodactylus* Gray, 1827 was done from Kamlang Tiger Reserve by a team of NCBS on 2021.

In 2015, a new plant species was discovered in Kamlang TR for the first time, making it India's first record. One plant gathered during this survey was identified as *Impatiens toppinii* Dunn, which was discovered for the first time in India, after critical analysis and subsequent literature review



The Mishmi people play an important role in animal conservation. They worship their invisible nature deities for their happiness and wealth. They also feel that certain animals, such as the Hoolock Gibbon, are taboo in their culture and will not approach it. Likewise, they have a few additional customs that the rest of the world is unaware of. Glaw Lake is the most important to them since they worship it as their deity and make offerings

The Mishmi people play an important role in animal conservation. They worship their invisible nature deities for their happiness and wealth. They also feel that certain animals, such as the Hoolock Gibbon, are taboo in their culture and will not approach it. Likewise, they have a few additional customs that the rest of the world is unaware of. Glaw Lake is the most important to them since they worship it as their deity and make offerings

# SHOWCASE



Photograph by-  
**Pijush Chakraborty**



## **Nauradehi WLS – An unexplored haven of Madhya Pradesh**

Nauradehi Wildlife Sanctuary lying within an area of 1200 sq km is located at the trijunction of Sagar, Damoh and Narsingpur districts and is the single largest forest block of the area. Nauradehi Wildlife Sanctuary is a unique protected area wherein two major river basins of India are encompassed, namely the Ganges and the Narmada.



Three fourth of the Sanctuary falls within the Yamuna (Ganges) and one fourth of the Sanctuary falls within the Narmada basin. Hence in this protected area a unique biodiversity exists. There are 70 villages inside the protected area, despite this, the Nauradehi Sanctuary takes care of the biodiversity conservation, the cultural diversity and caters towards the water requirements of the entire area through its vast forested catchment and significantly aiding in the local economy.

The Sanctuary is being given a lot of attention, a lot of plans are in the offing. After visits from the higher officials, plans have been put in motion for a Wildlife Corridor which will lead upto the Rani Durgavati Sanctuary. There has been a relocation of a couple of tigers to Nauradehi, which has instigated the department to make the Sanctuary a National Park.

Another reason for the Corridor and the new status are the plans to bring in African Cheetahs. There are plans to bring in more than 20 cheetahs from Africa and Namibia. The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), a world-class organization of wildlife, the National Board of



Wildlife and the Supreme Court have given permission to bring these cheetahs to India. The State Forest Research Institute, Jabalpur Veterinary Medical College and a team of wildlife scientists have also studied the impact of climate change and biodiversity here and said that it is suitable for the relocation of cheetahs. Studies have found that Nauradehi Wildlife Sanctuary is very good for cheetahs. Preparations are being made for cheetahs in an area of 500 sq km in Nauradehi. Out of this, grassland has been prepared in an area of 400 sq km.



This will be quite a major feather in the cap for the Sanctuary. Movements for these predators will become easy and they will also have the space required for them to hunt. Due to the rich and varied biodiversity of this Sanctuary, there is a large and sufficient prey base for predators.

However due to the Covid pandemic, all these plans have had to be halted. With the pandemic rules changing, the plans will now be expedited. A Wildlife Corridor has been mentioned being planned between Nauradehi Wildlife Sanctuary and Rani

Durgavati Sanctuary. By connecting these two sanctuaries, it becomes eligible to be named a National Park.

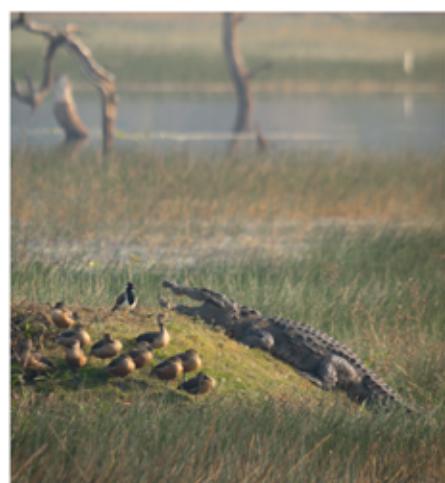
There are a large number of villages within the Sanctuary which has created issues of illegal farming, using forest land for agriculture, keeping cattle in the forest. The plans for resettling the villagers to a more safe area have started. Few villages have been resettled, and the others will also be moved in due course.

Initially 2 tigers were relocated to Nauradehi Sanctuary in 2019, today there are 5 tigers. There have been indications of tigers moving between Panna National Park and Nauradehi Sanctuary. This is a good sign, indicating that the Sanctuary is an acceptable place for tigers to stay. There are also a decent number of leopards in the sanctuary. Efforts for their conservation have been initiated.



Indian Wolf

Indian wolf is the keystone species of Nauradehi Wildlife Sanctuary. Other carnivores here include: Bengal tiger, Indian leopard, striped hyena, wild dog (Dhole), Bengal fox, Muggar crocodile, golden jackal, and bears. The tiger and the leopards are conspicuous by their absence though infrequent evidences are met with. Recently a tigress was found dead due to old age. Other fauna often seen is smooth Indian otter, sloth bear and Indian grey mongoose. Herbivores living here include: Four-horned antelope (Chousingha), nilgai (blue bull), chinkara (Indian gazelle), sambar deer, blackbuck antelope, barking deer, grey langur, rhesus macaque, chital (spotted deer) and wild boar.



Due to presence of perennial water sources including several rivers and Cheola lake, there are a great number of birds in the protected area. Bird groups found there include: eagles, vultures, storks, cranes, egrets, lapwings, kites, owls, kingfishers, quails and doves.

At least 150 bird species can be seen in Nauradehi. Some of the birds are King vulture, Egyptian vulture, White-rumped vulture, long-billed vulture, lesser adjutant stork, Painted stork, Open-billed stork, Spotted owl, Barred jungle owl, Black-winged kite, Indian pond heron, Heron, Green sandpiper, Indian pied myna, Common myna, Wood sandpiper, Red-wattled lapwing, Yellow wagtail, Purple sunbird, White-breasted Kingfisher, Stork-billed Kingfisher, Black drongo, Indian robin, long-tailed shrike, Black ibis, Rock pigeon,

Indian peafowl, Grey francolin, Jungle babbler, Golden oriole, Spotted dove, Indian roller, Magpie, Paddyfield pipit, Crested serpent eagle, Jungle crow, Asian green bee-eater, Honey buzzard, Changeable hawk eagle, Shikra, Paradise flycatcher, Verditer flycatcher, Black naped monarch, Common woodshrike, Plum headed parakeet, Rose ringed parakeet and greater coucal. The spotted grey creeper, a rare bird is also found here.



During winter season the sanctuary serves as the seasonal home for migratory birds, including the sarus crane. Wildlife Tourism is very big in Madhya Pradesh, the state is filled with excellent National Parks and Tiger Reserves. There is a long forest area, spread over 27 sqkm between Rani Durgavati Sanctuary and Nauradehi Sanctuary of Dameh. The border of Nauradehi is a dense forest area of more than 60 km from Jhapan, Jhale to Tejgarh, Sangrampur, Singargarh. Sangrampur and Singargarh come under the Rani Durgavati Sanctuary. The historical fort of Rani Durgavati is in Singargarh, Nidan. Jharna is the center of attraction. Through this corridor, there is a plan to make Rani Durgavati the satellite sanctuary of Nauradehi. Due to this its area will also increase by about 10 times.

There is a lot of potential for Indian and Foreign tourists to visit many places related to wildlife in Madhya Pradesh within a certain radius. Out of the various forest sanctuaries in the state, Kanha, Bandhavgarh, Pench, Panna and Nauradehi are prominent. Along with these, Bhedaghat, Khajuraha, Panchmarhi, Orchha of Jabalpur can also be visited. Nauradehi to Panna via Chhatarpur-Khajurahae, Panna to Bandhavgarh via Manpur, Bandhavgarh to Kanha via Umaria-Shahpura, Kanha to Panch via Seoni, Pench to Bhedaghat via Seoni, Bhedaghat to Pachmarhi via Pipariya can be reached. All these major tourist places are within a radius of 300 km from Jabalpur.



**Text by :**  
**Shrikant Tripathi**

**Photographs by :**  
**Himanshu Yadav**

# SHOWCASE



Photographs by-  
**Himanshu Yadav**



## Wonder Extraordinaire of Nature - The White Tiger

A sight to behold - the most amazing beauty of nature- The white tiger A progeny of Royal Bengal Tiger that has got the amazing white hue because of a gene mutation. It is not a different species but a genuine Indian Tiger. Zoological name- *Panthera tigris - tigris*. Both the white and the yellow tigers come from the same stock but with a hereditary chromosomal change. the habit and the habitat are the same, the life cycle is the same. Normal age from 16 to 20 years.

### Form Akbarnama

The oldest recorded information about White Tiger dates back to 1561. There is a painting in second part of "Akbarnama" which describes the ruling era from 1560 to 1578. The painting depicting the scene of hunting by Akbar shows two white tigers in it. Maharaja Ramchandra of Badhavgarh was contemporary of Akbar. Tansen, the King of Music and the humorist Birbal, both joined Akbar's court from Bandhavgarh.

It is Considered that during those days White Tigers were common in and around the forests of Bandhavgarh, thus was Akbar informer.

### There was another White Tiger

There was another White Tiger prior to Mohan, the forefather of all the White Tigers in the world, which lived in Govindgarh palace for five years. It was captured in December 1915 from the forests of Sohagpur estate (now in Shahdol) by Yuvraj Gulab Singh of Rewa State. Its picture and details were sent to the Journal of Bombay Natural History Society by Mr. Janki Prasad, the then Home Secretary of Baghelkhand Agency through Capt. Evans Garden. This first captive tiger of the world died in 1920. Its body was stuffed and presented to the George V of the England by Maharaja Vyankatraman Singh.



## There was another White Tiger

There is a village "Deva" 115 km away from Rewa in dense forests of Sidhi District (then under Dubri Game Sanctuary).

It was 27th May of 1951, Maharaja Martand Singh of Rewa had organized a royal hunting camp for his guest Ajit Singh, the King of Jodhpur. The search for tigers started. The banks of river Rani-ki-Kothi were famous for roars of tigers. The hunt began. News was received in the evening. A Tigress with three cubs in roaming in the nearby forests and one of the cubs in white.



## Pankhora, the Village of Mohan

One tigress with three cubs, the hunting team was overjoyed. The team advanced towards Bargadi forest area near Pankhora village about 7 km away from Deva. The Machans were put on trees on the banks of Kormar River.

The bait was tied for tigers. the hunt started. The whole village was thrilled. At last one tigress and two cubs were gunned down by the royal hunters in this hunting spree which started on 27th May 1951. But the white cub escaped. Now search started.....Surrounded by the beautiful & dense forests & perennial rivers & seasonal streams Pankhora village (in Vastua Range) can be called the village of Mohan.

## Mohan's Den

After a successful completion of tiger hunting expedition on 27th May 1951, the team was after the white tiger cub which had escaped. The searching team started the search of the white tiger cub hidden somewhere along the Kormar River in Bargadi forests. Hearing the searching team approaching white cub entered into one of the caves between the rocks along the bank of river. Later the hunting team captured him in a cage. This white cub so captured in a cage became the progenitor of all the White Tigers in the world. He was named "Mohan".



## Habitat of Mohan

The huge habitat of Mohan, the Great Grandfather of White Tigers. is known as Sanjay Tiger Reserve these days. The actual habitat of Mohan is Vastua Range (then Madwas) on Sidhi-Shahdol Road, 10 km from Majhauli. Vastua is also the northern gateway to Sanjay Dubri Tiger Reserve. The Tiger Reserve came into existence in 1989. The area of 1440 Sq.km was reduced to 466.657 sq.km due to formation of Chhattisgarh State in the year 2000. Will the tigers roar once again in this habitat, full of dense evergreen forests, perennial rivers, dens and caves.?

## Tiger in People's hearts

There are many villages in the forests of Mohan's habitat in Vastua Range, where wall paintings show divine love and respect towards wild animals. Wildlife is part of the family & are deified and not treated as enemies in the ancient culture of forest dwellers. "Baghaut" (Tiger God) and "Bhainsa Sur" (Buffalo/Bison God) are still worshipped in villages of Vindhya Region situated in forests. Nature is worshipped like God in folk traditions of forest dwellers.

## Parsali - An old hunting place

It is a magnificent guest house constructed in 1982-85 on the bank of Banas River. It was a favourite hunting place of the then rulers on Sidhi-Shahdol Road 10 km from Majhauli. The British used to come here for tiger hunting. Maharaja Raghuraj Singh had also constructed a "Shikar Kothi" (Hunting Villa)

here. It is said that British Officers hunted more than two dozen Tigers in the forests of Rewa White Tigers.

### **Wooden Bungalow of Naidhiya Shikarganj**

This wooden Bungalow was constructed by Maharaj Vishvanath Singh in 1850 a little away from parsa-li. Parties and feasts used to be organized for rulers and royal hunters in this magnificent bungalow made of teak wood. Perennial Banas River flows in the east of this now abandoned bungalow. As per the information gathered by wildlife experts 17 White Tigers were hunted in forests of Rewa State before capturing of Mohan.

### **Shikar Kothi of Chhuhiya**

On Rewa - Sidhi Road about 12 km from Govindgarh on Chhuhiya Hill this beautiful Kothi (Villa) made of squared stones was constructed by Maharaja Vyankatraman Singh in 1918. There is Baghwar village situated down below this Kothi on the foothills. As is clear from the name a huge population of tigers used to roam here. One can have a panoramic view of the forests of Sidhi District. This Kothi is the symbol of modern hunting era too. Hunters used to watch the Tigers through binoculars from this place. According to the information recorded in the history books Raghuraj Singh hunted 39 tigers, Vyankatraman Singh 158, Gulab Singh 619 and the last ruler of Rewa Martand Singh had hunted 85 tigers.

### **Govindgah Palace**

Construction of beautiful and huge Govindgarh water Tank was completed in 1855. A beautiful palace of Rajasthani Style of architecture was completed on the bank of this tank in 1882. This palace used to be summer capital of Rema State. This was an important tourist destination and pilgrimage of its time due to dense mango trees and temples. Martand Singh was born there. Later on White Tiger Mohan was kept in an enclosure in this palace which again was the centre of attraction in seventies for the tourists from all over the world.



### **Tiger Palace - Mohan's Enclosure**

Northern gate of Govindgarh Palace. It is the enclosure of Mohan. After capturing from Bargadi forests of Sidhi District on 27th May 1951 he was kept in the premises. Mohan jumped and escaped from this place after two days. The employees of Hunting Department of Maharaja Martand Singh Snared him again from the forests of Mand (where the Tiger safari is). Mohan was again was kept in the enclosure in the premises, where he lived his whole life. The progeny of White Tigers was born, brought up and spread all over the world in this very place.



## Great Grandfather of White Tigers

Mohan, Fascinating the wildlife lovers from all over the world, stayed here. This enclosure also became the laboratory of the propagation of White Tigers. The historical event took place on 30th October 1958, when 4 White Tiger Cubs were born to Mohan and Radha. Later on, Radha gave birth to thirteen white and nine normal coloured tiger cubs. He became father of 34 cubs in 19 years out of which 21 were white. Mohan - Radha and their off springs produced 114 white and 56 normal tigers which is a world record. Brought up in royal atmosphere Mohan Kept on alluring and fascinating the tourists of world.

And at last on 18 December 1969 he died leaving behind many interesting legends, tales and history of origin of white tiger.....

## Good Bye

The demise of Mohan, was grieved not only by people of Rewa - Govindgarh but it brought tears to the eyes of wildlife lovers to the world. State mourning was declared in Rewa. His dead body was wrapped in flag of Bandhavgarh (Rewa State). Officers and workers joined the funeral procession and offered floral tributes. Huge procession with flower laden Arthi (coffin) was taken out. Royal guards saluted. Mourning meetings were organized at many places. He was cremated with chanting of Vedic Mantras. No wild animal in the history has ever got such respect and regard in its life or after death..... Mohan earned a very special place of honour for Rewa, Vindhya and Madhya Pradesh in the world which is still alive in the remembrances and shall be Good bye Mohan.

## In Dreams, Thoughts and Books

Immortal in the wildlife history of world Mohan's head was stuffed and mounted as a trophy. Rewa Maharaja wrote a 'Sanad' for Mohan. Donations were given to the orphanages. Folk songs and poems were written on Mohan who had been an integrate part of lives. Many interesting legends, tales and stories are still told. Mohan was not a mere wild animal: he was an integral part of folk life of the area. He was a bridge of relation with nature, human and wildlife connecting with love and eternal integration Mohan is present in dreams, thoughts and books and the roar of his heirs have history of his honour.



## Foster of Mohan

In the history of wildlife the last king of Rewa state Maharaj Martand Singh and the white Tiger are complimentary to each other. He is remembered all over the world as a great saviour of white tigers. It was due to the strong will-power of Maharaj Martand Singh that resulted not only conservation of Mohan in such difficult conditions but also breeding of white tigers in a scientific manner and creation of white tiger world. It is a coincidence that in which palace Maharaj Martand Singh was born on 15th March 1923, bringing up and conservation of Mohan was also done in the same palace. Mohan was darling of him like his son. Mohan was the only reason of change of his attitude towards hunting and converting him into conservationist.

Mr. Singh was Member of Parliament of 3 terms during 1971 to 1985. He breathed his last on 20th November 1995. Whenever somebody in the world talk about white tiger conservation and breeding, Maharaj Martand Singh and Mohan will always be the centre of discussion.

## Mohan's Friend-Pulwa Bairiya

He is Pulwa Bairiya, friend of Mohan, Maharaj Martand Singh chose him for taking care of Mohan within



one week of Mohan's arrival in Tiger Palace. Mohan got attached soon with simple and easygoing pulwa. Both developed a sign language to communicate and many a time they both came face to face in enclosure but the relation of mutual understanding weal on. Pulwa acted as a messenger also between Mohan and Maharaj. Looking to his tiger Keeping skills he was sent to National Zoological Park, New Delhi with the white tigress Sukeshi in 1973. He was awarded the Best Zoo Keeper's prize thrice, He returned back to his home town Govindgarh after his retirement in 2003. Born in 1943, Pulwa Bairiya is living legend and witness to the long separation and home coming of white tigers of Rewa.

### **White Tiger on Postal stamp**

Finding a place on postal stamp is prestigious. Post and Telegraph Department, Govt of India issued a postal stamp on white tiger of Rewa in 1987. The important things is that this stamp was issued by the then central minister of post and Telegraph Department, Govt of India in a grand function organized in Rewa. Many documentaries have been made, books written and research projects done in the world on the white tiger. Even today white tiger fascinates most the visitors of Zoos in India and other countries.



### **Virat and Chameli**

The last tiger couple in Govindgarh Palace was Virat and Chemeli. Both were the offsprings of Mohan and white Tigress Sukeshi. Chameli was born on 6th September 1967 where as Virat was born on 17th November 1968. Sukeshi was sent to National Zoological park, New Delhi after the death of Mohan. No cubs were born of Virat and Chameli. At last occupant white tiger of Govindgarh, was very distressful. He was paralysed and died on 8th July 1976 after a long ailment. With the death of Virat ended the 25 year old white tiger breeding movement. During the Journey from Mohan to Virat and even after the family of white tigers in India and abroad went on increasing but the people in Vindhya Region waited for a white Tiger, descendent of their dear Mohan.

### **New Delhi Home**

White Tiger was sent to Delhi in 1963 according to an agreement between Maharaj of Rewa and Govt. of India. Two white Tiger cubs Raja and Rani, born of Mohan and Sukeshi, reached National Zoological park, New Delhi on 25th June 1963. A grand welcome function was organised for Raja and Rani on 2nd July in which Finance Minister, Mr. Morarji Desai and Agriculture Minister of state, Mr. Ram Subhag Singh were present. Huge number of tourists and wildlife lovers poured in to watch this white tiger couple, a special gift of nature. For scientists the National Zoological Park, New Delhi became a laboratory of breeding tigers in due course of time. Here Raja remained centre of attraction for visitors up to 19th August 1977 and Rani up to 26th October 1977.

### **Bagh Moshay in Kolkata**

A tourism revolution started with the roar of white tigers in Zoos. Zoo Managements try to procure white tigers. Then why not Kolkata? Alipur Zoo of Kolkata purchased two white tiger cubs Neeladri and Himadri from Rewa Maharaj. These two roared in the Zoo on 9th August 1963. Alipur Zoo also purchased a normal coloured tigress Malini, which was being reared in Rewa and was the property of Govt. of India. Malini and Neeladri produced 14 tiger cubs out of which 7 were white. Out of those offsprings one white female Malini was given a chance to be with Himadri and they produced 20 white cubs.

in the period of five years. Like Delhi, the progeny of white tigers started here also.

### **In Nandan Kanan**

How could have Nandan Kanan National Park of Bhubaneswar, Odisha been free from the glory and attraction of white tigers?

Diana, the white tigress and an offspring of Mohan, who was in Delhi Zoo, was sent to Nandan Kanan in 1979. She got a new name shubhra here. She was paired with the locally born normal tiger pradeep. This couple gave birth to four cubs in two litters. One of them was white female. She was named Ashwini. Once again in 1980 shubhra was mated with Dewvrat, an adult born of normal coloured pair Deepak and Ganga. Shubhra Proved lucky for Nandan Kanan. Shubhra produced 9 white cubs in three litters from 1983 to 1987. Nandan Kanan is famous in the world for its white tigers.

### **Mysore via Nandan Kanan**

White Tiger reached here via Nandan Kanan. Ganga's Sister Thara was sent to shree cham Rajendra Zoo of Mysore in 1972.

Thara was mated with a normal coloured tiger Krishna, which was purchased from Oriental circus in 1968. Thare gave birth to 24 normal coloured cubs in 9 litters from 1976 to 1984. Born in its third litter Arun and anita were kept together when became adults, the couple gave birth to 15 cubs in five litters. Born in third litter on 29th October 1984 were white female cub priydarshini and a normal coloured male cub Darshan. Definitely Arun and Anita had got hereditary white genes from their Grandmother Thara. That's how in Mysore white tiger dynasty Started.

### **Call from England : Bristol Zoo**

World was fascinated by white Tiger Mohan and its progeny.

Developed countries were head over heels for white Tiger. The Manager of Bristol Zoo came over to Rewa and met Maharaj Martand singh. It was 1962 Born from Mohan's companion female white tigress Radha on 24th March 1962, male champak and female Chameli were settled to be bought. Champak reached Bristol Zoo in England on 22nd April 1963 and Chameli reached after two months. They produced 14 white tigers in three litters. But many cubs died at an early age. Another male white tiger Roop was brought to Bristol from delhi. He was mated with sumati, daughter of champak and chameli and they gave birth to 7 white tigers in two litters and took forward the progeny of Mohan of Govindgarh in England.

### **Mohini Fascinated America**

Mohini, which was in Govindgarh with three brother and sisters, Raja, Rani and Sukeshi, Reached Washington Zoo on 5th December 1960. Radio Corporation of America had purchased it as gift to American children for 10 thousand dollars from Rewa Maharaja Martand Singh. President Dwight D. Eisenhower welcomed Mohini on the lawns of White House.

Samson, another Mohan's descendent, was purchased from Ahmedabad National Zoological Park to be paired with Mohini.

Pairing of these two gave birth to one white and three normal coloured cubs in 1964. This white tiger tradition was kept alive by samson's son Raman. Mohini was paired with its offsprings too. White Tiger Family born here was sent to Cincinnati and other Zoos of America.

### **In Bhopal : Better Late than Never**

By the decade of seventies the descendants of Mohan were everywhere in the Zoos of the Country but it took 37 years White Tiger to come to Van Vihar Zoo. Bhopal: the capital of our state. But, better late than never. White tiger Rustam came to Van Vihar, Bhopal on 18th December 1988, at the age of one year and three months. Rustam was ferocious type. He was left to pair with tigress lata. But the ferocious

Rustum killed Lata. After that white tigress Rini Was brouth from Nandan kanan in March 1995. Rini

when paired with normal tiger Ramu, produced cubs. Two years ago tigress Riddhi was brought from Indore Zoo. Last year on 23rd March 2014 white Tigress Pattu was brought to Van Vihar from Delhi Zoo. Same Pattu is the pride of Mukundpur White Tiger Safari.....This is historical coming of Mohan's descendent.....after 40 years separation.....

### **The Success Story**

The task of rehabilitating the wild animals is the sensitive issue and becomes more sensitive when it is the case of rehabilitating, rarest of the rare, white tigers. the history of White Tiger originates from Vindhya. The first White Tiger was captured on 27th May 1951, and was named 'Mohan'. The last White Tiger 'Virat' Took his last breath on 8th July 1976 in Bagh Mahal (Tiger Palace), Govindgarh. His companion 'Chameli' was sent to New Delhi. The White Tigers, who made Rewa and Vindhya famous all over the world, became history in their own motherland.

Shri Rajendra Shukla decided to make this history a reality again. The good intentions are rewarded by God, is the saying. When Shri Shivraj Singh Chauhan became the Chief Minister of M.P., he entrusted the portfolios of Forests & Biodiversity, and Minerals & Mining Departments to Shri Shukla. Shri Shukla, as Minister of Forests & Biodiversity, took two major missions in his hand, First- Rehabilitation of White Tigers to their prime habitat in Vindhya; and Second - Reintroduction of Tiger in Panna National Park, which had gone tiger less panna National Park made history soon but return of White Tigers to Vindhya was more challenging task; because the establishing of a brand new Zoo was surface. A team of wildlife specialists started planning. Step by step work materialised in laying of foundation stone of Mukundpur White Tiger Safari cum Zoo by the then Forest Minister of the State, Shri Shivraj Singh Chauhan, Chief Minister of State patronized the mission and the necessary permissions from State and Union Governments were accorded timely. It is so that a world class Zoo cum Rescue Centre along with White Tiger Safari took shape in Mand Forest at Mukundpur of Satna District.

### **Herculean Task of Bringing Back the Glory**

Embracing the history of Wildlife Conservation, White Tigers had always been the part of thoughts, books, stories and local sayings for last 40 years in Vindhya area, which gave world the unique gift, the White Tigers. The saying goes that the efforts combined with honesty and integrity, one day or the other, are awarded with success. The herculean efforts of Shri Rajendra Shukla, the popular leader of Rewa and Minister of M.P. Government, bore fruits on 8th November 2015, when he waved the green flag for departure of White Tigers 'Vindhya' to reach Mukundpur. The Caravan Started towards the original crowd gathered to greet 'Vindhya' here and many of them went along up to Mukundpur.

Shri Shukla, himself was present to offer sentimental welcome to the White Tigress at the gates of Mukundpur white Tiger Safari, along with a huge gathering of people's representatives, wildlife lovers and local residents. The glory of Vindhya had once again returned. Shri Rajendra Shukla, when Forest Minister of the State, initiated the process of return of White Tigers to Vindhya was accomplished after six and a half years.

### **Dear Vindhya**

In Bagh Mahal of Govindgarh, the story which had come to a halt after Chameli and Virat, White Tigress Pattu has again started it after 40 years with White Tiger Safari Mukundpur.

Pattu is offspring of Lakshman and Yamuna of Mohan's clan. She was born at Delhi Zoo on 27th July 2007. Van Vihar Zoo, Bhopal and then now Mukundpur White Tiger

Safari.....In the Background of memories of.....Mohan.....Chameli....Virat.....new journey of White Tigers Starts with darling Vindhya.

### **White Tigers in Country and the World**

Captured in Bargarhi forests of Sidhi District and brought up in Govindgarh of Rewa, Mohan's descendants with their divine beauty are alluring everybody all over the world. There are about 100 White Tigers in Indian Zoos and almost the same are in the Zoos abroad. Once roaming free in natural habitat these white tigers are now confined to Zoos. Main Indian Zoos having White Tigers are: Lucknow Zoo;

Alipur Zoo, Kolkata; Rajiv Gandhi Zoo, Bhubneshwar; Shri Vyankateshwara Zoo, Thirupati; Aurangabad Municipal Zoo; Mahendra Chaudhary Zoo, Jaipur; Arignar Anna Zoo, Chennai; Bennargatta Zoo, Bangalore; Shri Cham Rajendra Zoo, Mysore; Van Vihar National Park, Bhopal; Gandhi Zoo, Gwalior; Kamla Nehru Zoo, Indore; Sanjay Gandhi National Zoo, Mumbai; Assam State Zoo, Guwahati; Sanjay Gandhi Botanical Garden, Patna; Maitri Bag Zoo, Bhilai; Kanan Pendari Zoo, Bilaspur; National Zoological Garden, New Delhi; Sakkarbag Zoo, Junagarh; Tata Steel Zoo, Jamshedpur.

### White Tiger - At a Glance

Scientific Name	: <i>Panthera tigris</i>
Habit-Habitat	: Like Normal Tigers
Size - Length	: Male 200-250cm, Female 180-200 cm
Weight	: Male 120-130 kg Female 70-80 kg
Adult Age	: 3-4 Years
Diet	: In Zoos, 8-10kg Buffalo meat Per day (6 days in a week)
Reproduction Period	: Whole year
Estrus Period	: 2-8 days
Copulating frequency	: 10-30 times in a day, 8-30 seconds period
Litter Size	: 1-6 (Normally 2-3 Cubs)
Pregnancy period	: 100-110 days
Weight of newborn	: 800-1400 Grams, Eyes Open in: 7-10 Days
Life Span	: 16-20 Years



### Why it is White Tiger

White Tigers Are not albinos. They are simply white like white deer, white peacock and White Sparrow. In albinos, there is no colour in iris of eyes too; they look red or pink due to blood on the cells. White tiger cannot be termed as albino due to its blue irises and dark or light brown stripes. It is the same species as the normal tiger. It means that the white tiger too is Royal Bengal Tiger. Genetic of White Tiger : In case of white Tigers, It has been established that when a normal yellow colored tiger is mated with a white tigress or vice versa, all their off spring are normal yellow colored. This indicates that yellow color is controlled by a dominant gene. In genetics this dominant character or yellow color is denoted as "Y" and white color which is recessive is indicated as "y". The off spring of yellow and white parents are known as heterogeneous "Yy" because they have two unlike genes, one is derived from the father and the other from the mother. If corresponding fenes are alike, the off springs are called homozygous yellow color (YY) or homozygous white color (yy). However, the normal colored homozygous (YY) offspring will be yellow colored because the yellow color is completely dominant over white.

Genetically speaking the different gene combination of an individual is expressed as its 'Genotype' and its physical appearance is expressed as its 'Phenotype'. Therefore the tiger has three genotypes for coat color, viz heterozygous yellow (Yy), Homozygous yellow (YY) and homozygous white (yy) and two phenotypes, namely, yellow and white.

### The World's first - White Tiger Safari

The White Tiger Safari has been establish between the streams of holy Beehar, perennial Murjua and Bhamra rivers in mixed dense Teak and Feronia forests of Mand Reserve situated in Mukundpur Forest Range of Satna Forest Division in Vindhya Region. The notified area of the dry deciduous forests of Mand Reserve is 643.71 hectares. Here, in an area of 100 Ha., Mukundpur Zoo has been established.

White Tiger Safari has been created in 25 Ha. leaving 75 Ha. for the main Zoo. Apart from Tiger Safari, 40 enclosures are being constructed in the Zoo to house 69 different species of wild animals. Glory and heritage of Vindhya, the White Tiger, is the main attraction of this Zoo. Three beautiful water tanks have been constructed for white tiger to play and relax. White Tiger Safari is the pride not of only Vindhya but of the whole State.



### **Stroll Down the Rajpath (Imperial Road)**

A history was created on 26 January 2016 with respect to the wildlife lovers. About two lakh spectators spellbound watched the tableau of Madhya Pradesh, in which White Tigers were playing joyfully, pass the podium at Rajpath. The guest of honour was Mr. Francois Hollande, President of France. The President of India, Shri Pranab Mukherjee and the Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi were also present. The whole atmosphere looked under hypnosis of white Tigers. Millions of spectators in India and abroad watched this splendour of Rajpath, directly and through TV.

Almost the same scene was at Red Parade Ground at Bhopal, The state Capital of M.P. and at the Divisional Head Quarters of Rewa and Shahdol Districts, on Republic Day celebration. In this way the glorious past of White Tigers and the story which started on 27th May 1951 with 'Mohan', was remembered. The Zoos all over the world today are inhabited with the descendants of Mohan, and Marching ahead the progeny of White Tigers. Let us say once again 'Long live Mohan'.

### **Text by**



### **Shri Sanjay Raikher**

Director, Maharaja Martand Singh  
Judeo White Tiger Safari & Zoo Mukundpur,  
Satna, Madhya Pradesh

**Photographs are taken from Internet**

# SHOWCASE



Photograph by-  
**Krishnendu Mukherjee**

# Meeting with a Starfish Thrower - an example of successful inclusion

A lot has happened in nature conservation and the conservation of species. The southern white rhinoceros and tiger populations are recovering. Many large and small organizations, as well as individuals, are involved in the process worldwide with great commitment. And yet the evolutionary biologist Matthias Glaubrecht speaks in his book "The End of Evolution" about the fact that the tiger is "functionally extinct". The species only exists in reservations and needs outside support to survive. Humans inhabit 77% of the land mass.

In Germany, the wolf is returning in some places. Not everyone is enthusiastic about it. Livestock owners in particular feel threatened. When I was hiking in the Alps last week, the highest German mountain range, I often found posters with the inscription: "There is only one thing possible: The alpine pastures for our cattle, the wilderness for the wolf". In this sentence, a common misunderstanding becomes clear to me: We - the human species - have forgotten that the alp is the wilderness! That we built our village, our city, our field in the wilderness based on the idea that we are "the crown of creation". We have given ourselves the right to own the wilderness and have forgotten how to live in it without special rights, as equals with other living beings.

Let us turn our gaze from majestic animals like the tiger to everyday life in Germany. It is not only the experts who notice that the number of insects is reducing drastically. We call on governments to do something, because extensive changes in laws are necessary to preserve biodiversity. Let the politicians and the big companies and global players finally change something!

But what about you and me? Well, what can I, as an individual, do? When I walk through my city - and I live in an area with many gardens - I see more and more "rock gardens" with paved areas, "perfect lawns" (not meadows!) on which the robotic lawnmower ensures that 10 hours a day not even a tiny blade of grass grows out of line (and not a single insect survives). German gardens should be tidy! If you have a messy garden with dead wood and wild plants like me, you have to get used to people giving you strange looks. I like to bear these looks. But what can I do about deforestation, straightening of rivers, draining of moors, etc.? I can change my view and my attitude! In desperate moments, I like to remember the "Starfish Story", retold here based on the original story by Loren Eiseley:

*"One day a man was walking along the beach when he noticed a boy picking something up and gently throwing it into the ocean. Approaching the boy, he asked, "What are you doing?" The youth replied, "Throwing starfish back into the ocean. The surf is up and the tide is going out. If I don't throw them back, they'll die." "Son," the man said, "don't you realize there are miles and miles of beach and hundreds of starfish? You can't make a difference!"*

*After listening politely, the boy bent down, picked up another starfish, and threw it back into the surf. Then, smiling at the man, he said..." I made a difference for that one."*

Today I'd like to talk about one such "starfish thrower". I met Collin through an internet group about Autism Spectrum Disorder and found his Facebook page, where he talks about his life with autism and his conservation activities. Collin has had a very severe autism spectrum disorder since early childhood, as well as ADHD. He suffers from anxieties and an auditory perception and processing disorder. That's why he has great problems dealing with people. Meeting strangers, unfamiliar situations, loud noises and unfamiliar new places are extremely taxing and stress him a lot. What exactly is an "auditory perception disorder"? It is a neurodevelopmental disorder affecting the way the brain processes auditory information. This means that every sound that the ear takes in is registered by the brain with the same intensity and without any prioritization often leading to sensory overload. While we can filter



Collin

out sounds that are unimportant for us, Collin cannot. However, our brain filters according to its own criteria and does not always correctly evaluate what is supposedly important or unimportant, leaving us open to bias.

In addition, like many people on the autism spectrum, Collin needs firm and clear structures in his day to day life. The smallest deviations, such as a bus arriving too early or too late, a supervisor who has become ill or an overload with sensory impressions, repeatedly lead to a mental overload often followed by meltdowns. He is then unresponsive for hours or even days and unable to coordinate his daily life. Therefore, Collin also needs intensive support and supervision in order to cope with the demands of life. What is a report about someone like Collin doing in a magazine like "Wild Untamed"? What can he tell us or show us? He, who in our perfect society, cannot feel comfortable and secure, perhaps not even survive, without outside help? He who does not meet the demands of the society's definition of the "normal"? Perhaps that is exactly what connects him to the tiger! Collin shows us that our society has to change, that everyone has to contribute a part so that people like him, the tiger and also the insects can survive in it. What we diagnose as problems are actually great opportunities.



Collin at his garden

Having grown up in a small town, Collin has always dreamed of living with and in nature. His personal restrictions and societal expectations however made this almost impossible. So he moved from one place to another, was looked after in different homes and clinics and moved into the Moorhof in September 2017. At this special place he could now finally settle down and find ways to implement what he always wanted. "I'm living my dream instead of dreaming my life," says Collin. The Moorhof - a facility of the Evangelical Foundation Alsterdorf Assistenz (Real Estate) - has been working with the local branch of the German Nature ..

Nothing escapes his ears and eyes. Nothing is classified as unimportant from the outset. For him everything is a part of a larger context. He has been diagnosed by doctors to have the intelligence age of 12 years and he describes himself as "forever young" (don't we all want that?), and he perhaps exactly fulfills Jesus' criterion of "unless you turn and become like children..." And yet, through his special thought structures and coping strategies, he can teach us so much about his view of the world and how everything is interconnected.

It took 6 months of intensive preparation with Collin and his supervisor to enable me to visit him on the Moorhof and right up till the end it was unclear whether he would meet with me and speak to me. Finally in the summer of 2019 we spent 2 intensive days in the moors, heathers and meadows and were able to learn from each other.



Collin is working at garden

Conservation Union (NABU) for 6 years and has started a wide variety of nature conservation projects. Collin was classified as someone who is "unable to learn" and, due to his impairments, was unable to participate in a group. Thanks to the intensive support provided by the Moorhof employees - in particular his supervisor Rüdiger Schmiedeler, who is involved in nature conservation - he has now acquired skills and knowledge about nature and nature conservation, which he uses and passes on. What drives someone like Collin to deal with all his difficulties and to get involved with nature, when he has enough problems to cope with in his own life? Perhaps a song by a friend of mine, who is a musician, describes it quite appropriately. In one of her latest songs from the album "Life is not Black and White", Judy Bailey says:

"Where are your roots at? Gotta dig a little, check the past out, free it up a little. Sometimes it can change everything, knowing where you come from. Where are your shoes at? Gotta grow a little, spread yourself out, live it up a little. Sometimes it can change everything, knowing where you come from."

And Collin answers this question for himself as follows: "I am nature, nature is me. We are nature, nature is us. There is no 'Why to conserve?' because we are one". Having grown up with society telling him, "You can't do anything", "You can't accomplish anything", Collin now experiences self-realization and self-efficacy. His supposed limitations become the driving force for change. He sees the details, the insects that we overlook. His sensitivity to noise led to the use of a hand lawn mower, which allows insects, toads and frogs to survive. Trimming hedges by hand has the same effect. His detailed view allows new projects for nature conservation to emerge. His meticulous observations and records of flora and fauna provide proof of the success of the projects in terms of its goal of increasing biodiversity. Collin is contagiously convincing, and people around him are rethinking the way they do things. If in the past nature had to be clean and tidy for many, now wildness can arise and we can experience how nature shapes itself. With the support of the institution responsible for the facility, a space was created for things to grow and thrive that primarily provide for creatures of the animal kingdom, a 'free field'. The term "pest" is redefined and the future butterfly is seen in the caterpillar that eats the kohlrabi leaf. The caterpillar eats just the leaves and does not eat the tuber that will be our meal. Collin says, "We humans are often pests for nature too, we just aren't called that! The animals cannot go to the supermarket and we have to understand that we are all connected!".

Collin often experiences excruciating pain when spoken to by strangers. Living in and dealing with nature gives him routines and structure, and enables him to meet other people. What seemed impossible in the past, is now possible for Collin. He can now experience the collaboration with the qualified biologist Klaus as an enrichment and broadening of knowledge and with his notes on plants, insects, birds etc. he makes his contribution to the work of NABU. His eye for detail and his interest in photography create wonderful images of flora and fauna (one of which is also hanging in the Sunrise Nature Model School of the Saving Tiger Society in Nafarganj, India). The pictures are used to create postcards and photo books, which are intended to bring people closer to the diversity and perfection of nature.

In Germany people with disabilities often find employment in handicraft workshops. And in the past, Collin has not been able to pursue a job for a longer period of time. Through his nature conservation



projects, he now receives daily funding, the framework conditions of which can be tailored to his needs. With the help of his daily plans, he learns the routines and structures necessary for him and can work independently. At the same time, the nature around him calms him down. "I experience that I am rich in heart and I feel gratitude for what I can experience and achieve.", he says.

The project not only allowed Collin to be integrated, but it also managed to fascinate and inspire outsiders and to involve them in the projects. There is now a "fruitful" collaboration with the Wulksfelde nursery in the truest sense of the word. The moor farm receives plants and seeds from the nursery for the 'free field'. Native species now thrive there, blooming from spring to autumn and providing a food source for the insects. The seeds of the wildflowers are collected, packaged and shipped by Collin. The proceeds then flow back into the projects, into educational measures or the purchase of equipment such as microscopes with monitors or specialist literature. A small pond has been created on Collins terrace, in which the moor frog and newt feel at home. In the barn opposite the house, the bats have their quarters and the barn owl is raising its young.



### **Photographs are taken by Collin**

A major project is the preservation of the moor in the immediate vicinity of the facility. The birch trees growing there are draining the moor. With great effort, these are cleared and the original biotope is restored. The trunks of the birch trees are used to make fences and furniture, as well as piles of dead wood for insects. The wren feels at home in the remaining hedges made of smaller branches. The former fire extinguishing pond has been turned into a wet biotope project, the dead wood remains in the adjacent forest and offers insects a place to live. And if you look attentively, you can watch a starling drive away a woodpecker that is encroaching on his recently finished nest. And maybe all this will convince others to work together with the project. The organization "EntrümpelnmitHerz" regularly donates necessary gardening tools from household liquidations and supports the establishment of a toolshed which Collin can use. When Collin is out and about in nature, his eyes do not miss even the smallest dead insect. They are collected, prepared and are put on display for the public. Not all people

are well informed about ecological issues, and people with disabilities are often more sensitive to re. Displays, planned tours about wild herbs and their uses and lectures, for example about the barn owl, serve to impart knowledge to the population on the one hand and to integrate people with disabilities on the other. The resulting refuge increasingly serves the other residents of the facility and perhaps soon even the general public can profit through mindfulness courses and nature therapy sessions. Much has already been achieved, much more is planned.

Nature has achieved what we as a society have not been able to do: to give someone like Collin the framework conditions that he needs to feel safe and comfortable, to feel accepted with his possibilities and limits. And Collin shows us every day that you can live up to your responsibility even with major problems and limitations. As Collin says, "Don't think you can't achieve anything on your own. If many make their individual contributions in many places, we can together have a greater impact!"

So let us realise that the separation of wilderness and civilization is one that is artificially created by us, out of an unlawful claim to power and arrogance. Let us recognize our responsibility to make a change. Let's save starfish!

We develop in the meeting with the opposite, the other, nature. "All real living is meeting." (Martin Buber, Jewish philosopher)

I would like to thank: Collin for his openness and for sharing his thoughts during our exchange, Rüdiger Schmiedeler for his collaboration and Serena Maria Lobo for the friendly translation into English.

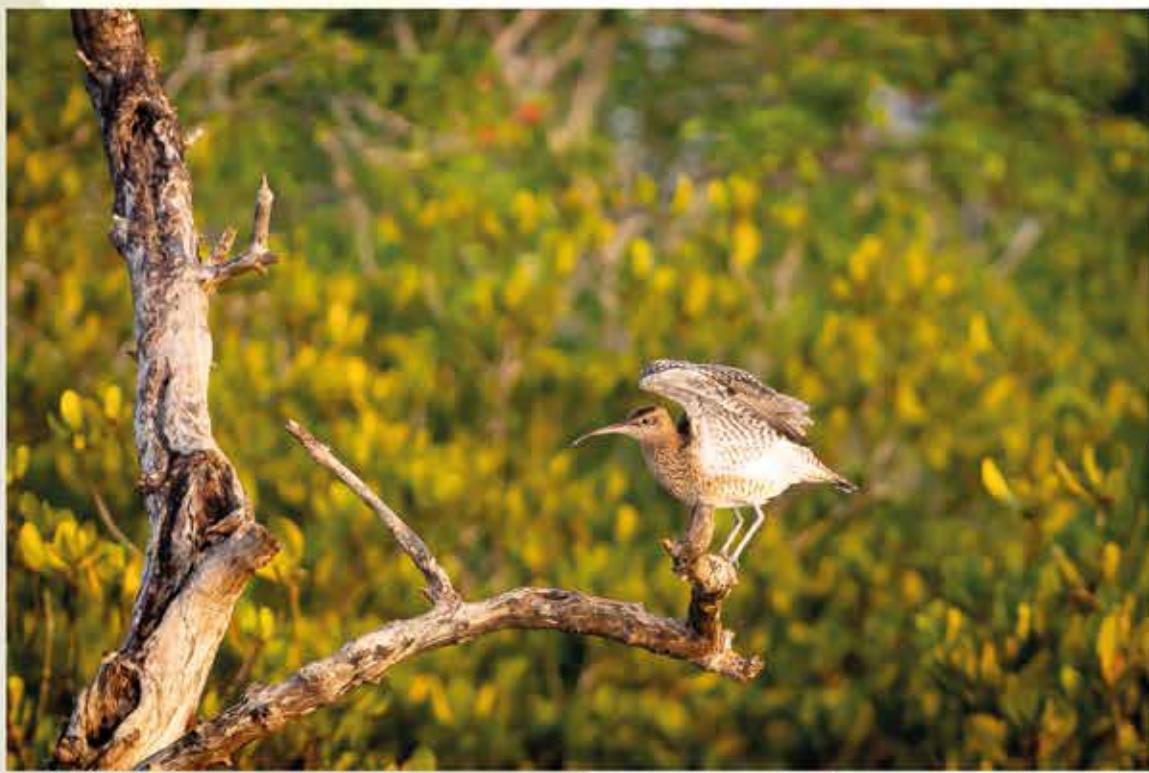
### Text by



### **Andreas Noak**

Social Worker, Nature Lover & Case support for children and youth with special needings.

# SHOWCASE



*A whimbrel – a wader – enjoys the soft winter light*



*Speedstar: A peregrine falcon*

Photographs by-  
**Krishnendu Mukherjee**

# Dog Squads : A game changer in Forest Protection

-Story of Kailash Charar – A remarkable Dog Handler

In any forest, the most important person is a Forest Guard. They are the guardians, the caretakers and the protectors of the forest, the wildlife, the flora and fauna. The knowledge they have of their domain, is unsurpassed which makes them invaluable. As of recent years, these Forest Guards have a four legged companion now, Sniffer dogs, who have become as invaluable as their humans. They are the Dog Squad, a team consisting of a handler and his dog.

This story focuses on one such Dog Squad handler. His name is Kailash Charar, and he has been in the post of a Forest Guard since 2008 with the Forest Department. His posting started in Van Mandal Katni, Madhya Pradesh. Soon after he went for a six months forest guard training course in Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve, Umaria from 01/10/2008 to 31/03/2009, after which he came back and was posted in the forests of Katni. Kailash always had the zeal to do something different. While being posted in the forest, he would patrol nights with other watchmen and look out for poachers. They have been successful in catching poachers in the jungles. During this time, Kailash came to know that the Forest Department was planning to introduce dogs to help them in their field work. He signed up to become a part of that program and train as a handler. At that time the present Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife) Bhopal, was Dr. H.S. Pavla and the Chief Conservator of Forests, Jabalpur was Mr. Satish Tyagi. A meeting of high level officers was held at that time, where, based on the lines of the canine squad of the Police Department in Madhya Pradesh, the Forest Department decided to keep a similar Dog Squad. The first batch was to start with training 2 dog squads for Madhya Pradesh, which were decided to be kept in Jabalpur and Itarsi. After that, he was sent to the Dog Team Training Center 23rd Battalion, Bhadbhada Road, Madhya Pradesh by his senior officers for 9 months training between November 2009 to July 2010, on behalf of the Forest Department. There he was paired with a six month old female German Shepherd named Jimmy. After the completion of the Dog Squad training, he was posted with the Tiger Strike Force in Jabalpur.



Most cases of illegal hunting and poaching were happening in the forests of Madhya Pradesh. The hotbed of illegal activities was seen to be happening around Bahlia, Pardhi, Bavaria, where hunting of wild animals was prolific and the animal parts were being sold and transported to other countries. This was easy as Jabalpur was the railway hub. These illegal activities was the reason for Kailash to move around, working in Pench Tiger Reserve, Kanha Tiger Reserve, Panna Tiger Reserve, Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve and Nauradehi Sanctuary Sagar.



Whenever there was an incident of illegal wildlife hunting in any of the National Parks and Forest Divisions, their team would be called. The dogs were very useful in searching out poachers and the location of animal parts and other illegal goods. The success rate of solving forest crimes increased with the inclusion of the Dog Squad. However, though the work was rewarding, it also meant long hours and days of active duty being away from family, living in remote areas. There are some tough times, sacrifices, like the time Kailash missed the birth of his daughter due to being on duty and he could not be contacted. He rues the fact that he was not there with his wife yet he is proud that he is representing the wild animals who he loves and is dedicated to protecting. He believes that it is our duty to protect and save these animals who cannot speak for themselves and need us to look out for them. Along with his canine partner, Jimmy, they solved 37 cases in 7 years in districts like Katni, Mandla, Dindori, Jabalpur, Chhindwara, Balaghat, Panna, Umaria, Satna, Sidhi, Seoni, Sagar, Damoh etc. At age 8, Jimmy was diagnosed with epilepsy. After a year of treatment, he was declared not fit for field duty and was retired from active duty. Unfortunately, Jimmy died a year later and his funeral was carried out with full ceremony.



The then Chief Conservator of Forests, Jabalpur circle, Mr. Ajit Srivastava and Divisional Forest Officer, Jabalpur Division, Mr. H.S. Mohanta and Mr. Vincent Rahim were major contributors in providing resources and taking the dog squad team forward. Keeping in view the local needs, senior officers of Bhopal, transferred the dog Cheetah who was posted with the Tiger Strike Force in Sagar and gave him to the Tiger Strike Force team in Jabalpur. Some time later, from 02/04/2018 to 12/05/2018, Dog Cheetah was sent to the National Dog Training Center, Border Security Force Tekanpur, Gwalior Madhya Pradesh for a refresher course. After completing two months of training, Cheetah was back in Jabalpur. The team, succeeded in solving 4 forest crime cases. However the health of Cheetah deteriorated, Kailash took him to the Veterinary Hospital but during the treatment, Cheetah died in his lap. In Kailash's words, 'At that time I felt that my life had been lost from my body'. He took control of himself and after the formalities, Cheetah was cremated with honour.



Present day, Kailash has been paired with Shera, they have solved 10 cases in 3 years. Everyone needs updates and refreshers in any line of work, same for the Dog Squads. The refresher courses are organised and conducted by the NGO, Saving Tiger Society under the leadership of Mr. Indrajit Sengupta. The refresher courses were held in Panchmari and was done with the cooperation and support of the Forest Department. In view of the success of forest crime cases in Madhya Pradesh due to the Dog Squads, at present 16 dogs are posted in various National Parks and Forest Divisions. In this, the senior officers and In-charge officer of State Level Tiger Strike Force, Shri Ritesh Sarothia of Bhopal have lent their support. Kailash has deep respect for his seniors and looks up to them for guidance.

In the 11 years that Kailash has been working, he has been successful in solving 51 cases as a Dog Squad team. He is in Jabalpur with his current partner, Shera, with the Tiger Strike Force.

Kailash has received the Wildlife Conservation award and a cheque of 50,000/- by the Forest Department of Madhya Pradesh during Wildlife Week on 07 October 2014. He has also received citations in the years of 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017.



Kailash recalls a memorable incident, they were called to Pench Tiger Reserve Seoni, where wildlife was being hunted. They arrived there and were conducting searches at the site of the incident, in the vicinity of the village Dhutera. However, this was not taken well by the local people and the villagers. They turned hostile and surrounded Kailash and his team from all sides. The incident turned volatile and they were beaten up by the villagers with sticks and stones. They were taken hostage and Kailash was beaten, his uniform torn and his mobile phone was broken. His canine partner then was Jimmy, who was also hit and beaten. They were uncertain if their fate and didn't know if they would survive. Fortunately, they were rescued by the police who came and took them away from the village.



The Dog Squad teams are well cared for. Their facilities during active duty include staying in government buildings, there are dog kennels, vehicles have been provided by the Forest Department and senior officers are always available for guidance and support.

Kailash's story tells us so much more. The handlers get attached to their dogs, it is very rewarding yet comes with its share of heartbreak. It's like losing someone in your family. Their work is fraught with risks and danger, they do face hostile environment and have to deal with violence from people. It's a very hard job yet people like Kailash continue because they believe that they are making a difference. They are passionate and dedicated to their job and are proud of it.

# SHOWCASE



Photographs by-  
**Pijush Chakraborty**



## **Two decades of Tiger conservation in Pilibhit Tiger Reserve**

**- Story of Akhtar Khan**

Pilibhit Tiger Reserve is located in Pilibhit district, Lakhimpur Kheri District and Bahraich District of Uttar Pradesh. The Pilibhit Tiger Reserve is one of the finest examples of the exceedingly diverse and productive Terai ecosystems. Pilibhit was declared a Tiger Reserve in September 2008 based on its special type of ecosystem with vast open spaces and sufficient feed for its elegant predators. It is India's 45th Tiger Reserve Project. The northern edge of the reserve lies along the Indo-Nepal border while the southern boundary is marked by the river Sharada and Khakra.



The study done by the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) shows that Dudhwa-Pilibhit population has high conservation value as it represents the only tiger population with the ecological and behavioural adaptations of the tiger unique to the Tarai region.



It is home and is a habitat for many animal species, numerous flora and fauna, around 326 bird species can be found here and around 2100 flowering plants. It is a mosaic of high Sal forests, plantation and grasslands with several water bodies. The jungles are home to myriad wild animals including the endangered tiger, swamp deer, Bengal florican, hog deer, leopard, etc. The large carnivores are supported by a very large prey base consisting of cheetah, sambar, wild boar, hog deer, swamp deer, blue bull, etc.



The bird life is also very rich and diverse and hundreds of species of birds can be seen round. The Chuka Interpretation Zones with nature interpretation center, cottages at the edge of a huge water body is unique & very popular with visitors.



The more beautiful, diverse and rich any Tiger Reserve or Park is, unfortunately, the dangers of illegal activities, poaching are that much more likely to happen.

Today we share the story of an individual who has steadfastly been working in Philit Tiger Reserve for a long time, on conservation. Akhtar Khan is a person who started his organisation in 2003, called Turquoise Wildlife Conservation Society. Long before that, he started out by conducting a few programs on awareness, some of them included school children to teach them about conservation and protection

of wildlife. Soon it became a full time effort where he concentrated on spreading awareness about the importance of conservation. Over the past decade he has seen how the attitude and the mindset of people have changed. As per Akhtar, working in cohesion with the Forest Department was not always smooth going as there was no proper communication or coordination.



The villagers and the local community in those days were not as informed as they are today, hence whenever there was a threat of a predator near their villages, they would turn hostile towards the Department and the NGO present and harass them to tackle the situation. As mentioned earlier, without the proper channel of communication in place, it would create more issues.



However, in the past decade, with widespread efforts on awareness and conducting programs on conservation and its importance, there has been a major improvement in the situation. At present, all concerned departments are working in conjunction with each other and all areas of work are clearly designated. Along with the conservation work, Akhtar is also involved in Rescue operations of wildlife, training for the forest staff and guides.

When he started working in Philibit, at that time there were 16 tigers in the forest. Today, he proudly informs that there are over 70 tigers in the Tiger Reserve, all living a natural life in the wild. Akhtar, does mention a key point here. Wildlife Tourism is an important aspect for the economy anywhere. The past few years have seen a huge rise in the popularity of wildlife Tourism in India. Tiger Reserves with a high concentration of the star animal, the Tiger, are often over crowded with tourists during season time. This influx of such large numbers of humans have made an impact on the wildlife and their behaviour. They have had to adapt to the presence of humans in their space and have had to change their behaviour to accommodate this intrusion. Akhtar says that the wildlife now are quite well adapted. In fact he says that, in the beginning when he started out, they faced much more conflict with 16 tigers in comparison to now, with 70+ tigers and hardly any conflicts.



Philibit today is an award winning Tiger Reserve, having won the TX2 Award which is given for doubling the Tiger population in a Tiger Reserve over a period of 10 years. The reason this Tiger Reserve is flourishing due to the constant and significant efforts of people like Akhtar Khan, who don't know how to live any other life but that of conservation. He mentions how much effort everyone had to put in to come to the place they are in today, the efforts put in by him, the Forest Department and the local community, everyone had to be on the same page, working in tandem, to bring the Tiger Reserve to its present condition. He became an Advocate, just so he could be of help legally should any issues require legal services. He feels that if you get into the field of conservation, then it has to be a whole hearted, dedicated effort. In between he tried doing other jobs, but could not connect with any of them, his calling was for conservation and he is happiest in the forests.

Today Akhtar has a small homestay where he hosts photographers, wildlife enthusiasts, gives them guidance, there are courses offered for those who are interested. Along with that, he has been working for 20 years, on compiling a thorough checklist of all the bird species, reptiles and mammals present the Tiger Reserve. He is currently working on the various tree species in the forest, the flora and is compiling data on them.

Akhtar has a message for people who show interest in wildlife and its conservation. He says that if efforts are made to protect the wildlife, the tigers who are at the top of the food chain, then automatically, the rest of the eco system gets balanced. This is vital as saving the environment is the only way for survival for the future.



# SHOWCASE



Photograph by - *Krishnendu Mukherjee*



Photograph by - *Himanshu Yadav*



## **Fighting against Climate change at ground zero-Sundarbans**

**-Story of Animesh Mondal**

There is a lot of literature on Sundarbans, almost every aspect of Sundarbans, its beauty, uniqueness, its bio diversity have all been covered. It is agreed that Sundarbans is a beautiful destination, a place like no other, it also plays an extremely important role for the environment. Sundarbans location, the waterways, the unique eco system, the mangroves play a vital part in the balance of Nature. The survival of every living species is based on the status of Sundarbans.

The side effects of any condition does not show up overnight. It is a long process and it is not a tangible process in the beginning. The negative effects of any condition happens gradually, there are signs, hints along the way which, if heeded will definitely make a big difference in the situation, however, these hints are mostly ignored or seen as too insignificant. This is the case with Sundarbans. Climate change, weather patterns, are factors that affect a place like Sundarbans. However, no one actually looked deep enough to understand exactly how bad the situation could get in the future.

The year Cyclone Aila struck, that should have been the wake up call to start looking into the impacts it would create in the eco system. Conservationists in Sundarbans are now discovering the many levels which have been affected and also how much is getting affected with other factors over the years.



No one is more aware of the consequences and the urgency to do something for Sundarbans than Animesh Mandal. He is a man who wears many caps, from being a conservationist to being a member of the Jila Parishad (South 24 pgs district administration committee member), he is literally wanting to ensure the survival of Sundarbans by tackling every issue from the root cause of it.

He has been immersed in the life, the issues of Sundarbans since he was a boy. Due to his father's involvement in Sundarbans, first as a teacher, then being involved in politics, Animesh thought that he might also have gone down the same path as his father, become a teacher. However, he started doing things a bit differently from a young age. He realised that Sundarbans people were mainly poor and had limited avenues for livelihood. While he was in school, he wore clothes as the local boys did so as not to stand out and make them feel that he is better than them. He knew lots of people who could not afford to pay for the education of their children, so he started paying for 3 boys. He paid for their books, their fees and continued doing so till they finished graduating. The money he used to give them, was mostly taken from his parents, unknown to them. When he got older, he started doing a few odd jobs and would use that money to sponsor them. He feels really good that even though, he did get into trouble for taking money, he helped those boys, who are now doing well in their lives. He has also been heavily involved in getting people medical help and taking people to hospitals in the city whenever required. His family have a home in Kolkata, the nearest city and he uses his home to take patients who require medical care or operations that are not available in Sundarbans.



Animesh Mondal



Animesh Mondal is supporting flood affected locals with tarpaulin sheets

He said that helping people and making a difference in their lives became his sole purpose and drive for further work. He said there is no better reward than seeing the joy and happiness in the people he has helped. He continues with his efforts in helping people improve their lives. His work involves finding better avenues of income for the people, trying to stop the illegal cutting of the mangroves, improving the living conditions in the villages.

He feels that if people concentrated on a few points of conservation in Sundarbans then there is hope that things will get back to a place where the eco system will survive. Those points being, the proper method of planting mangroves, the quantity needs to be more, locations of planting should be done with proper planning. Every area of Sundarbans has different soil and different plant types, this needs to be accounted for when planting mangroves as different types of mangrove does not grow in any soil. They have to be matched to the soil and water and the correct species need to be planted in its most suitable areas.

Recent years have shown an increase in cyclones and storms in that region. This is due to the effects of global warming. Water levels have risen in the past couple of decades, the decrease of the mangrove forests, are all factors that have increased the levels of destruction that are being faced after every storm. Flooding is a common effect of a storm in Sundarbans today, one of the ways to tackle this is through building Embankments. This is an ongoing project in every area of Sundarbans. Animesh has been very active in this project and feels that the embankments are crucial in reducing the flooding which affects the agricultural production and the livelihood of the people.

Pollution in various forms have increased in Sundarbans. Water pollution, air pollution, soil pollution, these which didn't exist earlier are all active factors in the decline of the eco system. People need to go back to the methods of yesteryear to bring back the natural cycle and balance in their environment. In order to increase productivity, the use of chemical fertilizers is reducing the nutrition in the soil and leaving behind harmful chemicals. The increase of motorised transportation, like autos, vans, which



He is organizing community supporting camps

use diesel as their fuel, is also detrimental. Lead and other chemicals seep into the soil, this in turn affects the animals as they eat plants and grass. The animals have also shown a decrease in their overall structure and muscle formation. They are not as healthy or strong, they have weaker muscles and this affects the quality, be it dairy or meat.



**Initiative of Covid-19 care units and vaccine drive**

Animesh however thinks that the most important and effective solution for a better future is Awareness. If people are made aware and educated properly about their environment, made aware of the consequences of their actions, taught the proper technique, then most of the battle is won. Creating awareness and conducting awareness programs is all good but how effective is it, if it is not followed. Animesh is very vocal about wanting to implement the changes, and follow through, he not only wants to make people aware, he wants them to execute the techniques and methods. He wants to ensure that people follow the correct path for the future.



**One of his regular activities-Tree Plantation Drive**

Some of the ideas he feels strongly about and is working on are a plastic free environment which includes single use plastic items, like water bottles, milk packets, soft drink bottles, disposable plates and glasses etc.

The increase of mangroves forests as that will bring back many features that slowly got lost, river silting, better quality of fish, migratory birds, the return of vultures who are almost extinct there.



The building of embankments, sustainable development, alternative sources of income for the people who are permanent residents of Sundarbans. Due to the popularity in tourism and hospitality industry, there are many people who have come from elsewhere and set up in Sundarbans. They have their businesses but are not permanent residents. The basic livelihood of the local community is agriculture, fishing and honey.

The major percentage of the people suffer whenever there is a natural disaster. Animesh wants to change these conditions, he strongly wants that everyone get involved, the government, the forest department, the NGO's and the people. Efforts have to be made, plans need to be executed and implemented correctly. He feels more people need to get involved in conservation as that is the only thing towards a better tomorrow.

# SHOWCASE



Photograph by - **Krishnendu Mukherjee**



Photograph by - **Aditya Das**

# A KING IN EXILE

## -Story of Raja through the words of his keeper

A small town background sometimes brings out the most amazing talents among people.

This is an account of a person who maybe be behind the scenes yet who has been doing extraordinary work in one of the lesser known wildlife Khairbari rehabilitation centre, Jaldapara National Park in North Bengal.

His name is Partho Sarathi Sinha, and he has been the zookeeper, wild animal handler for many years. His job is looking after all the wild animals in the Khairbari rehabilitation centre, Jaldapara National Park in North Bengal, however his designation is Forest Guard. His job might sound like the usual profile for a handler, taking care of a wild animal, yet it goes way beyond that.

He is being featured now due to a unique situation. The rehabilitation centre where he works, has been the home of a tiger, Raja, who was brought there after he was seriously injured in the wild. The background of Raja tells us of his capture from the wild in the Sundarbans. He had entered the villages and was going to be returned to the forest by the Forest Department, on the way, the forest staff there noticed his back leg had a very bad injury due to being mauled by a crocodile. The injury had left half his leg and that had to be amputated. This was done at the Alipur Zoo where he was transferred for his treatment. After the amputation, Raja could not be released into the wild nor could he be in the zoo for the public as he had that handicap. The decision was taken to send him to the Khairbari Rehabilitation centre in North Bengal at the age of 12. The aim was to keep him healthy, and give him a good life and also learn from him, the nature, behaviour of a tiger in captivity after having been in the wild for so long. Raja's journey to the Rehabilitation centre was not a very good one, he sustained some injuries and he was weak as he had not eaten anything throughout the journey. Raja was put under the care of Partho, as he is known and called, who had an innate knack with animals. Partho is very keen to learn about animals and he used the opportunity during feeding to learn about the animal, its personality, behaviour, habits. It's not just a duty for him, he literally becomes friends with the animal. Raja was given the same care by Partho, who slowly learnt what he likes to eat and what mood he is in. His care for an animal is complete, from administering vaccines, to giving them their medication, food, bathing them, he does it all. He shows them that he cares and they, in turn, trust him. Partho says to bring a wild tiger into captivity and then getting them used to living in captivity is a challenge.



Partho Sarathi Sinha



Wild animals are not used to be handled, they don't like being confined. They also react and lash out, Partho says, in the beginning when a wild animal is brought in, the biggest challenge is to get them to eat. That's the first hurdle, the animals refuse to eat. He mentions, he has had animals who have not eaten for over two weeks. Gaining their trust, showing them he cares, giving them the space and understanding them has been his key to success.

Partho has devised certain methods that have proven successful in the care of wild animals. He is in great demand from other zoos and wildlife rehabilitation centers around the country for his unique care, however, his heart lies with Raja and he is rightfully proud and possessive.

Partho has been looking after Raja for over a decade now, which brings Raja's age to 25+, an amazing feat in itself, as Raja is a wild tiger brought into captivity and he has an amputated leg. The longest survived tiger holding a record was a captive tiger born in a cage, who died at the age of 26. Raja is a wild tiger who has been in captivity due to his handicap and right now he could become the longest surviving tiger if he lives for another year. According to Partho, Raja is well, he moves around without any sign of weakness, has good control of his body, his muscle strength is good and does not look like an old tiger.

Partho Sarathi Sinha, is a person who, quietly has been working with wild animals from a longtime. The outside world has very limited idea of hidden gems like him who make a difference.



# SHOWCASE



Photographs by-  
**Phil Davis**



## Unsung Saviour of the Olive Ridley Turtle

**-Story of Rabindranath Sahu**

Among the vast coastline of India, only a very small portion, that too in a tiny section of a couple of villages, a beautiful phenomenon occurs. This activity has been happening for many years without a murmur being heard about it. It was just an event the villagers would see every year and some would make a little money out of it, but mostly it was just an event taken for granted.

We are talking about the annual Nesting of the Olive Ridley turtles. These turtles are endangered and the coastline of Odisha, near the Rushikulya river is their preferred nesting site. It is one of the world's largest mass nesting sites. Three villages range along the Rushikulya river, Podampeta, PurunaBandha and Gokarkhuda in Ganjam district of Odisha.



It is here that one of the more endangered species of turtle, the Olive Ridley, come to nest and lay their eggs between the second week of February to March. These turtles mating season starts in November and they mate for a few months before travelling to this particular beach to lay their eggs. An amazing fact about these turtles is that the rest of the year, they spend in the waters off the coastline of Srilanka. They travel the thousands of miles from Srilanka to this beach in Odisha to nest every single year. India has the largest number of turtle species in the world, and the largest number of Olive Ridley turtles can be seen here.

The turtles nesting ritual lasts only about 1.5 hours or little bit more. The turtles come up to the beach, choose the spot they want to build a nest and start digging. The best is generally about a foot and half long and a foot deep. Once the nest is ready, the turtle lays its eggs, around 100 to 150 eggs are laid by each turtle. Once the eggs are laid, they cover it with sands and return to the sea. The adult turtle's part is over. It takes about 45 to 50 days for the eggs to hatch. After hatching, the baby turtles make their way into the sea.



As fascinating the facts may sound, it was also not a very happy story in the early years. Not much was known about these turtles by the people, the villagers who resided in the area near the beach would take the eggs after they were laid and sell them or consume the eggs themselves. Some turtles were poached to sell for their meat. This reduced the survival percentage of the turtles as not enough eggs were hatching and the turtles were not growing to the adult stage. Baby turtles have a hard perilous journey to the sea, they are prized food for the sea gulls, foxes and other animals. A large

number don't make it to the sea. With survival rates being so low for the Olive Ridley turtles, their chance for extinction was very real.

In 1994, a scientist, Dr.Pandav, visited the area for the purpose of studying and working with the Olive Ridley turtles. A young boy was assigned to him as a volunteer/helper, his name is Rabindranath Sahu and this chance meeting turned his whole life upside down. During the course of Dr.Pandav's work, he explained the dangers of the turtles survival, taught him everything there was about the Olive Ridley turtles and its conservation. Rabindranath became a champion for the turtles almost overnight. He started by dissuading the villagers to take the eggs and turtles for consumption, started to protect them during their nesting times and spent every waking moment in his cause to save the turtles. It was a long road, he had no help, no one believed him, no one helped him. However, he persevered and refused to give up. Slowly, he got volunteers and started organising teams to help with protecting the turtles during their nesting and afterwards, the protection of the eggs. After hatching, the release of the baby turtles were also overseen by Rabindranath and his team.



Olive Ridley turtles like a clean sandy beach to make their nests, they will not dig nests if the beach is strewn with litter. In the beginning, when Rabindranath started his work, he would see 30 – 40 thousand turtles coming in to nest in a single night. His constant efforts since then, of keeping the beach clean, removing trash, marking out the area for nesting, putting up barricades showed amazing results. Today, this area has around 1.3 lakh turtles coming to nest and lay eggs every year. It gets so full with turtles and their nests, that there is no place to stand. A sight that is unbelievable and a life time experience.

Today, people from all over the world come to see this event and also learn from Rabindranath about his efforts and the success of his work. They have also set up an area where they hatch eggs separately to study them and for further research. Turtles are also tagged to track them when they are in the water, where they go, what they do, all of the information gathered is used to further enhance their conservation work.

Rabindranath says that if turtles start going down in numbers, then the oceans entire balance will break down. A simple factor is all that can create total chaos. Turtles mostly eat jelly fish, it's their most favourite food. Jelly fish are extremely prolific, if left unchecked, they rapidly fill the waters they live in creating thick layers and causing havoc to the natural sea life and for the fishing nets. The only way for jelly fish to be controlled in the natural cycle is to have a healthy turtle population.

He has completely dedicated his life to the turtles, he did not marry as that would distract him from his work, he earns his livelihood by working in farms and taking on jobs during the months when the turtles are not there.

His work is an uphill task, even today when people are aware of the situation, and he has teams to help him. It starts with tackling the garbage that gets swept into the beach from the river and the sea, he spends anenormous amount of time, energy, money to clear the trash since he needs to hire trucks to remove it. During nesting, which happens mainly at night, Rabindranath and his team are at the beach patrolling throughout. Turtles need total darkness as any light disorients them and they can't nest. Sahu and his team ensure lights in the village and in the near vicinity are turned off. Once the eggs are laid, it's a constant vigil to ensure the eggs are safe, from birds, snakes, foxes who like to eat the eggs. The next stage is the hatching and the baby turtle's journey to the sea. This is the most exhaustive job as there are lakhs of baby turtles who need to be safely released in to the sea. Here the challenge is to keep away the birds and dogs etc who find the baby turtles to be easy food. The teams and volunteers have to be very alert and try to get as many babies into the sea as possible. Of course there are some losses however it is kept to the bare minimum as possible.



Mr Sahu and his team members are cleaning the beach

Rabindranath's work for the past 28 years has made a very big impact, his complete devotion and single mindedness has paid dividends. Awareness is the most important part of conservation, had the people not been made aware and made to realise the necessity of saving these turtles and the benefits to us humans, this project would not have had the excellent success it enjoys today. Today, every villager is proud of this event and looks forward to it. Turtles are now so comfortable in that area, that they have even had turtle nests right in front of their houses. The entire community gets involved during the nesting, the hatching and the release of the baby turtles. Fishing is completely stopped. Each period takes about 10-15 days and the fishing boats don't fish during those periods. Apart from the turtles being saved from the fishing lines, the fishermen also don't have to worry about their nets getting caught or torn and their nets getting full of unwanted turtles. This has been a big achievement for Rabindranath along with the cooperation of the people in keeping lights off during nesting, helping in releasing turtles.



School children are his main volunteers during the release of the baby turtles, they have tons of energy and they run around collecting all the baby turtles who have strayed away and drop them in the sea. Rabindranath tries and arranges some gift of appreciation for the children. School bags, sports equipment, caps, tshirts are some gifts that he gets sponsored for the children.

His only goal is to continue this work, whatever he earns through his jobs, he uses most of it to run his NGO, Rushikulya Sea Turtle Protection Committee. He has around 56 members. They have also started celebrating Turtle Day on May 23. They are fully committed to saving and protecting all animals both on land and in the water. He has started work on Dolphin conservation as there are endangered Dolphins, House Sparrows has become another pet project of his and he is trying to save these little birds from extinction. He feels that saving the animals and birds is ensuring the survival of our environment and that in turn will save our planet.



# SHOWCASE



Photograph by  
**Indrajit Sengupta**



## Green Warrior – Shri Chandra Shekhar Sharma

There are some people in every field who are shining stars but they remain unknown, working diligently through the years. We are talking about the story of Chandra Shekhar Sharma, Forest Guard under Madhya Pradesh Forest Department here. As a boy, he used to watch his father go off to work in the forest, his father was a forest guard. Those days there were hardly any roads so mostly cycles were used. Living near the forests, he was used to seeing wild animals, birds and was quite used to them, being a part of that environment daily.

When there would be any incident of poaching or hunting, Shekhar would get upset, he felt for the animals as they were voiceless and unlike humans, could not get justice for themselves. He always wanted to do something for the wild animals but didn't know what. He was skilled in martial arts, becoming a black belt in karate and always felt he would like to join one of the Armed Forces. However, his first instinct was always for the forests and wildlife. He decided to try his luck in joining the Forest Department, unfortunately his father passed away before he could apply. He got the opportunity soon after to join the Forest Department. He joined as part of a team that handled wildlife crime. It was exactly what Shekhar wanted to do.

Wildlife crime is one of the big challenging tasks in conservation. It comes in many forms, hunting, poaching, trading. Over the years, wildlife crime has evolved a lot, becoming an organised industry and spreading out into international countries.

Shekhar was part of a three member team who were assigned to hunting down top level criminals. These criminals could be from anywhere in the world and this team was given full freedom to carry out the investigation wherever it took them. Various cells were formed to handle different areas of crime, from the cyber cell to the Intelligence and Data cell. These cells fall under the State Tiger Strike Force team. Shekhar is a part of the Intelligence and Data cell. According to him, their task is the most challenging, as they have to go undercover to collect Intel, they have to do covert operations, conduct raids and be in direct contact with the criminals while conducting their investigation. This is very risky as they are in danger of getting caught.



### A glimpse of some successful operations led by C.S Sharma

Shekhar, feels very satisfied that even though there is a risk with this job and at times it can get dangerous, they have managed to capture some of the most wanted wildlife criminals over the years. The team has also brought down international crime leaders which has brought the crime rate down to almost negligible numbers in recent times.

Some of the media coverages on STSF successful raids

Shekhar is very proud to have been a significant part in catching these criminals. He has also travelled to many places through this job which he has found to be interesting. Right from his early years, he has shown exceptional attitude and has been given out of turn promotion, he has also won numerous awards at both National and State level.

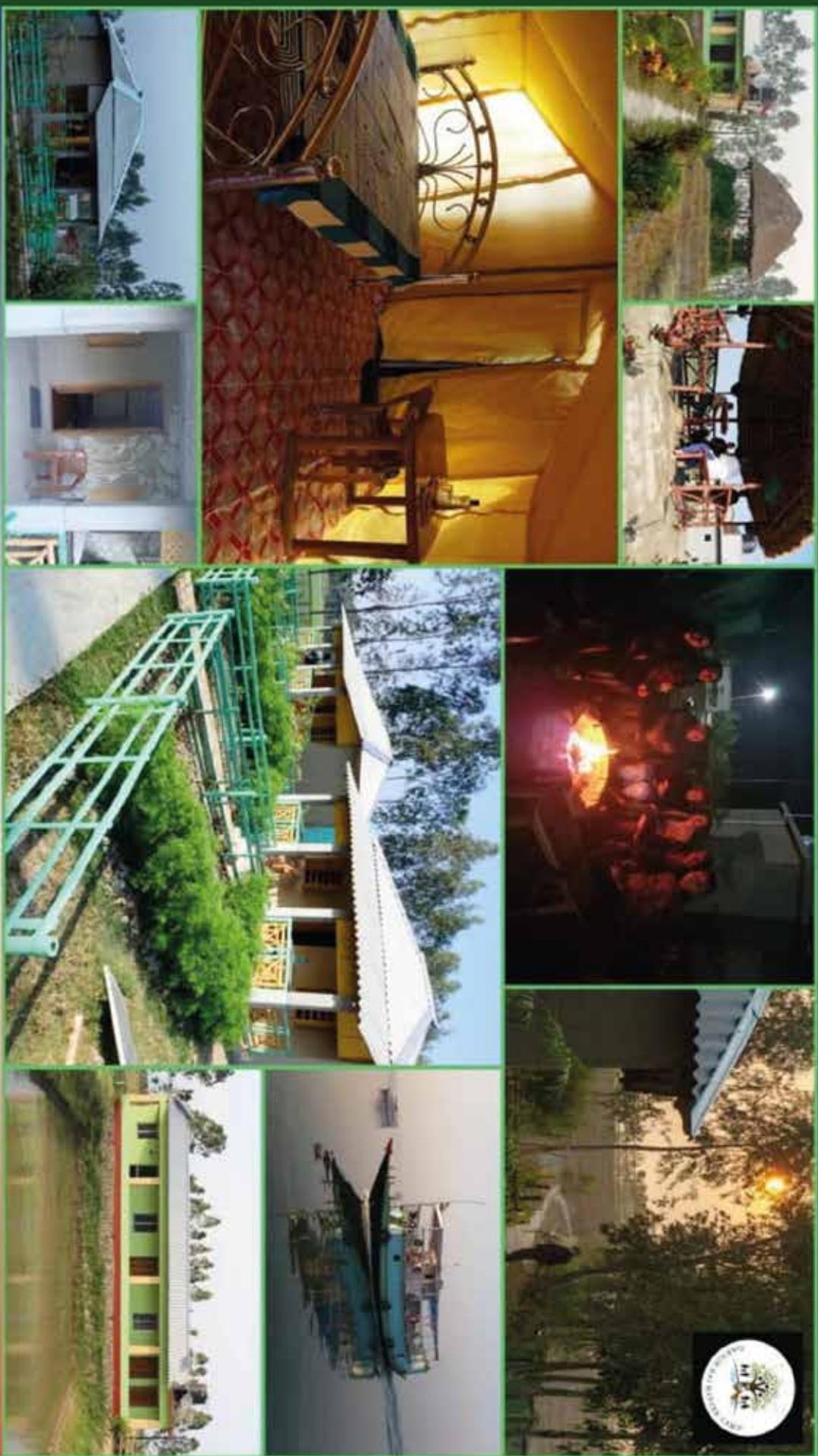


### Remarkable achievements of Chandra Shekhar Sharma

His job keeps him away from his family for long stretches and it's obviously difficult but he has their complete support and they encourage him to do his job well. Having seen his father working in the same field, there is pride in the family that he too is doing his part and with so much success.

There is an excitement in him when he talks about his work, one can hear it in his voice, how much he loves his job and the fact that he gets to interact with people from different places. It's this kind of passion and dedication that should be talked about and people like Shekhar Sharma whom we should know about.

# COMMERCIAL ADVERTISEMENT



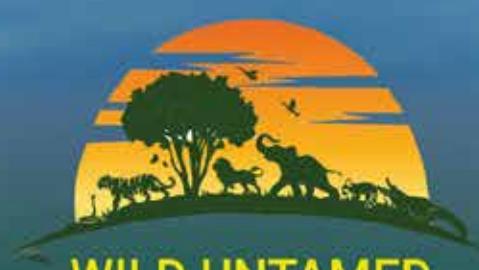
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