

India Wilds

Newsletter

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Cover Page Photograph:

**Black Panther by
Mrudul Godbole**

Is MoEF&CC reluctant to Save Wild India?

A recent statement by the Hon'ble Minister with additional charge of Environment, Forests and Climate Change during a function in Ashoka Garden, Ashok Vihar is worth a mention as it reflects a dichotomy in the approach of the environment and forests ministry. The Minister Dr. Harsh Vardhan said that people should plant more trees to stop the imbalance in nature as *"planting of saplings is divine work"*. Trees have a very important place in our lives so not only should everyone plant saplings, but should also care for the plants as a member of one's own family. *"They not only help in making the environment pure, but also provide life-giving oxygen, fruits, flowers, shade and cool the environment."* The minister also impressed upon the people to remain alert towards protection of environment and added that everyone must undertake one act for the environment every day. He also urged the people to use cycle at least once a week, as it will prove beneficial to the environment, as well as our health. The Minister also asked people to protect and conserve the flora and fauna.

When the Minister of environment and forests makes such a statement it gives an impression that that ministry and the Government is very serious about the protection of environment, forests and wildlife. Recently the Minister also expressed that *"The condition of our forests, rivers, air and land is a matter of serious concern for us. The reason for this is the modern lifestyle adopted by us. Plants are another form of God, they give us free oxygen and absorb carbon-dioxide"*.

However, the question that comes to our mind is whether the ministry and the minister are walking the talk?

A cursory look at the projects cleared by the Standing Committee of the National Board for Wild Life will reveal the hypocrisy.

The Hon'ble Supreme Court had banned mining activities within 1km of all National Parks and Wildlife sanctuaries. So in the past the oil extraction from rigs within 1km of national parks and sanctuaries used to be banned. However, the standing committee of the NBWL has now reversed its previous decision regarding mining of gas and has gone with the legal opinion provided by MoEF&CC that drilling for oil and gas is not covered under mining.

The MoEF&CC says that according to the EIA Notification (Environment Impact Assessment Notification 2006) mining is listed under 1 a and oil and gas exploration under 1b, so the Supreme court order banning mining activities within 1km of National Parks and sanctuaries is not applicable. The environment ministry is clearly trying to find a loophole. This is like killing



the spirit of the judgment and the spirit of wildlife protection in this country. If one tries to understand the reason for the 1km no mining activity within National Park and sanctuaries order, then it would be clear that oil drilling is also included. Prospecting for resources under the soil whether it is metals or gases involves destruction of the habitat of wild animals and leads to pollution as well, so in 2006 the Hon'ble Supreme Court banned mining within 1km of National Parks and sanctuaries.



Coal mine in Jharkhand

image courtesy - online media

This effort by the environment and forests ministry is clearly aimed at skirting the Supreme Court order and mocking the Supreme Court's resolve to help protect India's environment, forests and wildlife. So why this double speak Mr. Minister?

These days wildlife being mowed down by railways is a regular news item. Indian Railways is a major cause of wildlife deaths in this country, however, the MoEF&CC continues to ignore these deaths and push for more railway tracks through our forests instead of looking for alternate alignments or mitigation measures.

The National Tiger Conservation Authority has mentioned that about 250kms of tracks of Indian Railways in various parts of the country poses massive threats to the tiger's survival in India. The NTCA has said that apart from the tiger, other wildlife like leopards, bears, elephants, vultures and crocodiles have also been killed on the train lines. Another 86kms of train tracks also pose threat to tiger corridors between two or more national parks so that the dispersal and repopulation of tigers in contiguous habitat is severely impacted.

Since December 2016, in Madhya Pradesh four tigers have been killed by speeding trains. In Budni territorial forest about 10kms from Ratapani Wildlife Sanctuary in the Budni-Midghat section a tigress was mowed down on 1st April 2017. Four months prior to this incident, on 30th December 2016, a tigress was found to have been killed by the Jabalpur-Bhopal inter-city train in the Budni-Midghat area close to Barkheda station near Ratapani Sanctuary.

This area clearly has lot of tiger movement and hence railways should contain the speed limits of the trains while passing through this area and elevated sections for tracks/underpasses and overpasses. There are proposals to convert the Ratapani Sanctuary to a tiger reserve. However, there are also plans to set up a third track through Ratapani. So the wildlife deaths will only increase in this area.



Tiger killed by Train

In 2008, Ratapani Wildlife Sanctuary got an in-principle approval for conversion into a Tiger Reserve. However, it is said that the Government is knowingly delaying the notification of Ratapani as a Tiger Reserve. It is because, Ratapani is spread over 890 sq. kms, after notification it would be difficult to get permissions for widening of highways, infrastructure creation and other projects.

However, it would also be pertinent to mention that the MoEF&CC the ministry which is supposed to be protecting our forests, wildlife and environment is trigger happy in disemboweling our forests by allowing linear projects which fragment the habitat and sound the death knell for many species. MoEF&CC has recently given the go ahead to the broad gauge conversion of Akola-Khandwa rail line and this will result in broadening 18kms of train lines through Melghat tiger reserve. Broad gauge means faster train speeds and hence more wildlife deaths under trains.

Other major train lines passing through forests are the 12.5km railway lines through Buxa, 29km through Rajaji, 27km through Bhadra, 47km through Dudhwa and 34 km through Sanjay Dubri National Park. There are also many places where the railway tracks are not officially in the national parks or sanctuaries but are in the migratory corridors of the elephants and cause many deaths.



So one can easily conclude that the wildlife conservation and infrastructure creation is not well thought-out and is currently highly imbalanced with wildlife bearing the brunt of it. The National Board for Wildlife which has been packed with many “yes men” now serves as a clearing house for wildlife projects and many more projects which will devastate the ecologically fragile areas and wildlife will continue to get cleared.

If saving wildlife had been the priority, then alternate alignments for railways and roads would have been considered. Unfortunately, the project proponents never bother about alternate alignments. In earlier days the speed was less and hence alternate alignments whether by road or trains used to take a lot of time. However, these days alternate alignments shouldn't increase the time to commute due to higher speeds and hence should be the first aim if we are serious about saving whatever little is left of our wildlife and wilderness areas.

MoEF&CC, which is often headed by a junior minister, is prone to bow before the wishes of the other ministries and acts as a clearing house. Dr. Harsh Vardhan, though he is in additional charge of MoEF&CC is a Cabinet Minister and should be capable of holding his ground unlike the previous incumbent Mr. Anil Madhav Dave. However, he cannot act as a thorn in the ‘Industry at all costs’ attitude of the present Union Government.

Nevertheless, the Minister is right when he points out that there is a tradition of feeding the ants and birds in our country and thus, protection of flora and fauna is inherent in our culture. Our ancestors had handed over a pure environment as a heritage and had given some principles of living, with the help of which environment can be protected properly. Unfortunately the situation today is grim.

Photographs of Road kills



Insect



Common Indian Toad



Shield Tail



Green vine Snake



Cat Snake



Salea

The reason for this grim situation can be summed up nicely by Dr. Harsh Vardhan's words:

“Environment protection is connected to our culture, but we have forgotten this cultural heritage”.

When the country's Union environment and forests minister makes such a statement, one can realise that the near-term fate of India's wilderness and wildlife doesn't seem to be rosy. It can only be changed if citizens wake up and raise their voice, because in democracies only votes matter.

Black Panther

Black leopard or Black Panther as they are commonly known, often invokes awe as they are very rarely sighted and they have an aura of mystery. Apart from the rarity the Black panther also gained popularity due to Rudyard Kipling's character Bagheera in "The Jungle Book" where it protects Mowgli.



"Everybody knew Bagheera, and nobody dared to cross his path; for he was as cunning as Tabaqui, as bold as the wild buffalo, and as reckless as the wounded elephant. But he had a voice as soft as wild honey dripping from a tree, and a skin softer than dawn." Rudyard Kipling, The Jungle Book.

Initially Black Panther was considered as a different species from the leopards. However, research has conclusively proved that these are the same species and the colour is due to a phenomenon known as melanism.

Dunbar Brander on Melanism in Leopards:

Melanism is fairly common in the moist dark forests of Southern India and Malaya. These black leopards are not a distinct race and a black cub has been found in a normal litter. Cases of melanism in the Central Provinces are rare. I have only known of two black leopards having been killed in the last twenty years. A well-known black leopard lives in the neighbourhood of the Gugumal Plateau of the Melghat. It had been there for years before I went to the Melghat in 1912. On one occasion, close to camp, it walked slowly across a fireline about 20 yards off. I got a perfect view of it, and instead of being black, as generally supposed, it was a dark chestnut with the spots showing up as black shiny surfaces. It was evidently a male of

the largest size, not much smaller than a young tigress. Some day it will be killed, and if the lucky sportsman happens to possess a copy of this book he will learn that I saw this animal in 1913. (Page 129-130, Wild Animals in Central India, A. A. Dunbar Brander)

Pocock on Melanism in Leopards:

“This phase arises from the invasion of the normally yellowish hairs by black or blackish-brown pigment, called melanin.



But the intensity of the tint of this pigment is variable. Sometimes it is as deep as the black of the spots which can then only be seen under reflected light by reason of their superior sheen. But quite commonly on the belly it is dark brown so that the spots show up clearly on this area. Black panthers on this type are particularly plentiful in Java and the southern parts of the Malay Peninsula. Northwards they have been recorded from Burma, the Shan States, Assam and Nepal and they are alleged to be not uncommon in Travancore and other parts of Southern India....

It is unfortunate that the earliest name definitely assigned to an Indian panther was given to a melanistic variety which was therefore called fusca. The animal was recorded as coming from Bengal; and since skins from the district agree with those from other parts of India, I have no choice but to adopt fusca as the racial name at all events of the dominant type of panther of the country.” (The Panthers and Ounces of Asia, BNHS, 1930a)

Black Leopard & Normal coloured leopard co-existence:

In addition to the common spotted form, there are melanistic or black leopards, which are merely genetic variants – and not a separate species. Their darker spots and rosettes show up very faintly on a deep blackish-brown ground colour. Both black and spotted forms of leopards often co-exist as polymorphs in the tropical evergreen forests of northeastern and southwestern India, Southeast Asia and Central Africa. A pair of spotted leopards may produce black offspring if both have genes for melanism, but a pair of black leopards can produce only black offspring (Bailey 1993). Possibly because their colouration does not help concealment in more open habitats, black leopards are rare outside the tropical humid forest zones. (Page 560, Mammals of South Asia, Vol 1)

Non-agouti gene in Leopards:

“The complete absence of agouti hairs and the production of a uniform black phenotype is indicative that the leopard gene belongs to the general class of non-agouti mutants. It is proposed that the gene be designated non-agouti and be symbolised as a. The non-agouti gene does not interfere with the development of the characteristic leopard spots or rosettes because this pigmentary system is independent of agouti. Thus, the spotted pattern can be discerned in the black form as a reflected pattern as the animal moves. It can also be photographically recorded by the use of flash photography. It was also apparent from the available data that the black female was not as fecund as the spotted.” (Inheritance of the Black Form of Leopard Panthera Pardus, Roy Robinson, 1969).

On black leopard hunting Nilgiri Tahr:

E. R. C. Davidar writes that during his time (in the 1950s/ 60s) the Melanistic leopard was not as rare in Nilgiris as it was elsewhere. *“Besides the tahr, the predators that preyed on them attracted me. The open terrain provides opportunities for sighting them. On the top of the list are leopards. The majority of them are black leopard....In a clearing between sholas, a black leopard was going all out after a barking deer. The streamlined black form of the leopard, the brick-red of the fleeing deer, the green of the emerald turf on which the drama was enacted, set against the bottle-green sholas, all aglow in the rays of the setting sun, was a rare combination of colours and action...we climbed a hill and reached the spot where we had seen the hunter and the hunted disappear. There, seventy-five meters below us lay the black leopard, panting, its red mouth open. In our excitement, we bungled the shot and the leopard got away. After I laid my rifle down, I met this leopard a few times....The black leopard was a highly successful tahr hunter. It would take its position above a feeding herd – tahr are stupid in the sense that they watch out for danger coming from below, forgetting that it could equally come from above – and wait patiently for hours on end for the odd straggler, usually an intrepid juvenile, before stalking it.”* (E.R.C. Davidar, Whispers from the Wild, Page 256-257)

During the time of British, there were more forests, less people and more wildlife. So sighting of Black leopards were noted from many places where today hardly a single blade of grass grows as the places have been ravaged by strife, warfare and concretisation. J. C. Daniel in his book ‘The Leopards of India’ writes *“In 1939 a fully grown black leopard was shot near Rerhi, a coastal fishing village about 18 miles Southeast of Karachi, on the 4th April, 1939... Thomas Pennant (1798) in his book “The View of Hindustan” relates that a black panther taken in the Sundarbans in Bengal was sent to the Menagerie in the Tower at London by Hastings Warren.”* (J. C. Daniel, The Leopard in India).

Recent Black Leopard Sighting: A dream fulfilled

Dunbar Brander is one of my favourite author and naturalist and I have been always hoping to experience some of the observations of various species he has mentioned in his book. Some years ago I had seen Sambar's hitting out at wild dogs with their forelegs, exactly as Brander had mentioned. Now, after 104 years of him sighting a black leopard, it was time for me to have the experience of sighting one such charismatic animal.

We were fortunate to sight a black leopard on a tree top in Nagarhole on the evening of 4th July 2017. There were earlier reports of some very brief sightings. However, the sighting this time lasted for 26 minutes. The majestic black panther was resting on a branch in a tree, but was watchful of its surroundings. Its piercing gaze was mesmerising.



Rudyard Kipling in “The Jungle Book” writes that the black panther was feared “*Everybody knew Bagheera, and nobody dared to cross his path*”. Looking into his piercing eyes, one can easily get fear. One can feel that it is like some kind of apparition or ghost of the darkness. However, to me it appeared like this magnificent black creature is sucking up all the negative toxins and ill luck from my body, mind and soul. It was a spiritual feeling completely rejuvenating me. In the long wanderings in forests, few sightings in the wild had such an impact on me.

It started licking its body and then yawning. So I knew that the date with black panther is coming to an end as it was preparing to get down from the tree in search of prey. Suddenly there was a herd of deer nearby and in a flash the black leopard got down from the tree and disappeared in the Parthenium filled jungle where visibility was extremely poor. In a moment it had melted in the jungle.

I didn't hear his voice and can't confirm Kipling's description that its voice is “as soft as wild honey dripping from a tree”. However, Kipling's metaphor of the skin softer than dawn is pretty apt. I hope we can protect our wilderness and its amazing biodiversity so that others too can experience the mesmerising gaze of the Black Panther and see its soft silk like body.

Conservation News

NGT bans synthetic manja:

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) on 10th July has ordered a permanent ban on synthetic manja and nylon strings and any material that is not biodegradable for use in kite flying as it poses grave danger to the life and limb of people as well as birds and animals. The NGT had earlier placed an interim ban on synthetic Manja in December 2016.

The NGT bench headed by Justice Swatanter Kumar ordered “There shall be a total ban on the ‘manja’, which are made of nylon or any other synthetic material or are coated with synthetic non-biodegradable substances”. The bench also directed all the Governments to implement the order. “All chief secretaries of states and Union Territories are directed to enforce prohibition on manufacture and use of synthetic manja/nylon thread for flying kites throughout the country”. The ban includes cotton threads coated with glass.

Environment Ministry Approves Projects for Climate Change Adaptation in Three States

MoEF&CC has approved three projects for climate change adaptation in Rajasthan, Gujarat and Sikkim.

The National Steering Committee on Climate Change (NSCCC), under the Chairmanship of Secretary MoEF&CC, Shri Ajay Narayan Jha, approved the Detailed Project Reports (DPRs) submitted by Governments of Rajasthan, Gujarat and Sikkim for funding under the National Adaptation Fund for Climate Change (NAFCC).

Current projects address a range of climate change vulnerabilities in the States which are not addressed under the ongoing schemes of the Central and State Governments. In Rajasthan, the project builds on work carried out under Phase I of the Mukhya Mantri Jal Swavlamban Abhiyan to enhance the adaptive capacity of villages by making them self-reliant in terms of water requirement. The project in Gujarat seeks to enhance the adaptive capacity of natural resource dependent communities to climate change in targeted villages of Kachchh district. In Sikkim, the project aims to address the issue of water security which are directly identified as climate resilience building interventions under the SAPCC.

NAFCC is a flagship Scheme of Government of India, which provides 100 per cent grant to the State Governments for implementing climate change adaptation projects. The Scheme is designed to fulfill the objectives of National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) and to operationalize the State Action Plans on Climate Change (SAPCCs). During the two year period, 21 projects were approved at a total cost of Rs. 435.72 crore. The projects address vulnerabilities in climate sensitive sectors like agriculture, animal husbandry, water, forests and coasts among others. The project outcomes are expected to increase resilience and adaptive capacity of vulnerable communities and ecosystems against climate change impacts.

Conservation News

Environment Minister to Dedicate NCSCM to the Nation

The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has started a new National Coastal Mission. The Minister inaugurated the new building of the NCSCM at Anna University campus in Chennai. The research undertaken by NCSCM will be used directly for arriving at policy decisions and for capacity building of coastal communities and other stakeholders. Six research divisions have been established at NCSCM that will combine geospatial sciences with cutting-edge research on conservation, pollution, climate change and community interface – both in mainland and islands of the country. NCSCM's core strength is the multi-disciplinary nature of coastal system research for the well-being of coastal communities and promoting sustainable development based on scientific principles.

The Minister said that the focus of the Government in coastal states is sustainable livelihood, development of coastal communities through various R&D and policy initiatives.

The National Centre for Sustainable Coastal Management has been established with objectives of Promoting integrated and sustainable management of the coastal and marine areas in the country for the benefit and well-being of the traditional coastal and island communities; Strengthening capacity of coastal management at all levels, including stakeholders; Advising Union and State governments and other associated stakeholders on policy and scientific matters related to Integrated Coastal Zone Management; Striving to become a world class institution through cutting-edge research pertaining to understanding coastal zones, coastal processes, integrated planning and management of coastal and marine areas.

The Union Minister for MoEF&CC Dr. Harsh Vardhan emphasised that the NCSCM, along with other Ministries and State/UT governments will also strive to scientifically map the cumulative vulnerability of coastal environment to climate change and consequent threats to ecology, lives and livelihoods; develop vulnerability-based environment and adaptive management plans for key sectors by (i) mainstreaming climate sensitivity and readiness into all coastal developmental projects and (ii) Promoting development taking into account the threats due to natural hazards in the coastal areas and sea-level rise; build resilience of coastal communities (fishermen, agriculturists etc) and develop infrastructure and settlements in urban and rural areas; conserve and protect coastal stretches, its unique environment and its marine area by enhancing mitigation (blue carbon ecosystems which include mangroves, seagrass meadows and salt marsh ecosystems) and build institutional capacity – both sector-wise and for community.

We sincerely hope that this institution will become a world class institute without the nepotism that is often on display in many other research institutes.

Equipment Discussions -

Rode Videomic Pro Plus

Rode Videomic Pro Plus is a compact supercardioid condenser microphone with rycote lyre shockmount which helps in preventing transmission of noise through the mount and has an integrated LB1 lithium battery which is rechargeable via usb port. This microphone has got a frequency range from 20Hz to 20KHz and works well as an on camera microphone for a variety of uses that newbie videographers, event shooters, DSLR videographers grapple with in their day to day shooting environments.



The Rode Videomic Pro Plus has a +20 dB setting which will come in handy while shooting in DSLRs and other low end camcorders and it also has a flat setting when you are using with cameras or recorders with better quality preamps. It also has a -10 dB pad setting.

There is also a high pass filter setting of 75Hz and 150Hz. In some of the noisy urban settings with air conditioner hum and traffic noise, one can use these filters.

There is a new auto-power feature that is include which results in the power getting on when the cable is attached and off when the cable is removed.

The Rode Videomicpro Plus has got an improved RF tolerance than the previous Videomic pro. So there would be less disturbances from external RF emitting devices. The Rode videomic pro plus has a 3.5mm TRS cable and it outputs dual mono unbalanced signal. One can use it to record one of the signals at a lower level for safety so that any unexpected spike doesn't distort.

The LB1 lithium battery that is included which is supposed to last for 100 hours. These days many people carry powerbanks for recharging their phones. Since the battery can be charged by micro-usb, so one can easily use such a powerbank to re-charge the battery of this microphone in the field.

The Rode Videomic Pro Plus has a sensitivity of -33.6 dB re 1 V/Pa (21.2 mV at 94 dB SPL) ± 2 dB at 1 kHz. It has a dynamic range of 118.8 dB and a maximul SPL of 133 dB. The signal to noise ratio is 79.8 dB.

The Rode Videomic Pro Plus weighs 122gms and at 299 US dollars it is expected to be popular.

Preorder Link: https://www.bhphotovideo.com/c/product/1350282-REG/rode_vmp_videomic_pro_on_camera_shotgun.html/BI/13252/KBID/19990

Equipment Discussions -

Canon announces EOS 6D Mark II

Canon has announced the full frame DSLR EOS 6D Mark II camera.

The Canon EOS 6D Mark II has a 26.2 MP CMOS full frame sensor. This camera sports the latest DIGIC 7 processor. So the native ISO range is now from ISO 100 to ISO 40000. The high ISO is expandable to ISO 102400. However, the expandable ISOs are only expected to be used in extremely rare cases where capturing the shot is more important than the noise and quality of the image.



The autofocus system of the 6D Mark II has been vastly improved. It now sports 45 point AF with all the autofocus points being cross type. The previous 6D camera had 11 point AF.

These days Canon includes the awesome Dual Pixel AF in its DSLRs and the 6D Mark II camera is no exception. You can also record video in this camera at Full HD ie. 1080p at 60 frames per second.

The 6D Mark II has a vari-angle 3 inch LCD screen like the 80D and it is a touchscreen too, so one can also chose the point of focus by touching the area in the touchscreen. So it is the first full frame DSLR to have a vari-angle touchscreen LCD. However, the 6D Mark II can't shoot 4K video like the 5D Mark IV. This appears to be the area where Canon has decided to differentiate its high end cameras by giving them 4K and restricting others to 1080p.

Equipment Discussions -

The 6D Mark II has a continuous burst shooting mode of 6.5 frames per second. It also is dust and water resistant and comes with built-in Wi-Fi, NFC, Bluetooth and GPS technologies.

Price: 6D Mark II will cost \$1,999.00 for body only, \$3,099.00 with the Canon EF 24-105mm f/4L IS USM II lens and \$2,599.00 with the Canon EF 24-105mm f/3.5-5.6 STM lens

Availability: Late July

Equipment Discussions -

Nikon Announces Development of D850 DSLR

Nikon on its 100th anniversary announced the development of a next generation, high resolution and high speed, full frame D850 camera.

According to Nikon the D850 will be a formidable tool for creators who will not compromise on exceptional image quality and versatility, including both aspiring and professional photographers as well as hobbyists who capture landscapes, weddings, sports, fashion, commercial imagery and multimedia content creators.

The D850 is the successor to the D810, which has been highly praised by its users for offering extremely sharp and clear rendering, with rich tone characteristics. According to Nikon, the full frame D850 DSLR camera is engineered with a range of new technologies, features and performance enhancements that are a direct result of feedback from demanding users.

In a short video posted, Nikon shows someone shooting timelapse in the night and at the end it says 8K timelapse. To create 8K timelapse the shots should be atleast 7680 pixels on the horizontal side and 4320 pixels on the vertical.

Since the Nikon D810, which is again a full frame camera, shoots 7360x4912 which is 36.3 effective megapixels, by rule of thumb calculations we expect the D850 to have a higher resolution of 39.4 MP or close to 40MP.

The teaser video by Nikon also has live UHD 4K (3840x2160 pixels) video of a photographer setting up his camera for time-lapse in the night. So Nikon is giving a hint that the D850 can shoot 4K video and also has extreme high ISO capabilities. With Nikon pushing 4K video, Canon has to also up the game as far as 4K video is concerned. Canon currently has 4K video in only 5D Mark IV and 1DXMarkII. So expect 4K video to be in more DSLRs.

It is always good to have Nikon remain as a strong player and pushing Canon and for supremacy in the DSLR market. Healthy competition is always vital for customers.

Video Link - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a8MdTsFdvHc>

Natural History

Wonderful Wandering Glider

Text and Images by : **Amar Kumar Nayak**

Wandering Glider or Globe Skimmer (*Pantala flavescens* Fabricius, 1798) is a species of dragonfly belonging to the family of Skimmers (Libellulidae) and are found throughout the Indian subcontinent.



People often associate the ability to travel long distances with size of an individual. However, such people would get a shock when they know that these dragonflies, despite being small in size, are known for their capacity of powerful flight and they migrate from Africa to Asia.



Natural History

Wonderful Wandering Glider

Text and Images by : **Amar Kumar Nayak**

The Wandering Glider or Globe Skimmers pass through West Bengal during monsoon. They are also known to be harbinger of monsoon in Kerala.

The Wandering Glider is a medium sized golden yellow (in female) or orange (in male) coloured dragonfly found in marshes, wetlands and river side during June to November in the Indian plains.

Wandering Glider is a medium sized golden yellow (in female)



Wandering Glider is Orange in Males.

Natural History

Wonderful Wandering Glider

Text and Images by : Amar Kumar Nayak

This dragonfly grows up to 29-35mm (Abdomen), 38-40mm (Hind wing). It is very common in pre-monsoon, monsoon and post-monsoon seasons and its I.U.C.N. status is also Least Concern. During this time we can observe its flying behavior very closely, more than hundreds of dragonflies fly together for an hour or more around a fixed place.



The images of dragonflies were captured from different parts of Asansol-Durgapur industrial region between 2012-2016 for my work on Odonates.

Natural History -

COUNTRY NOTEBOOK: M.Krishnan: 'Battles Royal'

The Sunday Statesman: 17-October-1965 (shared by Shri. Saktipada Panigrahi)

BATTLES ROYAL

" THE galumphing Tusker shown below was photographed six years ago, shortly after he had won a territorial fight with another lone bull. I saw the vanquished rival too but that gory, raging, brooding giant was in no mood to permit an approach, so no picture of him was possible. The victor on the other hand was at peace with the world, unmarked from its recent encounter, except for a skin-deep abrasion high up the right thigh; he was grazing in a field of lush tall-grass selecting a few blades from each tussock choosily and flapping his ears vigorously, always a sign of contentment in an elephant. I had no trouble getting close enough to take several pictures, though my approach had to be made openly but the thin grey persistent drizzle blurred detail.



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ELEPHANTS seldom fight among themselves and as a rule only when they must. The big bull of the herd is not tolerant of strange adult bulls but thrice I have seen lone tuskers keeping together in a close brace for a few days -- I realise how meaningless is the word "lone" in this sentence but it is necessary to indicate that it is a grown bull living by itself and not a herd bull that is meant. At times, as when there is competition for some choice plot for grazing between two lone bulls or

when the master bull of a herd meets an aspiring rival, there is a BATTLE ROYAL.

THE curious thing about these fights is that they are often not limited to single engagement. No one can tell how impressive a bull tusker seems to a much smaller one, but it is seldom that a small bull will take on a really big one. However, a fighting pair is not always evenly matched and one of the pair may be considerably larger -- youth and ambition are often on the side of the lesser tusker and it is not always the bigger animal that wins though it is usually so. When the combatants are more or less of a size, the fight may drag on all day, or even be spread over several days with long breaks between bouts of fighting for feeding, drinking and baths or mud-baths.

AN animal weighing four or five tons cannot keep going for long without food, and both combatants break off from time to time to replenish, the other elephant often grazing in the same locality, though some distance apart. After feeding and drink-



ing, they resume the fight and break off again to feed, and occasionally the intermittent battle may last a week. At times the combat resolves itself more on less into a pushing match and then the slope of the ground on which each combatant is standing may favour or handicap him, but it is seldom that bulls start a fight on a sloping ground.

FIGHTS for the territory or the herd among rival GAUR bulls do not often result in grave injuries and are seldom fatal but unless one of the fighting pair breaks off and runs away quite early in the engagement, among elephants such combats usually result in the loser (and at times even the winner) being grievously wounded, and even in being gored to death. Unlike carnivores, which are expert in killing, herbivores often persist with the attack long after the enemy is dead, and the victor may stay on for some time after winning the fight periodically to gore the corpse of the enemy.

HOWEVER, the beaten elephant frequently runs away from the locality while he still can. According to my friend, K. Krishnamoorthy, it is such defeated tusked bulls that turn into rouges. I have the most sincere regard for my friend's knowledge of our forests and wild animals, particularly elephants, but though I realise a frustrated bull often given to raging, I think the main

cause for a lone bull developing into a rogue is gunshot wounds inflicted by men.

THE question of Mucknas is especially interesting. These tuskless bulls are common in parts of North-East India and uncommon in the South -- in Ceylon, all bulls are mucknas as a rule. An adult muckna usually has a remarkably thick and muscular trunk, and is often of imposing size. Some people say that in a fight between a muckna and a tusker the greater weight and trunk-power of the former yells, and tuskers seldom fight mucknas -- it is a fact that trunk is freely used in intra-specific fights among elephants. Others say that the tusks (which are also certainly used in such fights) will tell in favour of the bull possessing them and that mucknas fear tuskers. I do not know the truth of the matter, but both schools of opinion could be right, the tusker winning at times and muckna at other times.

WITH the dwindling of their territory because of human encroachments on elephant jungles, one might logically expect these territorial fights to be commoner than in the past but observation of wild elephants yields no evidence to sustain this view. Little can be said for certain on this point, because even if one is lucky enough to collect reliable data on fights between wild elephants in the last ten years or so, no reliable data from the past exists."

- M.Krishnan

This was published on 17 October 1965 in The Sunday Statesman

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I look forward to your inputs and support in preserving the last tracts of wilderness and wildlife left in our beautiful country. For other interesting articles and images check - <http://www.indiawilds.com/forums/>

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Regards,

Sabyasachi Patra

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