



IndiaWilds Newsletter

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Wildlife & Cultural Ethos :

On the occasion of the World Environment Day Prime Minister Mr. Modi tweeted "We are blessed to be a part of a culture where living in complete harmony with the environment is central to our ethos. Let us serve as trustees, where we utilise our natural resources for the present and at the same time ensure happiness of our future generations. Let us ensure that even the smallest step we take in our daily lives will be an effort towards conserving nature and natural resources".

I am really encouraged by the Prime Ministers statement though there are also some aspects of his statement that could have been articulated better.

It is not often that a Prime Minister of this country remembers that environment and wildlife is part of our cultural ethos. The Tiger and Lion are considered to be the "vahana" or vehicle of our Goddess Durga/Sherawali Maa. Elephant the vehicle of Lord Indra the King of Gods, the owl vehicle of Maa Laxmi the Goddess of wealth, the snake adorns the neck of Lord Shiva, Lord Kartikeya has peacock as vehicle, Lord Vishnu has Garuda or the present day Brahminy Kite and so on and so forth...

In short, each and every animal and living species is considered holy by being associated with our Gods. Unfortunately today we kill them as we deem fit. Lets examine the case of the elephant.

Save the Elephant:

Lord Ganesha, the elephant headed God is living in dire straits. Killed by speeding trains in many parts of West Bengal, UP and other parts of the country; poached for their ivory and domesticated and abused every day by elephant owners, this God is all but forgotten except perhaps his china made statues that adorn most of our homes or our car dashboards. There was an elephant task force constituted by the previous Government. Unfortunately beyond naming the elephant as our National Heritage Animal the previous Government has done precious nothing to protect the elephant or its habitat.

The Elephant Task Force report produced by the hard work of some knowledgeable scientists and men and women of repute is gathering dust. A major part of the elephant habitat is outside our protected areas. The Elephant Task Force report had recommended to buy back some of those lands to protect the elephant migratory corridors. Unfortun-



nately, given the low priority for our National Heritage Animal, there has been no budgetary allocations to buy and secure the elephant habitat. Budgetary allocations to buy back lands as enumerated in the Elephant Task Force report would help in ensuring the future of the elephants is safe as well as reducing the man-elephant conflicts. The fatalities, both of man and elephant, would be reduced as well.



Elephant killed by Train

The elephant is fighting an increasingly losing battle for survival. Will the Hon'ble PM kindly look into the Elephant Task Force report to help in securing the survival of this God in distress?

Sethusamudram Project

I would also like to bring to the Hon'ble PMs notice a massive blunder by the previous Government which wanted to push the Sethusamudram Project on the basis of questionable financial benefits. The Supreme Court appointed R. K. Pachauri committee in its February 2013 report had concluded that the Sethusamudram Project would neither be economically nor ecologically viable. The committee had said that "benchmark rate of return of 12 percent isn't met for the range of scenarios examined in the case of alignment 4A". It said that the projected rate of return, which was used by the project proponents to justify the financial viability of the project, is indeed "over optimistic".

The Sethusamudram Project will require dredging in this area, and will result in sedimentations which will stop the sunrays from reaching the sea grass leading to their death. There are about 11 species of sea grass found in this area which forms exclusive diet of the dugongs or sea cows, an endangered species. Death of seagrass will result in the dugong's perishing. Apart from the dugongs, the seagrass also forms an ideal ecosystem for various fish species which sustains commercial fishing and the economy of Tamil Nadu.



Adams Bridge

The Sethusamudram project is going to destroy the Adams bridge which is believed to be the Rama Setu, built by Lord Rama for moving into Lanka (modern day Sri Lanka) to fight against the demon king Ravana who had kidnapped Lord Rama's wife Sita. Mythology, perceptions and beliefs are inextricably linked with our cultural heritage. Protecting this cultural heritage would assuage the feelings of millions of Indians.

Jaitapur Nuclear Power Plant:

It would be apt to remind the Hon'ble PM a story from the Mahabharata. After the Mahabharata war, Gandhari had asked Krishna as to why her 100 sons had to die. Krishna had replied that it was written in Gandhari's fate that she was destined to watch her 100 sons die. Krishna told Gandhari that during her younger days, while cooking rice Gandhari had poured hot water on the ground and that resulted in destroying hundred eggs of an insect. The insect had cursed Gandhari to witness the death of her sons the way the insect had to see the death of her own.

Stunned by this discourse, Gandhari had said that it was the act of an innocent child. Krishna had explained that the laws of Karma are like that. Every action howsoever unintentional has an equal reaction, and one has to experience it in this life or the next. So in some parts of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana women are advised never to pour hot water on the ground. The hot water must be cooled or mixed with cold water before pouring on the ground.

This story from our rich cultural heritage teaches us not to harm other living beings and is very similar to the story of the proposed Jaitapur Nuclear Power Plant in Maharashtra which on completion will release massive volumes of hotwater into two creeks which will kill the flora and fauna of the creeks.

The environment clearance for this project was granted by the previous Government on the basis of NEERI report which ignored the thermodynamic study report about the impact of hot water discharge into the creeks. The impact of the hot water release into the creeks is going to be severe especially during low tides. NEERI also had based its report on November 1989 data of sea water currents. I am sure the Hon'ble PM would agree that a Power Plant which will be operational in 2024 and has got environmental clearance based on data from 35 years ago is a major anomaly. The creeks are rich in marine life and the major source of livelihood for about 15,000 fishermen and their families. Since the previous Government didn't lis-

ten to their protests and many of them even lost their lives in police firing, these people had voted for the present BJP led NDA Government. I would urge the Hon'ble PM to intervene and save the rich biodiversity of the area as well as livelihood of people.

Narcondam Hornbills

There is an endangered species of hornbills, numbering less than 350 birds, called Narcondam Hornbill (*Aceros nar-*



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condami) who reside only in the Narcondam islands. The proposal of the Coast Guard to set up a RADAR station as well as power generator will entail damage to the habitat due to clearing the area for a road and location for RADAR. There would be disturbance due to the regular functioning of the RADAR system and it is likely to cause irreversible damage to this species and can push them to extinction. So this proposal of the coast guard was earlier rejected by the MoEF on 31.08.2012. Unfortunately now the MoEF has reversed its stand.

The Hon'ble Supreme Court of India in its judgement on the relocation of lions had stated that "Article 21 of the Constitution of India protects not only the human rights but also casts an obligation on human beings to protect and preserve a specie becoming extinct, conservation and protection of environment is an inseparable part of right to life". It had again observed, "no specie can survive on the brink of extinction indefinitely and the probability associated with a critically endangered specie make their extinction a matter of time".

We do understand the requirements of the Defence forces, especially with the reported listening outposts by China in Myanmar's coco island. However, proactive diplomacy can often open up doors and be much

Narcondam Hornbill by Niranjana Sant

better than these reactive steps. The first external visit of the PM was to Bhutan, a neighbouring country in an apparent effort to engage and foster good relations with our neighbours. I hope India focuses its effort to engage with Myanmar as well, so that the challenges of China setting up outposts can be met.

Our defence forces always rise up to the challenges. I am sure they can search for alternate solutions to safeguard our borders as well as our natural heritage. The Hon'ble PM had said "Let us ensure that even the smallest step we take in our daily lives will be an effort towards conserving nature and natural resources". A small step to find out a solution to safe guard the future of this endemic species would go a long way in stopping their extinction.

Natural Resources Not Infinite:

The Hon'ble PM Mr. Narendra Modi had also said "Let us serve as trustees, where we utilise our natural resources for the present and at the same time ensure happiness of our future generations."

The meaning of the word trustee is that of a person who holds or administers property for a third person. The word trust is used as the person holds the trust of the third party to ensure that the property is secure. Which means the trustee doesn't consume or utilise the property for his/her own benefits. However, in his statement, our PM talks about trustee utilising the resources for the present. He has not said that as a trustee he or his Government will protect our natural heritage for the future generations. Instead he is talking of utilising ie consuming it in the present and his speech writers perhaps believe that even though the present trustees consume/utilise the natural resources the future generations will be happy. I wonder how the future generations will be happy with us when we are plundering and finishing off our natural heritage today?

Perhaps there is an assumption that our natural resources are endless. Unfortunately that assumption is completely wrong. There was a time when releasing pollutants to a river from an industry was still ok because the number of industries were less and the river could cleanse itself of the small amount of the man made pollutants dumped into the river.

There was a time when clearing a few patches of forest for roads, industries or submerging part of it for dams was ok because we had thought that we had huge tracts of forest land and the patches of forests cleared was small enough in comparison. Today we find that our forests have become isolated patches surrounded by human habitations. With loss of forest cover desertification is setting in with 69% of India's landmass being dry (ISRO 2007 report). Our forests due to their carbon sequestration act as our lungs.

There was a time when a few trucks, busses, industries belching out smoke was fine as they were few and far between. Today our air is heavily polluted and the children learn not to play outside for fear of air borne diseases. Every year 627,000 people die in India due to air pollution (estimated by Global Burden of Disease project). About 1.3 crore people above the age of 15 years suffer from asthma and 1.1 crore people above the age of 35 years suffer from bronchitis (2010 health ministry).

There was a time when as children we used to drink water from taps without any problem. There was a time when I used to drink water from the streams directly without fearing for the consequences. Today we have poisoned a majority of our ground water sources due to rampant pesticide spraying along with other kinds of pollution. Bottled water has become the norm. Millions of our countrymen don't even have clean drinking water, which is a basic necessity. A couple of months back I was astonished to see the water overflowing from the overhead tank was being collected by street children and women so that they can have some water for their homes. When there is such a huge difference between the Have's and Have not's can this country progress?

So how do we make our future generations happy Mr. Prime Minister when the present is coughing, bleeding, sneezing and struggling on its limbs?

I am really happy that soon after taking oath the PM has reportedly promised to "cleanse" Ganga, a river which has become so polluted that a dip in it can cause skin cancer. Similarly Yamuna and other rivers are dying because of pollution, diversion of water, mindless dam constructions which has reduced the flow of the rivers and their ability to self cleanse. I hope the new Government will take a holistic look at the challenges of polluted rivers.

The other reported move of the Government in looking into the Himalayan landscape would be a good move as it is an ecologically fragile area which is currently under tremendous stress.

I am sure the current Government due to its absolute majority will have more time to look after Governance instead of fighting the "coalition compulsions" and hence will be able to give more time to save our natural and cultural heritage.

Can Mass media help in Conserving Mahseer & Riverine Ecosystem?

- By Nishikant Gupta

India is home to a rich assortment of flora and fauna, and many species have suitably established an important position in the psyche of the Indian population through cultural, traditional and religious associations. Additionally, large terrestrial species such as the Bengal tiger (*Panthera tigris tigris*), the Indian elephant (*Elephas maximus indicus*) and the Indian one-horned rhinoceros (*Rhinoceros unicornis*) have long captivated people here through their majestic looks, imposing size and power. These charismatic species have managed to strike a positive chord among not just the Indian public but foreigners too. The numerous international and domestic tourists visiting the various protected areas, i.e. national parks, wildlife sanctuaries, conservation reserves and community reserves in India to observe these species in the wild has increased many folds over the last decade.

A majority of these terrestrial species can be observed within and bordering their designated protected areas (PAs), but seldom far away from such legislatively established zones, except the Indian Elephant whose major part of the territory falls outside the protected areas. In spite of such charismatic wildlife limited to hardly 4% of our landmass in the protected areas, a large portion of Indian population is aware of these species despite a majority of them not having seen them ever in flesh and blood. In our busy lives, the residents of our urban and rural areas are too busy in their daily struggle to eke out a living rather than think or dream of a holiday in the wilds to witness these charismatic species in question. These wildlife holidays apart from being expensive, often require long and tiring journeys to key PAs in India. A few flips of our television channels (disc antennas in remote villages is a common site in India), a few pages of online search engines, and logging into one's social media pages can often help in watching a film or photo of these charismatic species and help serve to continue the existing perceptions about wildlife that people have. The role played by mass media in keeping these charismatic species in the minds of the general public is immense, even though most of the coverage is sensationalistic and is aimed to arouse fear instead of love for the species.

One then wonders that if mass media has been so successful in keeping the news about wildlife in front of people, albeit mostly for the wrong reasons, then could there be a potential for raising awareness for our often neglected river ecosystems and the species supported by them? After all, our riverine ecosystem is as important as our forests. Millions of people

depend on the perennial Indian rivers and their species, e.g. fish for their livelihood, and multiple threatened species are supported by these rivers, e.g. gharial (*Gavialis gangeticus*), mugger crocodile (*Crocodylus palustris*), and South Asian river dolphin (*Platanista gangetica*). In addition, other riverine species such as the smooth-coated otter (*Lutrogale perspicillata*), the common otter (*Lutra lutra*), the oriental small-clawed otter (*Aonyx cinerea*), and the mahseer (*Tor* spp.) fish species could have the potential to generate substantial public interest. People, young and old alike, often flock to the temple ponds to feed fishes and watch the fishes big and small come close to the ghats. So a



Gharial (*Gavialis gangeticus*) by Kaustuv Chatterjee

freshwater species can catch the imagination of people if promoted well. And to top it all, people readily buy into the idea of “picnic” which in earlier days invariably meant a feast in a scenic locale near a stream or river if not in a dense forest.



Smooth coated Otter by Rajan Kanagasabai

One can exploit the fascination for fishes by promoting the mahseer (*Tor*) fish species, some of which can sometimes exceed 3 meter in length. Mahseer fishes are found in some of the major Indian River systems. For example, the golden mahseer occurs in rivers from Darjeeling to Kashmir; the red-finned mahseer in rivers of Uttarakhand; and the black mahseer in the rivers of Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and North East. The golden mahseer has also been adopted as a State Fish by Uttarakhand and a few other Indian States. The Indian golden mahseer (*Tor putitora*) and the chocolate mahseer (*Neolissochilus hexagonolepis*) are declared respectively as the flagship species (State Fish) of the states Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland in North-East India (Laskar et al)**



Golden Mahseer in the Kosi river

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has categorized the mahseer as threatened species with a decreasing population trend. Of the range of environmental factors resulting in the declining population size of this fish, urbanization, illegal encroachment, over-fishing, indiscriminate poaching (sometimes by the illegal use of poisons and dynamite), and destruction of habitats come up on top. The construction of dams and barrages result in fragmentation of the habitat for the Mahseer fish. This results in the fish losing valuable feeding and spawning ground. Unfortunately, due to lack of awareness about this fish and the lower priority placed on it vis-à-vis other charismatic species like the tiger, this fish never finds a mention in the environmental impact assessment when its habitat is altered due to construction of dams. It is imperative that we need to raise awareness that the fish is not just for our table but it also has an ecological role to play.

There are multiple benefits of promoting and protecting the mahseer species. They are regarded as an apex species in some river systems of India, helping to maintain the overall integrity of the ecosystem. Some scientists have referred to the mahseer as a keystone species, while others suggest promoting the golden mahseer as a flagship fish species for the conservation of himalayan rivers. Promoting Mahseer fish in the mass media can result in tourists visiting hotspots in the rivers for sighting mahseer. This tourism revenue can help the locals a lot and may hopefully lessen the migration of people from rural areas to urban areas.

Some may argue that spotting a riverine species like Mahseer may prove difficult, as simply walking on treacherous banks of a river doesn't guarantee sighting. However, through careful media strategy it can be packaged as thrill seeking treks. It should be noted that a casual safari within a tiger reserve too does not guarantee a successful sighting, and it often ends up more about the experience for a majority of the tourists, than simply seeing a tiger and one sights many other species! Similarly in this case apart from sighting Mahseer one can also sight other riverine species like otters, gharials etc.

In the case of the mahseers, appropriate photographs, films and documentaries could generate long lasting and positive effects among people, and can help to develop a desire among individuals to witness the species in the wild. Of course there are fears that such an approach might not be successful as anticipated, because after all, there is tremendous conservation and financial backing from international organizations for larger and more charismatic terrestrial species such as the tiger for example. Nonetheless, with the current threats being faced by the wild populations of the mahseers and Indian rivers, the time is right to take that challenging step towards their protection through the assistance of mass media. The financial hurdle could be overcome by the support of various media establishments, government organizations and NGOs. After all, lesser known, captivating river species such as the mahseers could have the hidden potential to protect itself and associated habitats, but more importantly the Indian rivers – a lifeline for millions through public relations.

***Strategy of mahseer fish (Actinopterygii: Cyprinidae) conservation: A case study in Arunachal Pradesh, India* Boni Amin Laskar¹, Jawan Singh Rawat², Mrinal Dasgupta³, Shyama Prasad Biswas⁴, DebojitSarma⁵ and D.N. Das⁶

Conservation News

Pilibhit Wildlife Sanctuary gets tiger reserve forest status

Jun 14, 2014

There is a welcome addition to the number of Tiger Reserves. The Uttar Pradesh Government has notified the Pilibhit Wildlife Sanctuary as a tiger reserve with effect from June 9, 2014. The upgrade in the status is expected to strengthen the ongoing tiger conservation efforts.

Pilibhit becomes the third tiger reserve in UP after Dudhwa, which was notified in 1987, and Amangarh Tiger Reserve in Bijnor, notified in 2012. The Pilibhit Tiger reserve will comprise of forest ranges of Mala, Mahof, Barahi, Deoria and Haripur and has a total area of 73,024.98 hectares. The core area will comprise 6,279.8 hectares, while the buffer zone comprising the Khutar range in Shahjahanpur will be of 12,745.2 hectares. Due to the upgradation to a tiger reserve it will stand to gain more budgetary support from the Central Government which will help in its preservation.

The Special Secretary, department of environment and forests, Pratibha Singh, said "Of the total tiger population in the country, about 118 are in UP, while approximately 30 tigers are in Pilibhit area. This notification will allow us to strengthen our efforts towards tiger conservation and promotion of eco-tourism in the state".

Apart from saving the tiger which is the apex predator, the tiger reserve notification and the consequent enhancement in protection will help in preservation of other rare species like the Bengal florican, swamp deer and leopard. Hopefully the increased effort in protection and habitat management will lead to better forage and hence increase in prey base for the predators. So the recently seen cases of tigers in the fields adjoining the forests is likely to get reduced bringing the number of unwanted human-animal conflicts.

Three tigers caught on camera in Tillari region

24th June 2014

KERI: Maharashtra's forest department says it has used a camera trap technique to study the natural habitat as well as the movements of the big cat in the Tillari reservoir and successfully captured images of three tigers.

The Tillari region, bordering Goa and Maharashtra, has a water reservoir nestled amidst lush green patches of forest with a thriving population of herbivorous animals favouring visits from carnivorous animals like tigers, leopards and other animals.

Speaking to TOI, B S Shinde, range forest officer, Dodamarg forest range, Maharashtra, said "We got camera trap images of tigers. Our authorities have told us to keep the information about the images confidential for the safety and security of the big cats. The tigers are in the region ranging from Chorla ghat in Karnataka and Goa to Kendre of Tillari. They come into this region due to the availability of ample food and water."

Ramesh Kumar, deputy conservator of forests, Sawantwadi division said, "Our officials were successful in securing camera trap images of tigers in the area of the Tillari reservoir. The images indicate the presence of three tigers."

Recently a team of wildlife biologists under the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund and Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment, supported by Centre for Wildlife Studies called for immediate intervention for protection and conservation of the tigers and other species of wild animals in the landscape spanning 6,000 sq km that is part of the Sahyadri-Konkan corridor.

This area covers the Koyna wildlife sanctuary, Chandoli national park and Radhanagri wildlife sanctuary along with the Tillari region as the rate of landscape modification and fragmentation is breaking forest contiguity and isolating protected areas for the large carnivores, the study found.

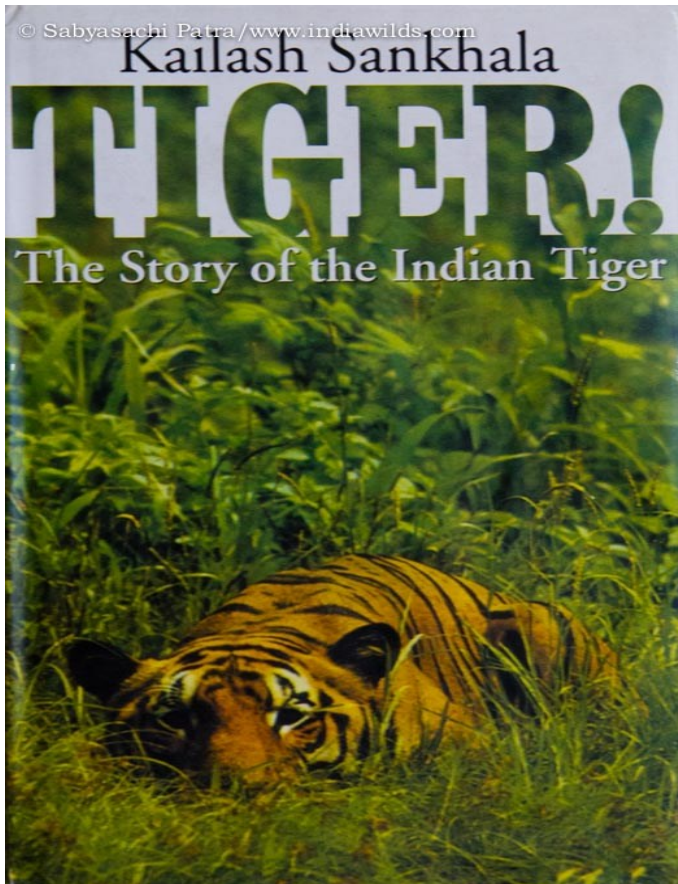
Using the same camera-trap method in 2013, through an initiative undertaken by range forest officer Paresh Porob, with a Wildlife Conservation Society-Bangalore (WCS) team, Goa's forest department captured images of a tigress relishing a wild boar in Dongurli inside the Mhadei wildlife sanctuary.

This year, Goa's forest department and WCS installed camera traps, but have not confirmed any results. The WCS team is currently engrossed in a camera trap project in the Bhimgad wildlife sanctuary, Karnataka.

Book Review

Tiger! The story of the Indian Tiger by Kailash Sankhala

I wish to bring to the notice of our readers a book which throws light on the tiger as well as on its author himself, who was one of the original champions of the Tiger, the Late Kailash Sankhala. In today's world where every other person wants to be known as the Tiger Man, he was the man who lived and breathed with the tiger, fighting many a battle against the hunting lobby and other interests inimical to the tiger and other charismatic wildlife. His voice had helped in stopping the official tiger hunts. He was the first executive director of Project Tiger.



During his stint as the Director of Delhi Zoo he had a tiger living with him in his quarters giving him ample time to observe and study the habits of the tiger. In 1970 he became the first Government officer to get the coveted Jawaharlal Nehru Fellowship and helped him travel the length and breadth of the country to study the tiger. This book is an outcome of all those studies in the wild and in the zoo. However this book is not written in the style of a PhD thesis. It is in fact partly autobiographical which helps in connect with that era and understand the wildlife as well as the threats that he fought against, often successfully. Perhaps that may help us in getting inspiration to fight the unprecedented assault against Wild India in our times.

This book is divided into two parts. The Part One, which is focused on natural history, is divided into several chapters. The first titled “The mighty predator” describes the various tiger species, their origin and the habits of the tiger like stalking its prey, how far it carries off its kill etc. This is a very good learning for many people as his black and white sketches prepared from his photographs describe the various poses as well as expressions. For example six head sketches of the tiger showing its expressions when it is watching, looking with interest, angry dislike, warning growl and low

growl etc. are shown which can help the reader in understanding the behaviour should he/she is fortunate to have such an encounter in the wild.

The second chapter titled “waiting for the tiger” is about his experiences in the hides near waterholes in Sariska. Those notes form would come across music to the ears of an avid naturalist.

The third chapter titled “Family bonds” talk about his sighting of a mating pair in the wild as well as interaction between tigress and its cubs in wild and in captivity in Delhi zoo. He describes an interesting incident due to which he opines that the love of water for a tiger is adaptive rather than instinctive. *“Tigers, unlike lions, love water; but this seems to be adaptive rather than instinctive and the mother has to train her cubs to like it. I once had the opportunity to watch three cubs having their first swimming lesson. The tigress entered the water and sat facing the shore, but the cubs stopped on the edge. After about ten minutes of noisy protests one of them tried to approach its mother, who purred encouragingly. Finally it jumped in, and when she thought it had had enough she grasped it in her mouth and deposited it on the shore. Then she seized the other two, one by one, doused them in water and brought them back to join their bolder brother.”*

In the chapter titled “Tigerland and its inhabitants” Shri Sankhala has highlighted the unique biodiversity of India and has pointed out that out of the World’s six bio-geographic zones, India has three. No other country or continent has more than two. He further points out the richness of India’s wildlife vis-à-vis Africa. A casual tourist visiting a forest may dismiss the sighting of a deer. However, in the book Shri Sankhala points out that India has nine species of deer, which Africa lacks altogether. And as far as predators are concerned, except the cheetah which has become extinct, we have the lion as well as the tiger, leopard, snow leopard and clouded leopard. We have wolves, jackals, hyenas and dholes (*Cuon alpinus*), mongoose, fox, otters etc. So he rightly calls India as “the kingdom of predators”.



Tiger Mating

In the chapter titled “Co-predators and camp followers” he has mentioned an encounter between a tiger and a crocodile where the crocodile was the one to initiate the attack on the tiger when the tiger was crossing the Chambal river. The tiger was quick to swim to safe ground and then counter attack and kill the crocodile.

The Part two of the book is pretty interesting, educational and is relevant even today. In one of the chapters titled Myths and Man-eaters which examines the various stories about man-eating tigers and interestingly he opines, “*The man-eating tiger is mostly the creation of the human mind as a result of mans intolerance of a co-predator*”.

In the chapter titled “Circus or zoo” Shri Kailash Sankhala was a severe critic of zoos. He himself was the director of the Delhi zoo and made it one of the topmost zoos in the world. He was in fact invited to setup the Singapore zoo, which he rejected. He talks about the illicit dealings that happen in the zoo market. He describes one incident when Miss Padmaja Naidu, former Governor of West Bengal and daughter of Mrs Sarojini Naidu, visited Delhi zoo and saw Urvashi an elephant presented by Jawaharlal Nehru. Miss Naidu, when she saw Urvashi the elephant dancing and playing a mouth organ had asked “*should Urvashi dance to earn her living in your zoo? Keeping her in captivity is enough punishment*”. This incident shaped his philosophy and later he became completely against zoos.

Abolish Zoos:

In a later chapter titled Project Tiger he writes eloquently against zoos “*The latest craze for Safari Parks or the creation of*

zoos is not the answer for saving a species. I have begun to feel that these institutions change their philosophy faster than the weathercock. In Roman times animal collections were made to keep a stock for entertainment in the amphitheatres. Later they called them zoos; as fashion changed they became “Zoological Gardens”, later still “Zoological Parks”. Now that ecology, environment and the biosphere are all the rage they are suddenly changing their signboards to become “Ecological Centres” or “Biological Parks”.

The new zoos are designed on an environmental concept, as indeed we designed the zoo at Delhi. But even with the best designing we have not come anywhere near this concept. Before they are brought to the zoo the animal was caught – involving an inevitable degree of cruelty – and then shifted from their natural homes. Birds have their wings pinioned – so depriving them of their life’s essence, free flight. Why? Purely for our benefit, to see them in “as natural an environment as possible”. The whole idea of bringing a free-living animal into captivity is revolting, and simply because they eat well and reproduce in captivity does not mean that a zoo is a proper environment for them.

Zoos boast that wildlife education is an aid to a better understanding of nature. In practice it is no better than the Children’s Corner which I abolished. Specimens exhibited in drab enclosures certainly do not convey the sense of what the stripes or the tusks mean to the animal. Museum techniques are now so far advanced that they are quite capable of creating dioramas that can convey the real meaning of the land and those that live in it. Dioramas together with films on wildlife are far more educational than the sight of an animal walking up and down in a cage all his life. If it is not necessary to bring the Grand Canyon or the Taj Mahal, the desert or the rain forests to your city except in pictures why should there be any justification for netting and snaring animals for educational purposes at a zoo? The marvels of nature must be seen where they are, not where they are planted by human hand. With supersonic travel the world has shrunk to be a small place, and it is within the reach of many to appreciate nature’s creations in their natural homes. A visit to one natural area to see a few animals is far more satisfying than gaping at a whole collection in a zoo. One should be selective, enjoying a few rather than becoming bored by many.

Someone will say that zoos serve as research laboratories. They do, but that does not entitle them to keep such large collections, particularly those animals not needed for research. Let us not be wasteful in our experiments.

I have seen zoos from Delhi to Dallas, Hyderabad to Honolulu, London to Lucknow, San Diego to Srinagar. I am sure that many zoo directors will agree with me that a zoo is for the most part a confused institution unsure of its objectives. Although it seeks justification in education it is really more of a carnival for entertainment. Except for a few zoos which do a real job of contributing to knowledge their objectives are pure hypocrisy.

After I left Delhi Zoo and spent two years in the wilds I could not become reconciled to the idea of such animal prisons. The idea of starting a zoo in Singapore was proposed to me; the proposal had a lot of money behind it, but my choice had to be for the animals to be free. I was also called to help in designing a zoo at Chandigarh and Bhopal in India; I attended the first meeting and went to select the site, but my conscience did not permit me to proceed any further. I had to request to be excused. I am becoming more and more convinced that zoos with multi-purpose objectives should be abandoned.

So what is the answer? I would suggest we concentrate on creating reserves where man’s interference – or what he arrogantly calls “scientific management” – is minimal. I do not like the term “national parks”, for it has been too loosely used. The initial meaning of “the untouched glory of God” has been so diluted that it has lost its significance. The term “park” conveys artificiality and the word “national” limits its universal appeal”.

There are other chapters on White tigers of Rewa, Tiger in the house, Operation census and about the Skin trade. There is something or other noteworthy thing to quote from this 220 page book, so I would urge the readers to get this book for their own reference. Published by Nataraj Publishers, the list price was 450 rupees. However this book is not always readily available and one needs to contact the publishers or purchase online.

Equipment Discussions -

BBS Area 48 Light for filming



Photography as they say is painting with light. If there is no light there there is no art. Even with my Canon Cinema C300 camera, which is a low light champion, I need light my subjects to expose correctly. So I am going to throw some light (pun intended) on the light that I use to light up my subjects in independent feature films, documentaries and corporate shoots. This light named Area 48 is from a company called BBS and has a new Remote Phosphor technology and I have been using this for nearly a year.

Remote Phosphor Technology:

The Area 48 light of BBS has a new remote phosphor technology where the remote phosphor coating is away from the LED light. There are 48 blue diodes which when powered up emits energy which in turn excite the phosphor diffuser coating and that emits the soft bright white light. This technology increases the colour rendering as well as consistency and output.



The design is clever as one can change the phosphor diffuser panels in front to change the colour temperature from day-light to tungsten to chroma for green screen work within seconds. Ofcourse, that means you need to buy the phosphor panels separately. These remote phosphor panels are basically polycarbonate panels with phosphor coating and the panels are flexible.

The phosphor panel acts like a diffuser so unlike traditional lights you don't need to add diffusion to the BBS Area 48 remote phosphor light to soften it. So you don't lose light in the process either.

Remote Phosphor vis-à-vis LED light technology:

This remote phosphor light is much better than the LED lights because LED lights are individually coated with phosphor so that they emit a white light. Since the phosphor coating is on the LED bulbs in traditional LED lights, they degrade over time resulting in change in colour temperature. Traditional LED lights also don't have good spectral response and give green spikes. The lighting is also not so consistent and has lower CRI than the remote phosphor lights. That is why the remote phosphor light is a much better option than the LED lights.

Brightness:

According to the manufacturer the BBS Area 48 light has got a CRI of 97 which is pretty high and good. This is also comparable to a 1K traditional soft light.

It is said to output 10000 lumens at 5600K ie. daylight remote phosphor panel.

Area 48 Light Weight, Battery power and mobility:

The BBS Area 48 light weighs 3.6kgs. As compared to its output which is equivalent to 1K softlight, the weight is much less. So one can handhold it.



This light also comes with either a V mount battery plate or an AB mount battery plate. I have bought the V mount plate option and use V lock batteries with it. So one can handhold this light and move with the talent while shooting. In a recent shoot where I had to handhold the camera and move along with the actors, one of the crew members was holding this light all the time and moving along with me. I bounced it from the roof to get an even lighting as per the scene requirements.

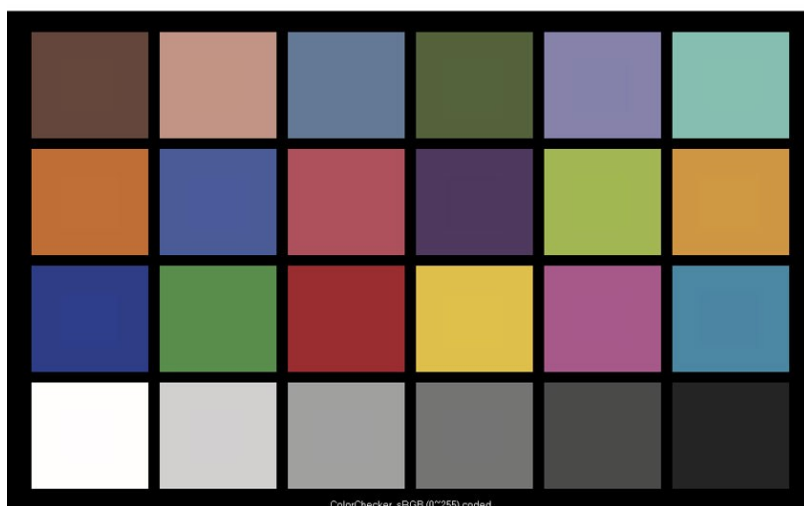
ing for the project.

Max current draw at 12V (from battery) is 10.5 amps. However as a word of caution, one should realise that this light is a lightweight as compared to existing lights of similar outputs. As the shoot progresses after each passing hour, handholding this light continuously is tiring. 3.6kgs even though perfectly fine for our shoots, one needs to place it somewhere when not shooting. So tell your assistant to place it on a light stand or on a table when there is a break in shooting.

Colour rendering of Area 48 Light:

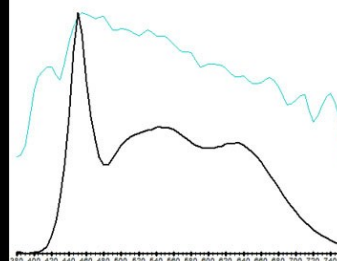
The daylight 5600K light was accurate and mixed well with the daylight. The light emitted is full spectrum and there are no ugly green spikes.

AREA48 5600K
TLCI-2012 : 97



Television Lighting Consistency Index-2012

Sector	Lightness	Chroma	Hue
R	0	0	0
R/Y	0	0	-
Y	0	0	-
Y/G	0	0	0
G	0	0	0
G/C	0	0	0
C	0	0	0
C/B	0	0	-
B	0	-	0
B/M	0	0	0
M	0	0	0
M/R	0	0	0



Integrated Barn doors: Since the BBS Area 48 light has got integrated barn doors, I keep the barn doors closed and the remote phosphor panel remains safely enclosed. Due to the integrated barn doors, you can also shape the light that is direct the light. They now have a version where Barn doors can be removed.

BBS Area 48 Flicker free:

This light is flicker free even at very high frame rates. So if you want to shoot some slow motion stuff, then this is the light that you need to use.

Shadow rendering of Area 48 Light:

The shadow rendering is nice and it appears as the light nicely wraps the subject.

External Power & Heat:

It can also be externally powered if you are in a room with power supply.

At 100% this light draws 145w from the mains power supply.

This light doesn't produce heat. So there is no chance of a person getting burnt unlike the traditional hot lights. No need to use gloves etc while handling this light. So all in all it is people friendly.

The actors won't sweat when in front of this light. Studios won't need more ACs when they use this light. Multiple units of this light can be assembled in fixtures of two or four and act like light banks. So this light is eminently suitable for small as well as large productions.

Dimensions of Area 48 Light with closed barn doors:

W: 356mm/13.97"

H: 275mm/10.82"

D: 115mm/ 4.53"

Weight: 3.6 kg / 7.94 lbs

The Area 48 light comes with an angled yoke. You can handhold the light by holding on to the yoke or place it on a regular light stand as the yoke comes with a 5/8" female baby pin.

Life span:

According to BBS the Area 48 light has got a life of 50,000 hours.

Scalability:

Another advantage of this light is that if a production or studio wants that it can scale up the use of the Area 48 light by stacking multiple units to create a much brighter source. This light can be stacked to create units of two or four and fixture for the same is available. All the units can be dimmable by using DMX512.

Not Weather Proof:

A word of caution to all who may get swayed by this small size and start using it in any condition. This light is not weather proof so don't soak it in rain. While using it one needs to at least hold an umbrella over it if it is drizzling.

Benefits of BBS Area 48 light:

- Light weight
- Powered by a V mount battery
- Mobile
- Small and can be handheld
- Dimmable and multiple units can be daisy chained
- No change in colour temperature when the power is dimmed
- No flicker
- Soft but bright light equivalent to 1K softlight

Price:

The BBS Area 48 Remote Phosphor light costs 2499 USD. To use the battery you need to buy the battery plate. The V Mount battery plate costs an extra 279 USD. The AC power supply kit costs extra 198 USD. Apart from this there are a host of other accessories that one can buy.

Full marks to BBS lighting for creating the Area 48 light which is small and mobile and I now use it while filming documentaries, corporate interviews as well as in features. So I highly recommend this light for serious filmmakers.

Natural History -

BRT Wild Life Sanctuary - Abode of the Gods-A feb visit 2014

Contributed by Shyamala Kumar

The Biligirirangaswamy Temple Wild Life Sanctuary, which was declared a Tiger Sanctuary in 2010, spreads over about 539sq km of a very unique ecosystem which connects the Eastern and Western Ghat systems. It comprises the ranges of Biligiri Rangaswamy and Male Mahadeshwara range running north to south in the Deccan plateau, which forms an important link between both the ghat system, and carries features unique to both.

It is about 215 km from Bangalore and the approach is via Kanakpura, Malavalli, Kollegal, Yellandur. From Mysore the route is through Chamrajnagar and the distance is about 90 km.



BR hills

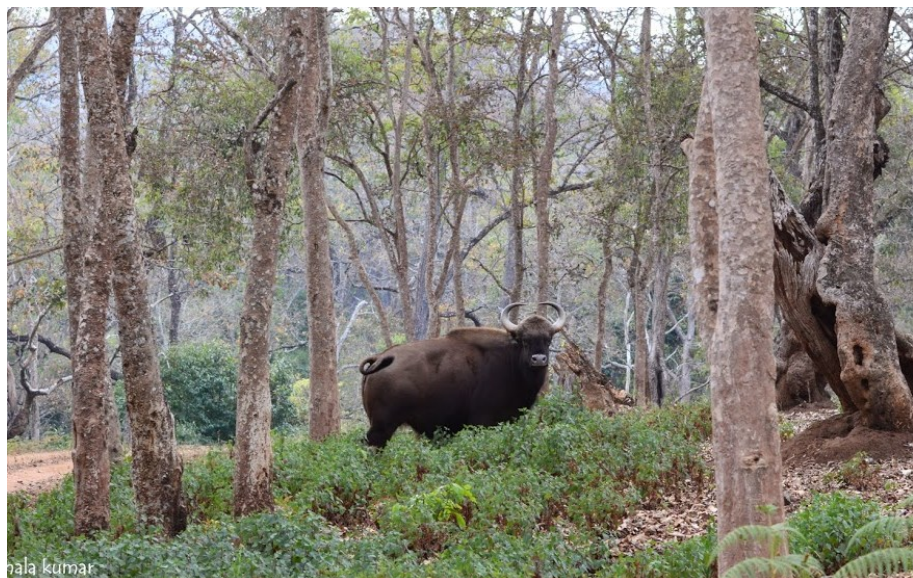
BR Hills lies about 4000ft above sea level between the Cauvery and Kapila rivers in the Chamrajnagar district. It is the home to a variety of flora and fauna. There are an estimated no of 17 tigers, elephants, leopards, gaur, sloth bears, wild dogs and the giant flying squirrel. Besides it is home to 270 birds of which 210 are migrant species. These forests play a unique role of creating a living bridge and bringing about diversity in the gene pool of the flora and fauna of the two Ghat systems.

The Biligirirangaswamy temple is located on the highest point of the BR range and occupies a pivotal place in the lives of the local Sholiga tribe. The foothills of the range are covered by scanty shrubs while the heights are characterized by thick deciduous forests.

It was a rarely visited forest till the Karnataka State Govt made one of its resorts right in the middle of the sanctuary and gave visitors a rare in house experience of undiluted wilderness. The resort consists of tents perched on the mountainsides. During the day the air resounded with the calls of innumerable avian species and the night was rent by the calls of Sambar warning us that a predator was on the move. We were often awakened by the sounds of wild hogs and chital foraging in the darkness right outside our tent. Leopards, Sambar, and muntjac have been sighted in the very premises of the resort.

Safaris were a unique experience in the sense that the tracks were balanced on steep mountainsides, so that we saw animals either fleeing up or disappearing down into thick deciduous forests or coffee plantations of local tribes. Photographing them was quite a matter of luck. We saw plenty of birds, muntjac, gaur and slothbear. The sloth bear experience was very frustrating in the sense as we just missed them three times.

Natural History -



A surprise sighting around a Picturesque Bend - Mother Gaur followed by her calf

Muntjac -Well developed canines

I saw this fine specimen tip-toeing around the resort premises. According to S.H.Prater-The upper canines of the male are well developed and are used by the animals in self defense.

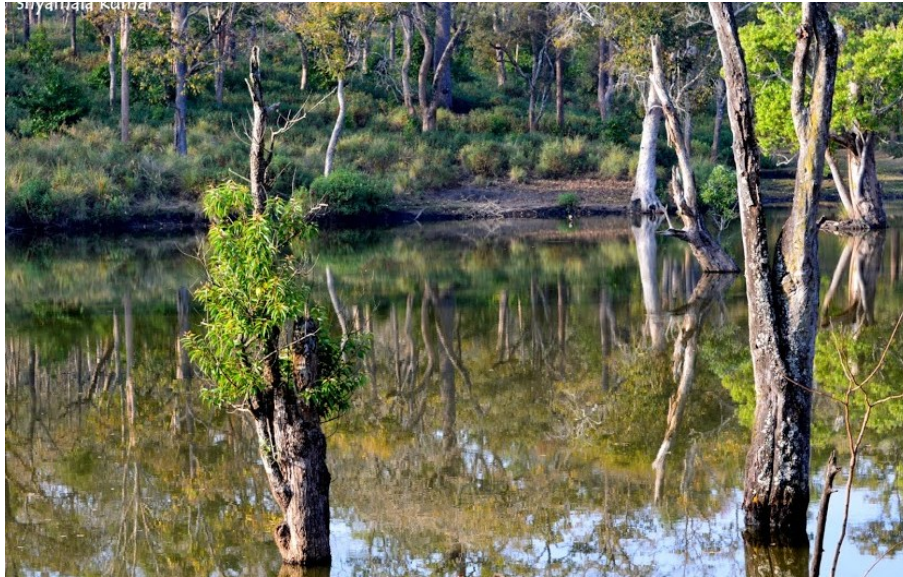


SHYAMALA KUMAR



A Gaur calf caught on the wrong side of the track

Natural History -



One of the innumerable water bodies - These were all still replete with water from the unseasonal rains.

A Surprise Rendezvous - Malabar Whistling Thrush



**A Lone Sentinel -
Crested Serpent Eagle -** Keeping vigil over one of the many lakes and ponds that are unique to BR Hills.

Natural History -



Struggling up a steep hillside.

The wild boar seemed to be more slim and streamlined than their counterparts in Corbett.



Tree Cancer ?

There were quite a few trees which seemed to be so afflicted. .

Natural History -

Birding places in and around Bhopal

By Mangru Minz

Bhopal is the capital of Madhya Pradesh. However being the capital city is not its only claim to fame. Bhopal is also known as the City of Lakes for its various natural as well as artificial lakes.

There are five lakes within the city, Upper lake, Lower lake and Sahapura lakes are well known as tourist spots. Apart from these lakes, Bhopal city is also surrounded by several stop dams which gather rain water for irrigation/cultivations purposes for farmers. Some of these stop dams like Kaliasot dam, Kerwa dam, Hathai kheda dam (Known as Ayodhya nagar lake) & Ghoda pachhad dam are just adjacent/ periphery of the city and a few others like Ajnal dam, Kolar dam, Rata pani dam & Halhali dam are around 10 to 45 KM range from center of the city. These dams are surrounded by forest, and hence attract both birds and mammals.

Few of these dams are developed for tourist attraction and have state govt guest house and restaurant also. Since the water level fluctuates widely ie running full in rainy season and reducing to about 15% in summer season, wildlife numbers in these areas varies according to the season. These places are also serve as a good picnic spot in winter seasons and are fully occupied and some times these places are over crowded.



1. Upper lake and Van vihar {animal park (Zoo) with limited confined area for each one, other animals such as spotted deer, black bucks and Indian blue bulls can be seen openly} itself is a very good birding place. There is a separate place (Pakshi Vihar) created for birds by Van vihar authority, but the place is little over crowded by tourist. In winter local authorities facilitate visits inside the park on prior booking. Every year during winter the local authorities also arrange bird watching camp in 1st week of January for young enthusiasts to create awareness about birds, their habitat and environment.

Though one can find, may be around a 100 varieties of local birds e.g. Grey heron, snowy egret, great egret, hoopoe, black drongo, silverbill munia, red avadavat, Water redstart, jungle peafowl, Golden oriole, Jungle babbler, yellow eyed babblers,

Natural History -

red vented bulbul, indian robin, Magpie robin, pied bush chat, bush lark, crested lark, red wattled lapwing, yellow wattled lapwings, purple sun bird etc, white breasted kingfisher, small blue kingfisher, pied kingfisher, little & large cormorant, Painted stork, Open bill stork, snake bird, gull, river tern & whisker tern, common kestrel, black shouldered kite, honey buzzard, eagle, pariah kite, spotted duck, common coot, little grebe, common moorhen, common crane, etc; during winter this figure rises to around 250 species due to the arrival of migratory birds.

2. Kaliasot Dam has now within the city limits and Kerwa dam is about 5 kms drive from the city. Both these dams are surrounded by forest, hence apart from local common birds one can sight forest birds e.g. verditer flycatcher, plum headed parakeet, alexandrine parakeet, button quail, spotted dove, eurasian dove, rufous treepie, coppersmith barbet, woodpecker, spotted owl etc.

3. Hathaikheda dam (Ayodhyanager lake) is going to be within the city limits in a one or two due to the expansion of the city. This lake was proposed to be a bird sanctuary, however there now lies a big question mark over it. This lake is fully dependent on rain water and the water level varies widely – running full in rainy season to nearly drying up in summer



with only 10% water. Local farmers use the water of this lake for irrigation. I use this lake mostly for birding & it is the nearest to my house. In winter, in this lake large number of migratory birds come. so far I have recorded many variety of waders and the lake surface appears full of different types ducks (in multiples of thousands) from December to end of February. Some of the birds visiting this lake are Spotted duck, ruddy shelduck, comb duck, northern shovler, northern pintail, common teal, mallard and white stork, open bill stork, painted stork, woolly neck stork, Black Ibis, white ibis etc.

4. Ghodapachhad dam is located just on the outskirts of the city in the eastern side. This is also a good place for birding for waders and birds of prey e.g. eagles, kestrel, black shoulder kite, ground birds like bush lark, sparrow lark, crested lark, stone chat, pranticole, crane and bittern etc.

5. Ajnal Dam (Eco park) is about 10 Km from the city in eastern side towards Raisen road, this dam is ended with a canopy of two hills having moderate forest areas. This is also a good place for birding and one can find verditer flycatcher, tick-

Natural History -

ell's blue flycatcher and Ducks, Herons and other forest birds.

6. Halhali dam is located about 45 Km towards Sanchi road. This dam has largest catchment area and also serve as hub for fish farming and supplies fish to Bhopal and other near by cities. This is also a good place for birding and one can find a few varieties of Gull, Tern, Ibis, Stork, Red start, Rock thrush etc. In winter several variety of gull and tern can be found here.

7. Sehat Ganj is located about 30 Km towards Raisen road. This place has undulating landscape having trees and bushes, which serve as a good shelter for birds. In rainy season this undulating landscape gives rise to lot of small streams flowing in different directions and that continues till end of November. This also attracts local people for weekend picnics leading to lot of pollution as plastics and other garbages is freely dumped all around. Fortunately this littering is limited to the road side only. This is also a good place for birding, and in the uphill places one can find birds of prey like Indian vulture, red headed vulture, egyptian vulture etc. Apart from this plum headed parakeet, Indian treepie , desert wheatear, Yellow wattled lapwings, Indian courser, sand grouse and some raptors etc found here.

**Oriental Honey Buzzard -
Photographed at Ghoda
Pachad Dam**



**Rudy Breasted
Crake -**

**Image shot at Ghoda
Pachad Dam**

Natural History -



Indian Couser - Image clicked at Sehat Ganj

Red Headed Vulture - Image clicked at Sehat ganj.

This image was taken just at the beginning of rainy season, hence looking greener. Earlier image (Indian Couser) was taken in late winter, hence dried up.



Peregrine Falcon - Image clicked at Hathai kheda lake.

Natural History -

COUNTRY NOTEBOOK: M.Krishnan: 'LION-TAILED MACAQUE'

The Sunday Statesman: 22-June-2014 (shared by Shri. Saktipada Panigrahi)

"THE Lion-tailed Macaque comes from where I do - the far South - and it is with pleasure that I introduce it to the readers of The Statesman, many of whom may not know this shy, forest-loving animal. However, I must confess that my pleasure is tinged with regret, for this, the most personable of our monkeys, is now rare where it was not uncommon before, and a naturalist living in the forests of Malabar tells me that it is getting rarer.

It is to be found in the heavy, evergreen forests of southernmost districts of Madras, and Kerala and the Western Ghats, right up to south Canara. Such forests are getting thinner with the with the inexorable increase of humanity and a creature so restricted in its range and so dependent on a sylvan habitat is especially in need of protection.



Lion Tailed Macaque

But perhaps my fears are somewhat exaggerated for, unlike most Indian monkeys, this one gives humanity a wide berth, and man has little cause to persecute it.

The first thing I should tell you about the Lion-tailed Macaque is that it is not lion-tailed. It is a thick-set, short-tailed monkey whose hands, however, are narrow and long and sensitive-fingered; its face is black and it is black-bodied and has a flat, black crown to its head, but its face is fringed all round with luxuriant grey whiskers, the kind of very full whiskers one sees in portraits of mid-Victorian elders.

My photograph shows a young captive female - in the adult male (which is larger, heavier and more powerful) the whiskers develop into a splendid, silver mane that is set off by the black of the body. Strictly speaking, a mane is elongated neck hair and this is really whiskers and beard, but had this Macaque been called the Lion-maned Macaque, no one could have object-

ed to the name - the male's whiskers do recall a lion's mane to mind. But "Lion-tailed" is ridiculous, for not only is the tail short and convex in its curve and in every way non-leonine, but it is also not tufted at the tip like a lion's.

I think the term "wanderoo" was once loosely applied to this macaque, but now appears to be restricted to a black Ceylonese monkey. And so we are left with the choice of the unhappy common name "Lion-tailed Macaque", and the scientific *Macaca silenus* (Linn). What a choice!

This macaque lives in family parties and small troops, and is respected by other monkeys in its range. It is remarkably free from nervous fidgets for a macaque, climbing and walking with an unhurried dignity as a rule, though capable of speed on occasion. People who have tried keeping it as a pet report that the male get savage and intractable when they grow up. Animals that love forests and freedom so much do not take kindly to cages and chains.

Not that this monkey is sullen or fierce by nature. It is delightfully playful when young, and even when an adult indulges in rough and tumble frolics with its fellows in its forest homes. An old male, it is true, acquires a mature, patriarchal dignity with age, worthy of its great, hoary mane, but it is deeply attached to its family party and quiet by disposition. Even its voice is unlike the voice of other macaques - not the usual rattling snarls and jabbering, but an almost human "Cooee" - a party of these monkeys call to one another in soft, mellow coos, reminiscent of a bird rather than a mammal.

I have the feeling - based, I admit, on the slenderest hearsay - that this monkey is perhaps found over a wider range in the South than is now recognised, in many places where there are great evergreen forests. Probably this is just wishful thinking, but I am quite sure that that the Lion-tailed Macaque deserves to be known widely all over India."

-M.Krishnan

This was first published on 13 January 1957 in The Sunday Statesman

Image of the Month -

The honour for the Image of the Month May 2014 goes to the image titled "**Raining Elephants**" by **Rajan Kanagasabai**.

This image transports me to a bygone era. Simply love it. Congratulations Rajan!

The following is the original text by Rajan:

It was raining elephants at Kabini last evening during the boat safari . . . large herds all over the banks, polka dotting the horizon in the fading evening light. . .

5D Mark III, Canon 400 DO F4, 1/500, F4, ISO 500, +.07+ EC, Bean Bag supported.



© Rajan Kanagasabai

Wildlife Photography -

Wild Buffalo by Anand Madabhushi



Blackbuck by Kaustuv Chatterjee



Wildlife Photography -

White-bellied Fish eagle by Shyamala Kumar

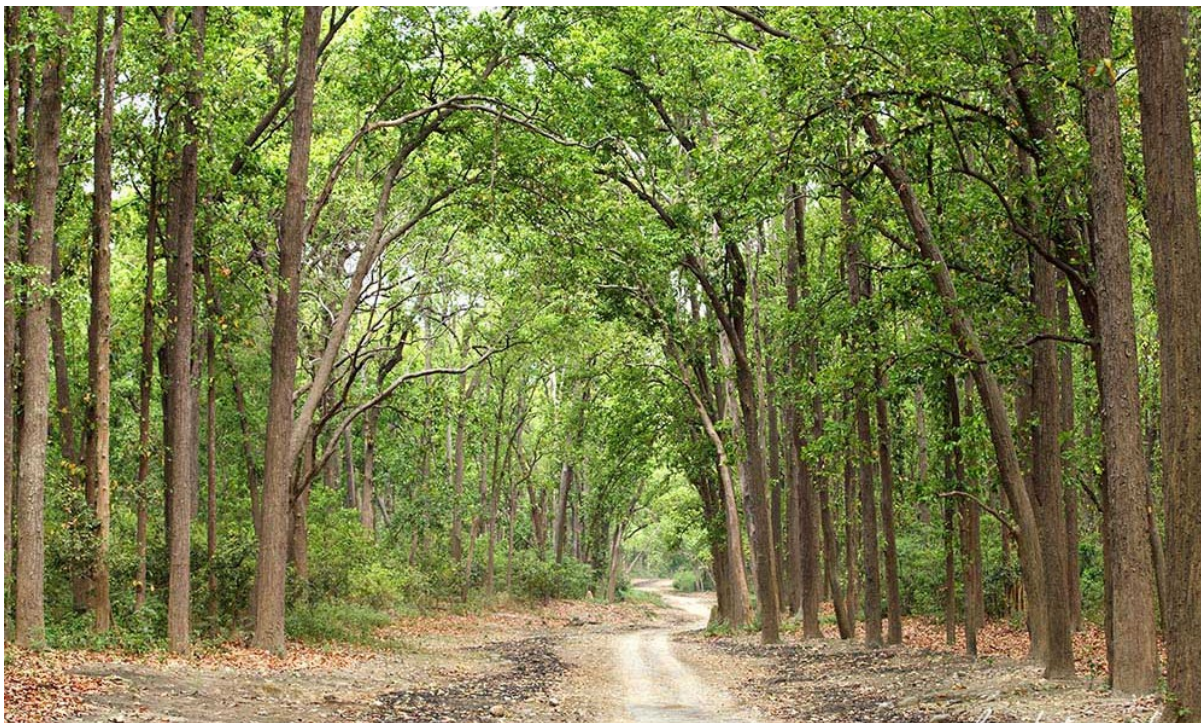


Banded bay Cuckoo by Jitendra Katre



Wildlife Photography -

A way through dense forest by Dr Ajay Kumar Singh



Indian Tree Frog by Abhishek Jamalabad



© Abhishek Jamalabad

Wildlife Photography -

Lynx spider by Prajwal J Ullal



Rufous Treepie by Bibhav Behera



Wildlife Photography -

The Alien Bug by Anil Kumar Verma



© Anil Kumar Verma



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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