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Cover Page Photograph:

Tigeress cooling off by
Sabyasachi Patra

Our Land. Our Home. Our Future – Desertification?

Desertification & Land Degradation in India:

India is the seventh largest country in the world and has a total geographic area of 328.73 Mha. This translates to 2.4% of the world's geographical area. However, with about 1.3 billion population India has 17.33% of world's population. It has 0.5 per cent of the world's grazing area but has over 18 per cent of world's cattle population. (*Elucidation of the Fifth National Report Submitted to UNCCD Secretariat 2012*)

So land with its soil and the water flowing in it as well as contained in the many water bodies along with the flora and fauna comprising the entire ecosystem, is very vital for the survival of India's population. Unfortunately, the human population as well as the cattle population is continuing to grow manifold. Together with urbanization and industrial development the proportion of land for agriculture, grazing and the land covered by forests is shrinking.

Unfortunately, India is also facing a massive problem of land degradation and desertification. Out of the 328 Million hectares of India's total geographical area, 228.3 Mha (Million hectares) i.e. 69% of India's total geographical area is under dry lands (arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid). These dry lands are heavily populated. An estimated 32% of India's total land is affected by degradation. Out of this area, about 81.45 Million hectares or 24.8 % of India's total geographical area is undergoing desertification. Since these highly populated areas are facing desertification, the people are highly vulnerable to environmental stress and it directly impacts their livelihoods. When livelihoods are impacted, the country faces internal strife. So this is-



Cracked soil in an abandoned field



sue of land degradation and desertification needs to be tackled in a war footing.

Water and soil erosion are major causes of land degradation with water erosion being most prominent in the areas under agricultural cultivation. Unsustainable agricultural practices, diversion of land for so-called developmental programmes, untreated industrial effluents polluting the nearby areas, both planned as well as illegal mining, diversion of forest areas for projects, deforestation in the forests as well as revenue lands and lands under other classifications are some of the major causes of land degradation which leads to desertification.

Government Propaganda:

Students of Marketing management would be aware that the best form of marketing is Propaganda. Government machinery and political parties all carry out propaganda to further their interests. However, the present Indian Government is cut above the rest as far as propaganda is concerned and it is reflected in its slogans and statements regarding desertification and land degradation as well.

In order to tackle the issues of desertification, land degradation and droughts, several major programmes were being implemented in the country, including, the “Mission for Green India” which is one of the Missions under the National Action Plan on Climate Change, to address dry land forests in addition to other ecosystems. However, now the Government of India has announced that it is working on creating a new National Action Programme (NAP), which will be finalized after conducting a series of regional consultations, and workshops with stakeholders “keeping in mind our national circumstances and development priorities”. This certainly means the forests will again be sacrificed at the altar of industrial promotion.

The Government of India has also announced that it has planned to achieve Land Degradation Neutrality by 2030. How this land degradation neutrality will be achieved is not yet decided as it is going to discuss it with stakeholders and it as it said the decisions will be based on “National circumstances and development priorities”. So clearly this appears to be a statement without any serious intent behind it.

The Central Government has said that India is focusing on sustainable land and resource management for livelihood generation at community level for making the local lands healthier and productive for providing a better homeland and a better future to its inhabitants. Keeping with the trend of creating catchy slogans for each activity, the Union Government has created this year’s slogan as, **“Our Land. Our Home. Our Future”**

On the surface, this slogan means well. It is aimed towards self-sufficiency and focuses on the

power that the farmer has within his hands through his own land. The slogan focuses on the central role that productive lands can play in securing the future of the farmers. At the moment there is farm distress and farmers and farm workers are abandoning the farming because their lands have become unproductive and they moving into cities as migrant labourers. If the farm can be made self-sufficient then it can actually stop migration and again start building happy and sustainable communities around the lands that have become unproductive. Unfortunately, we also need to conduct a deep analysis about why farm lands are becoming unproductive.

Factors adversely affecting quality of land:

The minister Dr Harsh Vardhan also said that “The Government is also taking a holistic approach towards improving the living standard of its citizens, with Swachh Bharat Mission, with a dedicated corpus of funds to address concerns over **waste disposal, sewage treatment, sanitation – factors which adversely affect the quality of land**”. Unfortunately, the Swachh Bharat Mission after the initial hype appears to be floundering and there is no focus or substantial funds allocation to it. In the villages, there is open defecation, as people don't have water to flush their toilets. In many cases, the newly constructed toilets are used for storing grains. The sight of plastics and other non-biodegradable wastes littered everywhere ensures that our land also gets degraded. Apart from the leaching of chemicals to the ground from the non-biodegradable waste, wild herbivores often inadvertently swallow these and die a painful death. The impact of such wastes on the farmlands have not been quantified.

The MoEF&CC Minister also said that initiatives like the Soil Health Card Scheme, have been launched by the Government to help farmers improve productivity through judicious use of inputs. He added that the Scheme was allotted rupees 840.52 crore over the last three years, which is 30 times more than the funds devoted to soil research and analysis in the preceding years. Unfortunately, this statistics looks like Government beating its own drum as results are nowhere to be seen, else the farmer suicides, demonstrations and even violent clashes with police would not have taken place.

Some of the major reasons why the farmlands have become unproductive is not acknowledged by the Government as it is complicit in it. A lot of hype was created about Green revolution and the increased productivity due to use of synthetic fertilisers, chemical pesticides and herbicides, high yield crops etc. Today, the fields are barren and farmers are angry. The chemicals have taken their toll on the fields. Farmers who have abandoned their traditional agricultural practices are left in the lurch. Unfortunately, the Government still continues to promote the unhealthy and polluting synthetic fertilisers and pesticides by giving subsidies. The total subsidies for chemical fertilisers were Rs. 26222 crores in FY 2006-2007 and it are now at Rs. 70,000 crore for FY2017-18.

This massive jump in fertilizer subsidy came due to the introduction of the NBS (Nutrient based subsidy) scheme in 2010. The impact of NBS was reduction in the soil nutrient quality. The NBS (Nutrient based subsidy) scheme also resulted in shortages and in the year 2013 the urea price got hiked with phosphoric and potassic fertilisers more than doubling the price to Rs. 25000 per MT. This price rise also resulted in skewed use of various nutrients and an improper fertilizer mix. So instead of the recommended Nitrogen (N): Phosphorous (P): Potassium (K) ratio of 4:2:1, the overall ratio for the country was 8.2:3.2:1 in 2013-2014 and for Punjab it was 61.7:19.2:1 in the year 2013-2014. This kind of improper chemical fertilizer use

has resulted in destruction of the long-term soil health, which impacted the productivity of the land. So the farmers started distress selling of their lands and looking for jobs abroad as taxi drivers, store workers and other such jobs.

Why Not divert fertilizer subsidy for Organic Farming?

Instead of spending 70,000 crores of rupees in every financial year, the Government should have diverted some of the amount towards organic farming and promoted the use of natural fertilisers and manure. It is strange that Cow urine is being propagated as the panacea of all diseases and is mixed in many ayurvedic medicines of Ramdev's Patanjali Ayurveda. However, when it comes to using cow dung for manure, it seems there are not many takers, despite India having world's 18% cattle population.

Earlier trees surrounded our fields. The leaves of trees used to fall on the fields and serve as manure and enrich the soil. Birds used to perch on these trees and bushes and catch pests from the crops. With mechanized farming, the fields are barren and don't have trees. So the soil can't be naturally enriched. When the field is ploughed, the wind takes away the topsoil. After a crop, the stalk of the rice or wheat used to be kept in the field and those used to decompose and increase the nutrition of the soil. Today the farmers especially in the Punjab, Haryana belt, burn the wheat and rice stalk and those get swept away by wind. So there is a net loss of nutrients from the fields. And when the field is left fallow after the crop, there are no trees and hence the topsoil also gets eroded. So now the farmer has been trapped in the problem that he has created. He has to depend on continually supplying nutrients to the fields. The farmer should now completely revamp the model of agriculture and look towards organic farming. Incidentally that will give the farmer more money.

The ecological impact of the synthetic fertilisers and pesticides are only studied in some places where it has caused major disasters like the Endosulfan tragedy in Kerala. These chemicals used are now found in our food including tea. (Slow Poison: Pesticide Tea, August 2014, IndiaWilds Newsletter Vol. 6 Issue VIII, <https://www.indiawilds.com/diary/indiawilds-newsletter-vol-6-issue-viii/>)



Pesticides being mixed in fertilizers

The indiscriminate use of chemical fertilisers and pesticides has also resulted in increased incidences of cancer. A study by PGIMER (Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research) established direct correlation between chemicals fertilizer & pesticide use and Cancer in villages in Punjab.

Government Schemes and Leakages:

Dr. Harsh Vardhan, the Minister incharge of MoEF&CC on the occasion of World Day to Combat Desertification said that various schemes have been drawn up to showcase India's efforts to mitigate concerns over desertification, land degradation and drought problems. According to him Government schemes like 'Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana' under the Ministry of Agriculture, have witnessed a surge in allotment of funds, with Rs 4750 crore being released in 2016-17, as compared to Rs 3707 crore in 2015-16. The 'Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana' of Ministry of Water Resources has got 22% increased budget allocation for the years 2014-17 i.e. Rs 4510.55 crore compared to Rs. 3699.45 crore in the previous three years. Allocations under Deen Dayal Antyodaya Yojana - National Rural Livelihoods Mission of Ministry of Rural Development, has been increased from Rs. 3000 crore in 2016-17 to Rs. 4500 crore in 2017-18. Besides these schemes, Deen Dayal Upadhyay Grameen Kaushalya Yojana and Integrated Watershed Management Programme of Ministry of Rural Development, Swacchh Bharat Mission, National Mission for a Green India and National Afforestation Programme (Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change) are some of the programs that the Government showcases as its mechanism for mitigating concerns over desertification, land degradation and drought problems.

It is a well known fact that budgetary allocation is not a sure shot indicator of success of a particular programme or mission. There are huge leakages in the various Government programmes and the entire fund allocated for a scheme doesn't reach the intended beneficiaries. In 1985 while visiting the drought affected Kalahandi in Odisha, the then Prime Minister Shri Rajiv Gandhi had said that for every rupee spent in Government schemes only 15 paise reaches the intended beneficiary. Recently a bench of Supreme Court justices comprising AK Sikri and Ashok Bhushan while hearing a petition regarding use of unique identity or Aadhar number said *"A former prime minister of this country has gone on record to say that out of one rupee spent by the government for welfare of the downtrodden, only 15 paise thereof actually reaches those persons for whom it is meant. It cannot be doubted that with UID/Aadhaar much of the malaise in this field can be taken care of"*. The Supreme Court bench said that "lots of ghosts and duplicate beneficiaries are able to take undue and impermissible benefits". So the Government simply tom-tomming increased budgetary allocations under various schemes resulting in arresting land degradation is stretching the truth too far.

Though the Government talks about Green India Mission, every month we see some very dense forests and ecologically fragile areas are sacrificed for linear projects or opened up for mining, dams, canals and other ecologically destructive projects. Our forests not only act like lungs due to carbon sequestration, they also help in rainfall and stop soil erosion. Trees also act as natural barriers for stopping the sand and other particulate matter from the air. For example, cutting down trees in the Aravalis for constructing houses and mining leads to more of sand laden winds from Rajasthan increasing the particulate matter level in Delhi's air. So the Government has to seriously infuse life into the Green Mission.

Politics is the last resort of the scoundrels: George Bernard Shaw

With the Government always trying to give itself a pat on the back, the real state of desertification and degradation of India's landmass will continue. If one feels sad about it, then it may be pertinent to mention George Bernard Shaw's famous quote "Politics is the last resort of the scoundrels".

Fighting desertification and land degradation is a long-term work. It has complex interrelationships with our environment and with the advent of climate change, fighting desertification should be one of our priorities. Unfortunately, this doesn't go down well with the industries that are driven by quarterly profit and loss. Since industries, politicians and Governments are hand-in-glove, long term focus is often the casualty. Politicians feel that they should take up issues which they can talk about immediately. If they take up long-term issues like climate change, then they may not be around to claim credit when any benefit occurs. In fact the benefit of fighting climate change doesn't occur after a work is finished, say like a dam or a power plant is completed so that people can see it. And since this is based in science, not many politicians understand it and hence don't care for it.

Nevertheless, there have been many well meaning individuals and organisations that have been trying their best in their own little ways in arresting land degradation by planting trees in degraded lands, public lands as well as in buffer areas of forests so that the soil erosion can be arrested and pressure on the forests for firewood is reduced. There are others who are fighting to remove invasive vegetation as exotic vegetation like lantana results in higher water runoff as the capacity of the soil to absorb water is reduced. The exotic weeds and shrubs also reduce the grazing areas and impact the livestock. There are other people trying hard to educate villagers to use farming techniques that are more environment friendly. If people can be made aware and they seriously take up tree plantation in all the available land, then soil erosion and desertification can be stopped and the air that we breathe will become clearer. As a Nation do we have the collective will power to fight for our future?

*"Hope springs eternal in the human breast;
Man never Is, but always To be blest:
The soul, uneasy, and confin'd from home,
Rests and expatiates in a life to come."*

- Alexander Pope, an Essay on Man

One day with Bonellis Eagle...

By Kedar Javadev Dhepe

“ I will not be alone in the company of Nature and Birds...” _Salim Ali

Some people say the attraction to anything is from birth and it's in the blood. Love for nature and wildlife too seems to be in the blood of many of us. It is another matter that not many people are able to take time out from their busy schedules to visit nearby wilderness areas. However, when life throws many curve balls at us and we are deep down in stress, taking a break and visiting a nearby forest area or hill makes us forget our stress.

In March this year, the urge to run and take shelter in mother earth's lap became very intense and we took a trip to hills near Kolhapur. Myself and my friend Prashant departed from Ashta and took minimum luggage and food so that it doesn't become cumbersome in the field.

At 3pm we reached the bottom of the hills and started to climb upwards. It was very hard to continuously climb this hill. We saw many common birds like Bulbul, dove, sparrow, bee-eaters etc. We also sighted Kestrels which are hovering in the sky like helicopters.

As we reached the middle of the hills we suddenly saw a large bird in the sky. It had huge wingspan and appeared regal. We looked at it through our binoculars and were happy to identify it as the Bonellis eagle.



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Bonellis eagle

We increased our speed, at the same time trying to keep contact with the beautiful bird with the binoculars and suddenly we realized we had reached the top of the hill. The view from the peak was incredible.

Unfortunately we found a large nest on tree near to hills. The nest was large enough for a man to even sit easily. However, a word of caution, one should not go close to a nesting bird as the bird might get disturbed. When a person is close to a nest the mother bird won't come close to the nest and hence the chick may remain hungry. And in case of large raptors, you may be attacked by the raptor.

We noticed the small chick looked like cotton. It was a new born chick. They had very small feathers which were white. After sometime the chicks tried to sleep alone in nest with spreading of its small wings. They were waiting for their parents..

After a long wait at a distance from the nest, at 6.30pm we at last saw its flight. She was returning to the nest. We became really happy to hear the sound of the chick when the parent came closer. The chick welcomed its mother after a long wait. It got closer to its mother and rested its head under her feathers, seeking the warmth from her feathers. We witnessed this affectionate display in the golden light of the sunset.

I wanted to observe its behaviour at night so we planned to sleep on that hills and observe that nest and beautiful eagle. Most birds sleep on branches of trees in standing position which is known as roosting. Eagles are also not any different. The female stayed with its chick in the nest the whole night. We observed their activities after every 2 hours in the moon light.



Bonellis Eagle with chick

Photographed By - Kedar Dhepe

That night we had dinner at the temple which is near to the hill, so sadly we missed the opportunity to cook food outdoors. There are also high risks of forest fires so we decided it would be safer not to cook. We had our meal and returned to our tent. For that whole night I was thinking about the mother's love of the Bonellis. These eagles are mainly found in mountains or open woodlands. These eagles mainly feed on hares, other birds, reptiles, lizards etc.

After some time I fell asleep but woke up early in morning to observe its morning activities. I was stunned to witness that the roosting eagle was in the exact same position the whole night with its chick safe near to its stomach.

It was magical to witness the rising sun from over the hills in the distance... not a common site in the cities or from our hostels. The chick is also experiencing the first sunlight of day from its nest. At 7:15am the female left its nest and took high flight and perhaps forgets all efforts of night shift.

After sometime we were unable to see her so we walked down to see her. After about half an hour or so we saw both the male and female were resting on top of the other hill. We reached the bottom and from the other side I tried to scan the hill so as to get closer to them to get good photographs. Unfortunately I was able to get about 10 ft. or so and they also noticed me approaching and quickly took flight to the skies....!! What eyesight they have...!! Their eye reflects golden light of sun and huge wings....!!

We felt really lucky and blessed to have witnessed the Bonellis from such close distance. And main thing is they didn't attack me. I also doubt that they even thought of attacking. Sometimes nature, animals appreciate our love for them and give it back with much satisfaction and happiness. If one approaches the subject slowly without making any undue noise and sudden movements and without appearing to directly approach them, birds and animals get comfortable.

People always think animals are wild and that they attack us but true be told – no wild animal will attack you if you don't cross your limits. They always try to avoid people and avoid conflict. If we give them the space they need, they don't mind our presence.

We returned from the mountain and had some tea with the local people near the temple - a memorable cup of tea, without milk but with lemongrass. We then headed back towards the nest.

After much waiting we heard the sound of a chick. It noticed its mother before we noticed her approach. At 11:30 female came with a Francolin bird. We were amazed after seeing this because the size of frankolin bird is so big. The chick was hungry so the female continuously chopped the meat into small pieces and fed them to her chicks. She held these small cuts close to her chicks beak. The chick used to quickly catch the food and swallow. It was a very nice experience to see eagle feeding its chicks. We have seen these only on national geographic and discovery channels but today we experienced and videoed first hand. We were very blessed to see this amazing experience of an eagle's life.

The feeding continued nearly for half an hour. Chick became silent after feeding and went near the female. The female protected her chick from the direct sunlight by spreading her wings. I will always remember this moment... A mother's love for her child is always so lovely to watch. Whether it is humans, animals or birds, every one protects their children. There it oc-

curred to me that they do not have mind like humans but they have love and other emotions...they work everyday for their survival...so no different to humans,

“ They also have equal right to live...!!

At 2:30pm the female took flight and left nest. After half an hour the male came to the nest, and the chick started continuously calling for food. We were amazed to see that male vomited food and fed it his chick. We realised that Eagles can eat more meat than they require and they keep it in the trachea or within the neck and can at any time vomit it and feed it to their chicks. When the chick is growing and getting stronger, it would require feeding twice a day. So, hunting a large prey once a day becomes necessary.

The entire day, we were taking rest in the hills and whenever we used to see the flight of eagle or hear the call of chick, we used to take our cameras, binoculars and run madly to see it, hoping that we don't make noise in the process. It was exhilarating. We had never felt so much happiness as we got watching the love between the eagles and their child. From this experience I have started feeling a deep love and connection with these birds. The sight of these majestic birds flying in the sky or the cute chicks being protected by their mother fills me with joy and makes us forget all our problems and worries.

After 3pm we took our bags and left the hills. We are remembering all the things that we witnessed while we are walking. We both can't forget this amazing experience with this Eagle. Just then we noticed that the female was flying in the sky. I thought she is saying goodbye to us...



- Kedar Javadev Dhepe

(Kedar Dhepe is an automobile engineer by education and is a passionate wildlife and nature lover.)

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Haryana Government wants trees to be felled ignoring NGT Notice

Disregarding the National Green Tribunal seems to be a norm these days. Initially it was Ravi Shankar of Art of Living and now Haryana Government.

In the recent case, the National Green Tribunal (NGT) had issued a notice to the MoEF&CC and Haryana Government and the Haryana Forest Department with regard to tree felling permission given by the Haryana Forest department. The Additional Chief Secretary (Forests) of Haryana S. K. Gulati has directed the PCCF and other officers to grant permission to a real estate company to fell trees in the Sarai Khwaja village in ecosensitive Aravalli area of Faridabad district. It is reported that this is the third attempt by the Government to grant permission to the real estate company to clear trees in a 52 acre plot.

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) had issued a notice on 19th of June against the tree felling order of the Haryana Government. However, despite the NGT notice, the Additional Chief Secretary forests is putting pressure to the forest department officers to issue permission to Bharti Realty Ltd in blatant violation. The idea is that by the time the NGT decision is taken, the private entity will clear fell the area and start construction and then later the Government will tell the NGT that a lot of money has been sunk in the project and hence it needs to approve the project.

These days the officers are pushing their personal agendas irrespective of NGT decision, knowing fully well that by the time the decisions are taken, they would have moved on to other departments or retired.

Karnataka Forest Department undertakes Seed ball dispersal using students

The Karnataka Forest department has decided to involve citizens to help in afforestation drive. The forest department has tied up with all the Jawahar Navodaya educational institutions in every district to sow 28 lakh seed balls. Apart from the students of these institutes common people are also involved to achieve the one crore saplings programme under the “Neerigagi Aranya” scheme.

Earlier, seeds were thrown around. In 1986-87, the state also followed the process of dropping seeds from lite aircraft as is practiced in many countries abroad. In these process, not every seed survives. However, due to the sheer number of seeds sown in a short time, there are chances of many trees growing up. However, this time the Government thought that involving common men and women as well as school students will result in tapping their energy and time into sowing using seed balls which have a higher chance of survival. These seed balls are basically made of soil with some manure so that the seed in it has sufficient nutrients to grow.

The important thing is that these kinds of seed ball campaigns doesn't need any expenditure from the Government. This

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campaign taps the good will of the people and they donate their time and energy and do it with utmost sincerity. So the chances of the campaign giving better results are higher. Nevertheless, the Government is going to evaluate the effectiveness of this campaign in a few years.

However, while tapping the goodwill of the people, enough information about the suitability of the type of seed for the terrain is not provided. Generally the Government should promote native vegetation, as exotic vegetation creates a lot of harm. To know more about the negative impact of exotic species please check: <https://www.indiawilds.com/diary/indiawilds-newsletter-vol-3-issue-x/>

319 plant species discovered in India : Botanical Survey of India

The Botanical Survey of India has published a compilation of plant discoveries in 2016 and it reveals that over 300 new plant species has been discovered in India. This includes 206 species which are new to science and 113 species having their distributional range in India.

The 319 species comprises “128 taxa of seed plants, 1 taxon of pteridophytes, 20 taxa of bryophytes, 32 taxa of lichens, 26 taxa of algae, 62 taxa of fungi and 50 taxa of microbes are added to India,” said BSI Director Paramjit Singh.

These discoveries were majorly made from Western Ghats (17%), Eastern Himalaya (15%) and Western Himalaya (13%). This also reinforces the fact that these three areas are our major biodiversity hotspots. The scale of new discoveries should make the Government realise that there needs to be more effort to protect these biodiversity hotspots, else many species will be wiped out before they are discovered as our population explosion and the relentless greed to colonise new spaces have led to shrinking wilderness areas.

NTCA approves 3.4 crores for Tiger Relocation to Rajaji

The National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) has approved Rs 3.40 crores for relocating tigers to Rajaji National Park. Two male tigers and three tigress are planned to be shifted from Corbett to western sector of Rajaji. This plan had been prepared by WII in 2010.

According to this relocation plan, five tigers will be captured from Corbett National Park and relocated to Rajaji. In 2010, Wildlife Institute of India had done the study “Population Viability of Tiger in their North Western Range Limit, Terai Arc Landscape” and had suggested that a fresh population of tigers need to be introduced to revive the tiger population of Rajaji. The wildlife corridors have been devastated due to man-made canals and other projects and hence the genetic diversity in some of these places is lost. So it is imperative to shift tigers and enrich the genetic diversity.

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India's first tiger relocation was conducted in Sariska when tigers were shifted from Ranthambhore to Sariska. This was followed by shifting of tigers from Bandhavgarh to Panna. These shifting exercises are not well thought out. Scientists are known to have caught tigers based on whoever they could find. The reason given was that the helicopter can't wait for long time. Animals do have family bonds. Suddenly breaking those bonds, causes tremendous stress among the tiger families. Translocation in layman's terms is forcibly shifting someone to a new house, away from their families. The psychological stress involved in this exercise is not studied and is ignored in India. It is very important to study the tigers in an area and find out not only the suitability of the tiger for mating but also it should be ensured that the tiger is wanting to shift out or carve a territory on its own outside the area.

Wild Tiger walks 125 kms from Panna to Bandhavgarh

A three-year-old tiger in Bandhavgarh has been identified as tiger with codename P212 from Panna. This shows that the tiger has covered a distance of 125kms between the two National Parks.

It is not known which route the tiger followed and how much time it took to come from Panna to Bandhavgarh. Tigers try to wander around in search of a good territory where prey base is good and competition from other tigers is less.



After realising that the tiger has covered 125kms, people have given it the nickname Bahubali 2, after the enormously successful film Bahubali 2. The tiger oblivious of its nickname is doing fine in Bandhavgarh.

Nevertheless, this raises an interesting point that scientists need not try to do stop gap arrangements of airlifting tigers from one park to other but focus on the more important task of identifying and restoring broken forest corridors between

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different forests and national parks so that tigers can disperse from one park to the other based on number of tigers, competition, death of other tigers etc and maintain a healthy gene pool.

Translocation of an apex predator is big news and is charismatic work. Will scientists and the Government focus on the less glamorous but more important work of restoring lost wildlife corridors?

Poachers Kill third rhino from Orang this year

Orang, often known as mini-kaziranga has lost its third rhino to poachers bullets this year. Hearing this news, the forest minister is reported to have rushed to Orang to evaluate the situation.



After the previous two rhino poaching incidents this year, there has been no action for systemic improvement to stop rhino poaching in Orang. However, that didn't stop the Forest minister Pramila Rani Brahma from saying "I have asked for a detailed report on how poachers could manage to kill a rhino in daylight. Based on the report we will take appropriate action".

Orang, spread over 78.8 Square kilometers, is estimated to have 100 rhinos. The 78.8 sq km area of the park is included in the 492.46 sq km area of the tiger reserve.

Like most of the National Parks and protected areas, Orang too faces manpower shortages along with old workforce.

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"Orang is a well protected park no doubt. But killing of three rhinos this year is a matter of concern. We will look into what best can be done to protect the wildlife in the park. We are expecting to provide more forest personnel to Orang by August this year," said the minister.

There have been several poaching attempts this year and the forest officials under the condition of anonymity say that more rhino poaching this year cannot be ruled out.

Wild Animal poaching racket unearthed in Odisha

A wildlife poaching racket in Odisha has been busted and body parts of over 400 monitor lizards were seized by the Odisha Crime Branch, state Forest Department and the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB). One person has been apprehended in this operation in Brahmeswarpatna in old town, Bhubaneswar.

210 dried hemipenes (intromittent organs or male sexual organs) of monitor lizards were seized during the raid. The Odisha Crime Branch was informed about the racket by the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau and then a joint raid was successfully planned. A case has been registered under the Wildlife Protection Act 1972.



Monitor lizards have an important ecological role to play. They predate on wide variety of invertebrates including insects, crabs, snakes, fish. They also feed on carrion. The monitor lizard becomes prey for larger animals, birds, crocodiles etc.

Unfortunately, the Monitor lizards are hunted in mass scale because their body parts are used in tantric rituals and folk

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medicine and skin used for wallets and other smaller leather items. Some tantric rituals use the hemipenes. Other superstition is that the hemipenes of the monitor lizard when dried and ground can act as an aphrodisiac. The meat is also said to cure diseases and believed to be aphrodisiac. People think the tongue of the monitor lizard will cure TB (tuberculosis). There is no end to superstition about monitor lizards. So the poor monitor lizards are being locally exterminated in many places. Unfortunately, they are not charismatic creatures and hence people don't care even when they see a monitor lizard being carried in bicycle by a person or being sold openly in some of the markets in North East.

The rate at which monitor lizards are being hunted down is alarming. Unfortunately, the forest department in various states is not capable and don't have the will power and resources to track poaching of monitor lizards.

Selfie with a Tusker:

The selfie craze is becoming bigger and bigger and can be life-threatening as was witnessed earlier this month in an incident in Dhenkanal district of Odisha.



One Abhisekh Nayak of Masania village in Dhenkanal was trying to take a selfie with a wild tusker when the furious tusker attacked him. A herd of wild elephants were in the vicinity of the village and were feeding when the temptation to click a selfie with the elephants overcame him. The mobile phone cameras have got wide-angle lenses, so one needs to go close to click a selfie. The elephants got disturbed due to the intrusion into their zone of tolerance and the tusker charged at him. People don't realise that elephants despite their bulk can run close to 40kmph speed which is faster than even Olympic runners. If the elephant would have had an intention to kill, then death would have been instantaneous. Nevertheless, any blow from such a powerful creature can be life-threatening.

Our readers are requested to raise awareness about this selfie craze taking lives.

Equipment Discussions -

Canon Announces EOS C200 Cinema camera

Canon has announced the EOS C200 and C200B cinema cameras in EF mount. The C200B is a version of the C200 cinema camera without the EVF, top handle and LCD so that it can be used for three axis gimbals.



Salient features of the Canon Cinema C200 camera:

Sensor: Super 35 mm, 8.85MP CMOS. Active image area of 24.4mmx13.5mm

Processor: Dual Digic DV6

Resolution: DCI 4K Raw Light and UHD 4k. The Canon C200 can shoot in DCI 4K (4096x2160) in Canon Raw Light upto 50/60p in 10 bits or DCI 4K (4096x2160) in 12 bits at 24/25P/30p.

Full HD (1080p) at upto 120p using the full sensor.

ISO: ISO 100 to 102400. The standard ISO range is from ISO 160 to ISO 25600.

ND Filters: 10 stop internal ND filters

EVF: 1.77 million dot OLED Electronic View Finder (EVF)

Recording Format:

UHD 4K (3840x2160) upto 60p in 8 bits to SD cards in MP4 format.

Media slots: 1 C Fast 2.0 card, 2 SD card slots

The C200 also has an improved version of Canon's Dual Pixel AF technology. There is a new AF lock setting which can be used to change the composition without changing the focus point from the subject.

This will be a big help in shooting in documentaries as well as shooting features with a small crew, especially when focus pullers are becoming an expendable item.

Dynamic Range:

The Canon C200 will give a dynamic range of 13 stops when shooting in MP4 format and 15 stops in Cinema Raw light.

Touchscreen LCD:

The C200 has a 4 inch removable touchscreen, a first in any canon camera. The users can touch the point in the LCD and select the focus and the DPAF will do the rest. In the 1DXII and the 5DMarkIV the touchscreen was at the back, so it was a bit difficult for people to touch and focus. After the introduction of 1DXII, we have been demanding such a touchscreen for the cinema series and now Canon has come out with the removable LCD touchscreen and it would really make a huge difference.

Audio Controls

The C200 has two XLR audio inputs in the body. This is the first in the cinema series cameras to have XLRs in the body and not in the LCD screen. It also has a 3.5mm microphone input. Audio is recorded uncompressed in 16-bit PCM format at 48 kHz and option of AES/EBU. Canon had included 24 bit sound in the C300 Mark II. Reducing it to 16 bits is an attempt to downgrade it from the C300 Mark II. Wish it was 24 bits.

This camera weighs : 1.4 kgs.

Price: The C200 costs **\$7500 US Dollars** and the C200B costs **\$5999 US dollars**.

Preorder Link: <https://www.bhphotovideo.com/c/produ...825359/KWID/EZ>

PRESS RELEASE

Canon U.S.A. Announces New Canon EOS C200 and EOS C200B Digital Cinema Cameras in Continued Expansion of Cinema EOS System

New Offerings Bring Performance and Versatility, Combining Core Canon Technologies with New 4K Video Formats Optimized for HDR Applications.

MELVILLE, N.Y., May 31, 2017 - Canon U.S.A., Inc., a leader in digital imaging solutions, today announced the Canon EOS C200 and Canon EOS C200B Digital Cinema Cameras, the latest additions to its acclaimed Cinema EOS line of professional cinema cameras. Designed to meet the demanding needs of filmmakers and TV production users, the new Canon

cinema offerings will combine the ease of use of entry level cinema cameras with exciting new, high-end features that are ideal for cinema, documentary, wildlife, wedding and events productions.

Representing the third generation of the Cinema EOS system, the Canon EOS C200 and Canon EOS C200B Digital Cinema Cameras feature the latest in Canon technologies and offer two 4K video formats, Canon's new Cinema RAW Light and MP4, optimized for those interested in recording beautiful HDR video. Alongside a newly developed dual DIGIC DV6 image processing system, Canon's celebrated Dual Pixel CMOS AF system and improved operability for professionals, these new products are capable of capturing stunning 4K video across a variety of production applications.

"Building upon the success of our Cinema EOS system and taking into account feedback from users in the field, the new Canon EOS C200 and EOS C200B Digital Cinema Cameras provide powerful and versatile solutions for production users eager to expand their creativity and explore the possibilities of HDR cinematography," said Yuichi Ishizuka, president and COO of Canon U.S.A., Inc. "With an innovative new file formats available, alongside improved operability that professionals need, the new generation of Cinema EOS cameras are poised to become the camera of choice for many in the filmmaker community."

Based on feedback from Cinema EOS users, this new offering will be available in two configurations, while retaining the same core technologies within. The Canon EOS C200 Digital Cinema Camera is a production-ready solution that can be used right out of the box, accompanied by an LCD Monitor, LCD Attachment, Camera Grip and Handle Unit. The camera also features a 1.77 million dot OLED Electronic View Finder (EVF). For users who crave more versatility and the ability to craft custom setups tailored to their subject or environment, the Canon EOS C200B Digital Cinema Camera offers cinematographers the same camera without these accessories and the EVF to optimize shooting using a gimbal, drone or a variety of other configurations.

New Features and Benefits

The Canon EOS C200 and Canon EOS C200B Digital Cinema Cameras sport the same 8.85MP CMOS sensor, that combines with a newly developed dual DIGIC DV6 image processing system to help process high-resolution image data and record video from Full HD (1920x1080) and 2K (2048x1080) to 4K UHD (3840x2160) and 4K DCI (4096x2160). A core staple of the third generation Cinema EOS System, this new processing platform offers wide-ranging expressive capabilities and improved operation when capturing high-quality HDR video.

The combination of sensor and newly developed processing system also allows for the support for two new 4K file formats designed to help optimize workflow and make 4K and HDR recording more accessible to filmmakers. Cinema RAW Light, available in 4K 60p/50p at 10 bit and 30p/25p/24p at 12 bit, allows users to record data internally to a CFast™ card by cutting data size to about one-third to one-fifth of a Cinema RAW file, without losing grading flexibility. Due to the reduced file size, users will appreciate rich dynamic range and easier post processing without sacrificing true 4K quality. Alongside recording to a CFast™ card, proxy data (MP4) can also be simultaneously recorded to an SD card for use in offline editing.

Additionally, filmmakers will also be able to export 4K in MP4 format on versatile SD media cards at 60/50/30/25/24P at 8 bit. Support for UHD recording allows for use in cinema and broadcasting applications or scenarios where long recording

times are needed while still maintaining top image quality. The digital cinema cameras also offer slow motion Full HD recording support at up to 120fps to help ensure every frame is captured in exquisite detail.

The Canon EOS C200 and Canon EOS C200B Digital Cinema Cameras feature Innovative Focus Control that helps assist with 4K shooting that demands precise focusing, whether from single or remote operation. Canon's acclaimed Dual Pixel CMOS AF technology helps to expand the distance of the subject area to enable faster focus during 4K video recording. This also allows for highly accurate continuous AF and face detection AF when using EF lenses. For 4K video opportunities that call for precise focus accuracy that can't be checked on an HD monitor, users can also take advantage of the LCD Monitor LM-V1 (supplied with the EOS C200 camera), which provides intuitive touch focusing support to help filmmakers achieve sophisticated focusing even as a single operator.

In addition to these features, the Canon EOS C200 and Canon EOS C200B Digital Cinema Cameras offer:

- Over Sampling HD Processing*: enhances sensitivity and helps minimize noise
- Wide DR Gamma: helps reduce overexposure by retaining continuity with a gamma curve
- ISO 100-102400 and 54db gain: high quality in both low sensitivity and low-light environments
- In-Camera ND Filter: Internal ND unit allows cleaning of glass for easier maintenance
- ACESproxy Support: Delivers standardized color space in images, helping to improve efficiency
- Two SD card and one CFast™ card slots for internal recording
- Improved grip and Cinema EOS System compatible attachment method
- Support for Canon CINE-SERVO and EF Cinema Lenses

Cinema RAW Light Compatibility

Editing and grading of Cinema RAW Light video format will be supported in DaVinci Resolve of Blackmagic Design. Editing will also be possible in Media Composer® from Avid Technology®, using Canon RAW Plugin for Avid Media Access®.*¹ This format can also be processed using a Canon application, Cinema RAW Development.*² Demonstrations using these software programs will be given at the 2017 Cine Gear Expo June 1st-4th in Hollywood, CA.

Furthermore, Premiere Pro CC of Adobe® Systems will support this format until the end of 2017. Editing will also be possible in Final Cut Pro® X from Apple®, using Canon RAW Plugin for Final Cut Pro X®.*³ after second half of this year.

Pricing and Availability

The Canon EOS C200 and EOS C200B Digital Cinema Cameras are scheduled to be available in August 2017 for estimated retail **prices of \$7,499** and \$5,999** respectively**. The EOS C200 comes equipped with additional accessories including the LM-V1 LCD Monitor, LA-V1 LCD Attachment, GR-V1 Camera Grip and HDU-2 Handle Unit. These accessories will also be sold separately and available in **September 2017**.

An ideal complement for the EOS C200 Cinema Camera is the recently announced COMPACT-SERVO 70-200mm Zoom Lens. The lens is scheduled to be available later in 2017, for an estimated retail **price of \$5800**.

Equipment Discussions -

Nikon Announces Three New Wide-Angle NIKKOR Lenses

Nikon has announced two wide angle zoom lenses and one prime lens.

One of the lenses announced is the AF-P DX Nikkor 10-20mm f 4.5-5.6G VR lens. The other is the AF-S fisheye 8-15mm f3.5-4.5E ED circular fisheye zoom lens. The third lens in the series is the AF-S Nikkor 28mm f1.4 E ED lens.

The AF-P DX NIKKOR 10-20mm f/4.5-5.6G VR – Ultra-Wide Zoom Lens That's Compact and Portable

The compact 10-20mm AF-P DX lens is targeted at the new budget conscious photographers.

The Nikkor 10-20mm lens comes in DX format and is compact and portable. It is aimed at travellers who don't want to carry a heavy lens or people wanting to shoot large group portraits, scenery, real estate or do youtube videos etc at a cheap price.



This lens comes with VR and it gives an equivalent of 3.5 stops of benefit in stabilizing the image. So capturing sharp images in lower light becomes easy. It uses Nikons Pulse Motor technology for super-fast and whisper quiet AF operation- which is especially useful when recording video.

There are three aspherical elements for excellent image quality with minimal distortion even at the widest focal length.

Equipment Discussions -

This is a versatile lens that not only excels at shooting expansive horizons, but also offers a remarkably close working distance that's useful for images or showing up-close details when making product-related videos or how-to content. To get closer to capture small objects with big details, the lens has a close minimum focusing distance of only 8.6 inches (0.22 meters), bringing small objects to life in a big size.

Price: \$1249.95 US dollars

AF-S Fisheye NIKKOR 8-15mm f/3.5-4.5E ED – Circular Fisheye for Photographers and Content Creators

This is Nikon's first fisheye zoom lens. So photographers and filmmakers would be happy to explore this lens creatively.

This is an FX-format lens with the look and feel of a circular fisheye and the versatility of a full-frame fisheye.



According to Nikon, this lens design provides a creative circular 180-degree vertical / horizontal angle of view on full frame cameras, and zooms to a non-circular fisheye view (180-degree diagonal angle of view) on the long end of the focal range. The lens can also be used on DX-format cameras for a distinctive point-of-view and extreme wide-angle applications. When looking to push creative boundaries, the intriguing perspective from a fisheye lens should be considered to provide a distinct look to your photos and videos, such as a dramatic emphasis on a subject or an extremely wide interior point of view.

The AF-S Fisheye NIKKOR 8-15mm f/3.5-4.5E ED is also the latest in Nikon's Gold Ring Series of premier lenses and features a next-generation design for high-resolution Nikon DSLR cameras.

This lens is constructed of lightweight magnesium alloy, and employs internal focusing (IF) to retain its compact size, even while focusing. It is also Nikon's latest lens to use an electromagnetic diaphragm for consistent exposure during high speed shooting, or smooth exposure control while capturing video.

The optical formula of the Fisheye NIKKOR 8-15mm consists of three ED elements to reduce chromatic aberration, while two aspherical lens elements minimize coma, even at the widest aperture, and enable a more compact lens size. Additionally, the front lens element is coated with Nikon's non-stick Fluorine coat to help resist dirt, fingerprints and smudges, while Nikon's exclusive Nano Crystal Coat helps reduce ghost and flare.

Price: \$309.95 US dollars

AF-S NIKKOR 28mm f/1.4E ED – The Latest in The Gold Ring Series of f/1.4 Primes in the NIKKOR Line

The new AF-S NIKKOR 28mm f/1.4E ED is Gold Ring glass that provides maximum versatility for outstanding definition and sharpness regardless of shooting scenario.



There are nine blades to give a nice circular bokeh. This lens has a fast f/1.4 maximum aperture so that one can shoot in low light and use it creatively by using its shallow depth of focus in the widest aperture.

One can easily shoot low light interiors, caves or events with this lens.

The body is solid as it is composed of lightweight magnesium alloy. It features dust and water drop resistant sealing so one can easily shoot in inclement weather. There is a fluorine coating to resist dirt and smudges.

The optical construction of the lens is engineered for the best possible wide-angle image quality. This lens has 14 elements in 11 groups, with three aspherical elements and two ED glass elements to minimize chromatic aberration, distortion. The lens also uses Nikon's Nano Crystal coat to reduce ghosting and flaring so shooting against light becomes easier.

Price: The AF-S NIKKOR 28mm f/1.4E ED is priced at \$1999.95 US Dollars.

Natural History -

COUNTRY NOTEBOOK: M.Krishnan: 'The Large and the Little of it'

The Sunday Statesman: 21-June-1964 (shared by Shri. Saktipada Panigrahi)

THE LARGE AND THE LITTLE OF IT

(The Gaur mother with her charming little Infant)

" THERE is a Tamil proverb that says, " The youthful calf knows no fear". I had thought this a piece of metaphorical wisdom, meaning more or less that youth and inexperience rush in where maturity fears to tread, but early this summer, following a small herd of Gaur on elephant back, I realised that the saying was literally intended, and true to nature.



There was a dozen grown cows and sub-adults in that herd and right at the back, a cow with a very young, golden-fawn calf, perhaps a day old. The calf lay down for periodical rests, when the slow-grazing herd stopped in a patch of grass, as it did from time to time, but when on the move it frisked about with gay abandon, taking each light-bodied leap with jerky vigour and with the tail hoisted high in a flag of high spirits, the way Gaur calves gambol the second day of their lives and it seemed to find the hulking figure of our elephant irresistible.

My interest in that herd lay primarily not in this charming little infant, but in a very large cow in the vanguard with exceptionally thick, out-curved bull-like horns. Has some inept "sportsman" mistaken her for a bull? I thought this likely for she carried two neat round red wounds on her left shoulder, which seen from a distance and through glasses, seemed remarka-

bly like gunshot wounds and on the borders of the sanctuary, in which I was, the most disgraceful kinds of poaching were indulged in. What I wanted was a clear photograph of the wounds, taken from close up.

I anticipated trouble getting close to her; having been shot at she would naturally be very distrustful of humanity and last thing I wished was to move her to a run when she limped slightly and seemed to find walking painful. So I had our elephant posted in the line the herd was taking and if the big cow took fright and sheered away I decided to give up.

She was not the one bit frightened. In fact she almost brushed past our elephant but she was to our left and presented her unwounded right flank to us -- "sportsmen on the border favour 12-bore guns rather than rifles, and therefore I was not surprised that there were no exit wounds. The only thing to do was to wait till the herd had passed on and then taking a parallel course get ahead of the gaur and stop the elephant again, and try to get the big cow to pass us on our right.

It was when the herd had passed us and we were about to turn aside that the little calf's curiosity got the better of it; it took a few wobbly, tentative steps towards us, stopped for a moment, and then came bounding in right up to the elephant's feet to stare at us in round-eyed wonder.

Our mount, an adult tusker, slewed round to face the tiny visitor and swayed agitatedly from side to side. For some reason it did not like its proximity and nothing that the mahut could do, could turn him a little to one side to enable me to take a picture of that calf staring up at us all eyes and fanned-forward ears. The things that can cause a riding elephant uneasiness and even fear would surprise anyone unfamiliar with the great beasts, and it is not as if all of them fear the same things -- they have their whims and fancies in this. I knew that our Vikrama was afraid of Porcupines (a very understandable apprehensiveness) and Mouse Deer and even Vultures at close range; but I did not know he was scared of friendly little Gaur calves that came gamboling at him.

Well, he was and he showed his dislike in a pointed manner. Inserting the tip of his trunk into his mouth he drew up some watery saliva and sprayed it out in a fine jet directed at the calf. Meanwhile the mother Gaur, approaching warily had come up and with steady rhythmic licks of her soothing tongue persuaded the calf to follow her and return to the herd.

This happened four times in all in the course in my attempt to get a close-up of the wounds on the big cow -- and effort in which I failed unaccountably, for every time that cow insisted on passing us on our left. And every time we halted to let the herd pass before trying to get ahead of it, the calf came back on bounding legs to see Vikrama and Vikrama grew more and more agitated with each repetition of the scene. In fact, his dislike of the calf was so acute and evident and the mother Gaur's anxiety was so patent each time she came to rescue her little one, that I had to abandon my effort and take ourselves away though the herd and wounded cow had, by now, "accepted" us.

The mother Gaur tried hard to make her calf follow her whenever they were near the elephant walking well ahead and mooing in a low voice to summon the little one. But once it was within some 30 yards of Vikrama, the calf seemed to find his surely fascination irresistible, and came leaping in to stand within 10 feet of us, to stare up entranced.

The cow would then come up at an apprehensive walk, on tip-toe, with the head held fairly high and when near enough, she would stretch out her neck and lick the calf, a thing that at once brought it out of its trace and induced it to follow her back to the herd.

By exchanging my Rolex for a box-camera with a long lens, I got some pictures of the calf -- not the wonderful close-ups I could have got it if Vikrama had behaved, but some grab-shots taken at about 50 feet, which still serve as a memento of one of the most delightful experiences I have had in the course of my long observation of wild animals."

- M. Krishnan

This was published on 21 June 1964 in The Sunday Statesman

Wildlife Photography -

Leopard by Shymala Kumar



Rhino in Kaziranga by Mrudul Godbole



Wildlife Photography -

Tiger T57 by Vipin Sharma



Sambar-Stag from Corbett by Debasis Bose



Wildlife Photography -

Rufous-necked Hornbill by Sandipan Ghosh



Oriental Pratincole by Samrat Sarkar



Wildlife Photography -

Crab by Prajwal Ullal



Honey Bee by Prajwal Ullal





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/>

To post in the IndiaWilds forums, you can register free of cost using your Full Name as user id at -

<http://www.indiawilds.com/forums/register.php>

If you are already a member of IndiaWilds and have forgotten your user id and/or password you can mail administrator@indiawilds.com

Regards,

Sabyasachi Patra

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