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Adventure & Wildlife

A bi-monthly magazine

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Cover Story
The Queen of Bijrani

Also Featuring
12th ATOAI Convention
India Bike Week 2016

Vol 1 | Issue 1 | March 2016

82 Pages



India's Largest Adventure Travel Association Working Towards Safe & Honorable Travel

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- Sustainability Pillar
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- To be inclusive and grow membership to 1000 responsible members.
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- To help members operate in all 7 continents.

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- Annual conventions
- Promote adventure tourism in India.
- Take necessary steps for promoting, encouraging and assisting in the development of Adventure Tourism throughout the country.
- Communicate with Govt. & Non Govt. Bodies in India for issues related to adventure tourism.

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From the Editor's Desk

Dear Readers,

It is with immense pleasure, I put forth the maiden issue of Adventure & Wildlife, a bi-monthly magazine which focuses mainly on Adventure & Wildlife destinations, along with this equipment used, expert views on relevant issues, advice & suggestions, safety norms, guidelines. Also touch upon challenges faced by the communities and other stake holders of these resources and conservation issues. We shall showcase the best practices and achievements from individuals and organizations who have made major contributions in these sectors keeping in mind some of the above parameters.

You must be wondering why these two sectors – Adventure & Wildlife, the reason being after a great deal of research and understanding, we realized that these two sectors almost go hand in hand and the individuals or institutions for these two sectors are from similar interest groups, who are passionate to explore and find time and resources to indulge in their passions.

The main initiative behind this is to provide a common platform for all the stake holders to exchange views, experiences, and address various interests and issues pertaining to these two sectors. It is interesting to note that the number of people who are being drawn to these two sectors is ever growing. A print media effort in the form of Adventure & Wildlife magazine shall be an ideal catalyst for dissemination of valid information and refreshing contemporary articles. I am sure you would learn and appreciate something you were not aware of in this publication. We shall bring in more awareness, address challenges, best practices, explore destinations and create a community who shall indulge responsibly in these activities and at the same time contribute to safe guarding the ecosystem.

I look forward to your support and request you to participate to create a community of Givers and Gainers. Please submit your thoughts, suggestions, feedback, experiences and share it with the readers through Adventure & Wildlife magazine. In our endeavour to bring all these relevant and updated information, we shall also be organizing series of events, awareness programs, seminars and workshops over a period of time and ensure participation of the various communities, stake holders and thus help in bringing in a positive change.



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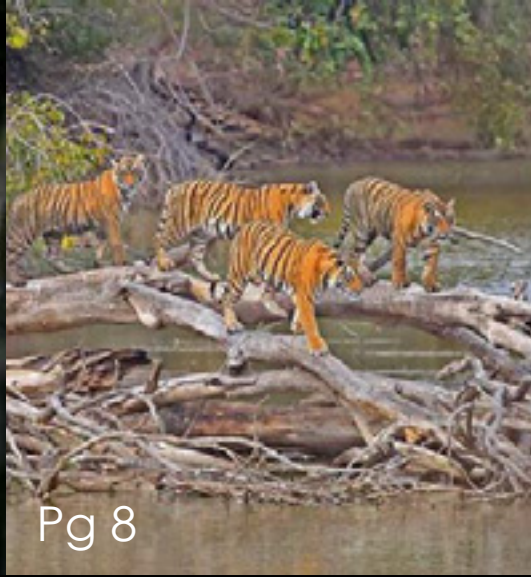
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"I take this opportunity to wish you and your team all the success for the launch of 'Adventure & Wildlife Magazine'. I wish to add that such a magazine is the need of the hour and shall be a catalyst for source of information and promote responsible & eco tourism initiatives. I would like to convey my best wishes to all and every success in the years ahead."

Dr. Mahesh Sharma
Hon'ble Minister for Tourism, Govt. of India



"My congratulations & best wishes to Adventure & Wildlife publication team. Wishing them all the success. I would not hesitate to say that a magazine like this is what the readers require."

Shri RV Deshpande, Hon'ble Minister for Large & Medium Industries and Tourism, Government of Karnataka.



"I wish you and Adventure & Wildlife magazine every success in raising the bar on responsible nature and adventure tourism."

Julian Matthews
Founder, TOFTigers



"Heartiest congratulations on the launch issue of Adventure & Wildlife Magazine, a publication for the adventure & wildlife community in India. I am sure the magazine will not only cover the wider issues being faced by industry, it will also be a great information source."

Akshay Kumar
President, ATOAI

Editor's Pick

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THE WILD NATURE OF NATURE TOURISM

By JULIAN MATTHEWS



The morning sun was beating down hard as we made our way back to the Kisli park gate, but it had been a few hours well spent. The four of us had had a quiet but delightful drive through the meadows and malevolent sal forests of the Surhi range of Kanha, where statuesque barasingha abounded and the sal heartwood borer beetle *Hoplocerambyx spinicornis*, was doing its best to kill whole groves of trees. The trip had been a revelation. Seldom can I remember a drive with such a sense of 'wildness' seemingly all to myself, free of the usual camera-laden tourists like me. We had stopped, we had watched, we had listened – often for half an hour at a time – all our senses concentrated on the infinite sights and sounds of the jungle. Yes, the driver had become a little fidgety, the guide a bit bored, but I was elated.

That morning I had what I wanted as a tourist and customer. Isn't customer satisfaction the ultimate objective of a

quality safari drive? Here was a responsive, customer-focused, informative driver and polite park guide, succeeding with well thought out and applied vehicle routings – even with 1,33,660 other visits last year.

Let's remind ourselves where and why parks were originally created – for conservation and recreation. It was right here in India after all that the first park was created in Bori Sanctuary in 1865, in what is now the Satpura Tiger reserve. This was seven years before any were declared in the United States – too often credited as the original forerunners.

Yet for decades the agencies constituted in the two countries to oversee these precious landscapes have run them in completely different ways. In the United States they encourage you to visit, design clever ways to help you enjoy their natural rhythms, allow you time to reconnect with nature away from modern contraptions, through camping, hik-

ing, biking and nature trails, kayaking and rafting, clever signposting, mapping and even refuge huts. They make sure that you are prepared and able to have an amazing time, and ideally fall in love with a place, so you come back again, spending your dollars to help the park authorities to preserve them – ad infinitum.

In India it's been exactly the opposite. Close off the most fabled landscapes, restrict you to small areas, make you as inconvenienced and often as uncomfortable as possible travelling around, staying inside or doing anything of great interest within them. Furthermore, ensure there are no facilities or services, you can't go with experts, get no guide books or maps and finally send you away feeling you should be grateful for what you did or didn't see.

The CEO of The National Wildlife Refuge Association, which oversees 6,00,000 sq. km. of wilderness across America and its 53 million visitors per



are 48 tiger reserves – many get only a few visitors, while some like Periyar (see page 25) get nearly a million 'look-but-don't touch' visits per year. If, as I see it, wildlife seems to be doing very well in parks that have tourism (even some with elements of appallingly poor tourism), and researchers agree that tigers are not feeling any ill effects from present tourism capacity, it would suggest that more zones and more gates should be used to spread eager visitors further but thinner across more landscapes, inside and outside parks ensuring both better experiences for visitors, adding hugely to park and government revenues, opening new opportunities for marginalised communities and ensuring that far more people gain the infinite tangible and intangible benefits of quality nature experiences. How else can we expect people to fight for these wildernesses unless they can visit and fall in love with them in the first place?

annum – summed it up. "If it wasn't for tourism here in the U.S. there would be no consensus for conserving these areas. The two are inseparable and interdependent. You just have to plan it carefully."

The Numbers Game

In 2005, I looked a decade ahead and saw the then nascent nature tourism industry expanding hugely, as more and more people were expressing interest in wildernesses, had the financial reach and improved transportation that was putting once remote wilderness destinations within easy reach. The need then was to spread this new enthusiasm further and thinner across landscapes, ensure its sustainability and its support for wildlife and local communities.

Now let's think 30 years forward. Not to the three million visitors across 10 popular tiger reserves as we have today, but to 50 million visitors across over 500 reserves and sanctuaries, something akin to what the US Refuge Association deals with year and year out. There

The Mind Game

The default mentality for the vast majority of forest officers is "Tourism? As little as possible, please." Not wholly surprising for most senior officers whose early careers had been spent managing collapsing forests without prying eyes, politicians' visits or media hounds. This was their forest and nobody else was going to see it.

This institutionalised blind spot has meant, in reality, exactly what these foresters least wanted, uncontrolled and uncontrollable tourism, has happened in some places. And now Field Directors prefer to stick up their hands and say, "I told you so. Tourism is a problem."

The MOEF has to take tourism seriously, not simply by adding an extra paragraph on it into its five year planning cycle. Accept, as every other country does today, that nature tourism is a critical component in conserving parks and alleviating poverty, and make plans to ensure that only the best formats of wilderness tourism can thrive. The Ministry of Tourism needs to do likewise. Make sustainable tourism measures mandatory

for providers – encouraging the kind of monitoring tools like TOF-Tigers PUG mark to highlight the best accommodation for visitors to choose. Only then can we be serious about using this industry as one of India's five key economic drivers – without killing the goose that laid the golden egg.

The Planning Game

Long-term planning – or a complete lack of it – and the consequences for this oversight affects all aspects of safari goer's visit. No industry, least of all tourism, is self-regulating. It won't deliver revenues to parks and wealth to its neighbours in the way it is presently set up and looked on; it's a competitive business, not a social enterprise after all.

However, it still could do a whole lot better with far more visionary long range landscape planning by state governments, and greater partnerships and consensus, decision making between providers, parks and communities. It also needs to rid itself of an indulgent menace, *VIP tourism*.

There are a cadre of visionary field officers and forest bureaucrats who are making great strides, finding novel ways to work together with excellent safari operators and accommodation providers, seeking consensus and making things happen against a seemingly immovable and apathetic force. Go on a trekking trail in Satpura, drive through the restored Sawai Mansingh Sanctuary in Ranthambhore or Pench in Maharashtra or enjoy the new activities being pioneered in Tadoba. See for yourself.

So while India has learnt how to protect – even expand – its tiger numbers, it still needs to recognise the very best way to keep them, and how to use the world's love for the striped cat to ensure that its progeny – that I saw lying at ease on a dirt road on a sunny November last year – will still be there in 2115.

Julian Matthews
Director of the nature tourism action charity TOFTigers.
www.toftigers.org.



FROM BUST TO BOOM

Pic : <http://www.indileak.com>

Julian Matthews, TOFTigers, says good things are happening in the magical wild kingdom of Ranthambhore.

A decade ago in 2005, the Rajasthan state government declared an emergency; a red alert on the state of tigers within its borders. The state's most famous wildlife attraction seemed doomed to extinction, with only two male adults, 11 females and five youngsters remaining in a small 392 sq. km. reserve nestled in the ancient Aravalli fold hills, south of the state capital, Jaipur. All seemed lost. The increasing demand for tiger products had driven a skilled poaching tribe, the Mogiya, on a killing spree, enabled by poor protection efforts gaping staff shortages and the low morale of foresters employed to guard increasingly porous borders.

The Mogiyas proved adept, in small-skilled groups, at tracking and killing tigers on the fringes of the park and had even brazenly been lifting them from core areas. With new alarm bells ringing, the police were galvanised into action, and protection staff strengthened with new powers and equipment. In this they were ably supported by a new non-governmental organisation called Tiger Watch set up in the home of Dr. Goverdhan Rathore, son of the charismatic Fateh Singh Rathore, admired world-wide for being one of the architects of Project Tiger and the one who

brought the Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve to life. Village tip-offs began to pour in and before long, several Mogiya poachers were apprehended. Over the next three years, some 70 poachers were picked up red-handed. Furthermore, a huge effort was initiated to integrate and educate this predominantly nomadic tribe, who historically lived by hunting alongside the largely pastoral communities dwelling on the park boundaries. Alternative livelihoods were sought, including incorporation into protection staff and education programmes, and the efforts soon began to pay dividends. Poaching largely stopped – even if Rajasthan's only other tiger reserve, Sariska, 128 km. away, was now suffering the consequences of the better monitoring here. It was dramatically declared devoid of all tigers in early 2007.

Today Ranthambhore is booming. Under the leadership of Field Director Y. K. Sahu and his team, support from many of its tourism enterprises, pro-active community outreach programmes and long-term partnerships with external agencies, a once doomed park is again flourishing. As Dr. Khandal of Tiger Watch says "Our tiger population is now up to 60 individuals, 25 percent

The 'tiger squash' has forced a number of young males out of the safety of the reserve and across inhospitable densely packed agricultural landscapes, propelled purely by feline instinct to find their own territory and survive through their own territorial occupation or conquest.

above its last historic high and already set to bursting point, so much so that young male tigers are pouring out of our borders to find new territories in which to settle. Currently two tigers are being tracked as they head south and east."

The 'tiger squash' has forced a number of young males out of the safety of the reserve and across inhospitable, densely packed agricultural landscapes, propelled purely by feline instinct to find their own territory and survive through their own territorial occupation or conquest.

Nonetheless, the most exciting part of this success is the re-wilding that has happened so rapidly in the southern part of the park. The ongoing demand from a never-ending stream of park visitors can take some of the credit for this. Here, in the unvisited and overgrazed Sawai Mansingh Sanctuary, which had since 1991 been a neglected part of the reserve, a few large herders agreed to give up cattle and take to guiding visitors instead. The change in the landscape in 2009 had been the habitat of a lone tiger with a poor diet, has, within five years, again with decreased cattle grazing was astounding. What turned into a green haven bursting with biodiversity, including chital and sambar, the staple prey for tigers, of which 15 are now able to sustain themselves. In the process as many as 60 locals have found employment as park guides for the many visitors who only a few years ago refused to go near the area.

Though many cattle and sheep herds still graze on the park fringes, well-administered and generous cattle-compensation schemes, supplemented by park entry fee revenues, have induced herders to accept the odd livestock death as part of everyday life, not the family disaster it once was. Furthermore some three village relocations in the northern area have helped extend Ranthambhore's boundaries and add over 50 sq. km. for wildlife.

Not only has Ranthambhore's success been good for its own tigers, but it has helped re-establish a new breeding population in the nearby Sariska Tiger Reserve, which today has 13 individuals, up from the original eight that were relocated there. What is more, little known forests like Mukandara Hills long-devoid of tigers, have begun to offer tigers sustenance. Ditto for Kuno-Palpur, across the border in Madhya Pradesh which now offers shelter to some of the cats that moved out from Ranthambhore and survived.

Could this be the future? Maybe now there is a real belief, and a viable success story that can be emulated to ensure these large carnivores will remain in their historic homes long into the future.

NOT YET OUT OF THE WOODS

Though Ranthambhore's underlying tiger numbers are up, long term protection is a 24x7 job, 365 days of the year – with no let up. It's a thankless task. Often one in which every weakness is exploited... so one day you're winning, the next you're losing.

The Field Director and his team have to worry about 'active management' of these tigers – relocation of young adult males if necessary, as well as a skewed male/female gender problem in the park, and potential inbreeding, specifically from the famous Machli tigress' gene pool. Worryingly on the increase is the deliberate poisoning of prey species outside the park, to save ongoing crop damage. This is seriously affecting the prey base for large carnivores and occasionally poisoning the tigers themselves. Prey species often have little choice but to seek grazing in these landscapes because of invasive species like the thorny and unpalatable *Prosopis juliflora*, which has replaced large parcels of the park by edging out palatable species of plants.

Tourism development along the western boundary north of Sawai Madhopur continues at break-neck speed, and without recourse to the park's carrying capacity. Clearly there is little thought given to long-term sustainability. Only a few visionaries act and interact beyond the benefit of their own wallets, and they are deeply concerned at the damaging effects of over-development. Furthermore, for years the booking of park tickets has been undermined by a 'mafia' of operators, ensuring an unjust system that favours the wealthy and a burgeoning of very demanding 'VIP guests' on a finite resource. Intensive care is still required.

Julian Matthews
Director of the nature tourism
action charity TOFTigers.
www.toftigers.org.

Aghanashini River Bank

A SYMPHONY & SPECTRUM FOR BIRDING-December 2015

By Ravi Shastri & Shiuli Mishra

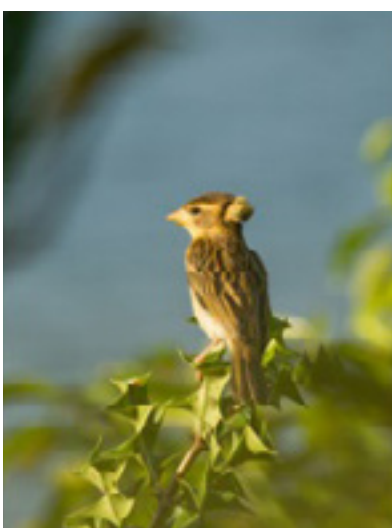
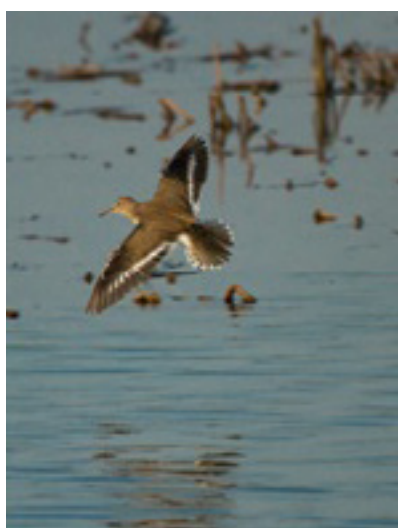
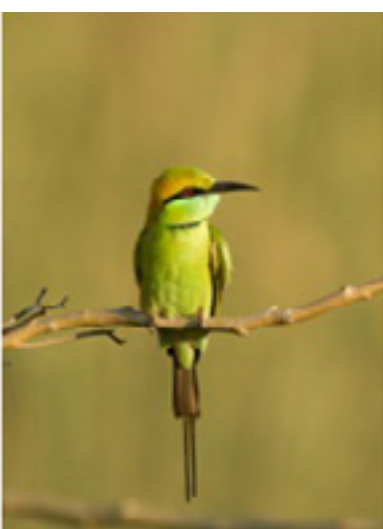
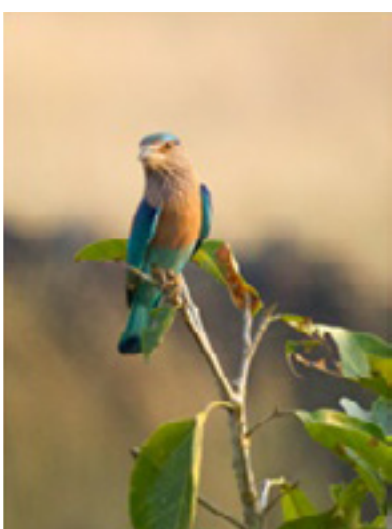
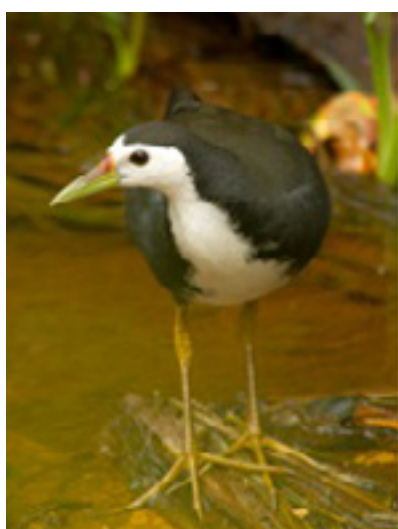
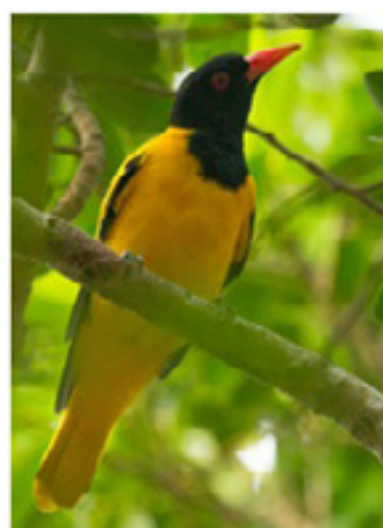
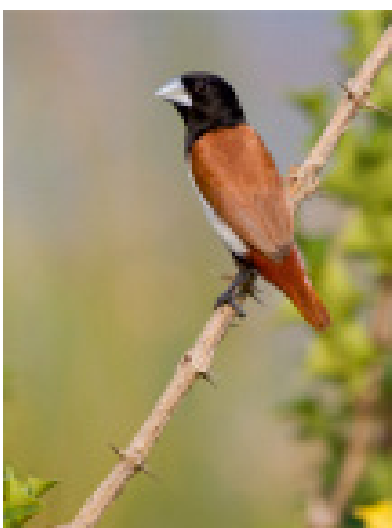
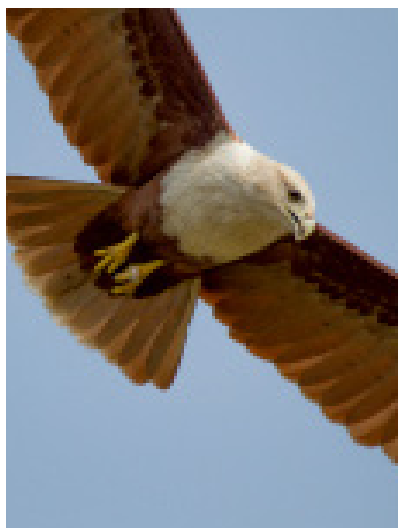
'Self possessions are always undermined and other's possessions seem better', this proverb best suits my thoughts when it comes to the flora and fauna in my own native place, Uttara Kannada.

Towards the north of the hustle bustle town Kumta in the Uttara Kannada district of the Karnataka state is the river Aghanashini which joins the Arabian sea providing an eye-catching sunset, serenity and peace!

Aghanashini River bank is a treasure house of known and unknown flora, fauna and best suited weather for birding; which resulted in exploration of 70+ species of birds and that too in a mere 2kms walk beside the river bank.

Spectacular array of wading birds, predatory birds, tree birds in their natural habitat. Its practically impossible to showcase the entire range of bird species of the Aghanashini river bank, but here is a short list for all the birding enthusiasts to plan your next birding tour to this symphony and spectrum of birding called "Aghanashini".





To offer you a glimpse of the vivid variety of birds that frequent the banks of the river Aghanashini

Purple Heron, Grey Heron, Pond heron, Common Kingfisher, White Throated Kingfisher, Pied Kingfisher, Baya weavers, Egrets, Brahminy Kite, Common Kite, Jacobin Cuckoo, Stilts, Ibis, Sandpiper, Shrike, Cormorant, Tri-Colored Munia, Green Bee Eater, Common crane, Sunbirds, Koel, Tailor bird, Priniya, Red vented Bulbul, White Browed bulbul, Common lora, Water hen, Indian Roller, Black headed oriole, and many more...

I even took out a moment to think why do nature enthusiasts like birding? What is so special about birds? I think it is the sheer variety of bird species that fascinates most of them! It would be surely impossible to get bored doing birding at the Aghanashini river bank

Though bird-watching is an enthusiasm and a hobby to many of us.... I remember that during my childhood my father made our home garden so favourable for birds to perch and feed that Our garden became a ballroom for birds for dancing and swirling to their tunes. It used to give us immense satisfaction that we made a vital contribution to the conservation of our local environment.

I also would like to salute the people staying in and around the river bank... who have made sure not to disturb or harm the natural flora and fauna of that area and protect it to a great extent which results in survival and sustenance of mammoth of native and endangered birds.

We all need to understand that a slightest of disturbance in the natural flora and fauna by we humans might result in huge eco - imbalance. Save Nature. Save Future. And long live the habitat and the birds of the beautiful Aghanashini River!



Ravi Shastri

Self-taught photographer.
Digital Marketing Consultant.
Travel Freak. Wanderlust!

Founder Thrilltrail

Sharmilee – The Queen Of Bijrani Zone, Corbett National park

By Ravi Shastri & Ameya Tarde

“The book of nature has no beginning, as it has no end. Open this book where you will, and at any period of your life, and if you have the desire to acquire knowledge you will find it of intense interest, and no matter how long or how intently you study the pages, your interest will not flag, for in nature there is no finality.”

Taking these words of the famous hunter and tracker turned conservationist Sir Edward James “Jim” Corbett as Gospel I began planning for my maiden trip to Jim Corbett National Park. With some research over the internet I got a gist of what Mother Nature had planned for me. Her blessings for us are sort of a treasure hunt which we have to unravel as she holds our hands and takes us along with her.

The park has a core area of almost 821.99 Square Kilometres and a buffer area of 466.32 Square Kms located along the foothills of Himalayas in Uttarakhand spread over 2 districts Pauri, Nainital & Almora. River Ramganga, Sonanadi and Pallaen flow through the reserve giving life to more than 110 species of trees, 58 mammal species, and 580 species of birds with over 25 species of reptiles.

Corbett National park is divided into 6 main zones; Dhikala, Bijrani, Sonanadi, Jhirna, Dhela and Durgadevi. Bijrani zone was my choice of zone for obvious reasons. I wanted to see India's national animal in its full glory in its own domain.

Amdanda Gate where it all starts is roughly 3 kms from Ramnagar Railway Station. To come to the official government guest house in Bijrani zone you have to cross 7 kms of buffer area from the Amdanda Gate.

The village folk in this buffer area gave me a feeling that life can be so very simple and yet so happy and fulfilling in these parts; man and animal live in such close corners yet there are hardly any clashes between them. Comparing the lives of these village folks with mine gave me a gloomy feeling of what an illusion I was living in - The man-made concrete jungle.

But Mother Nature holds your hand at every step. “Our happiness, I believe, resulted from the fact that all wildlife is happy in its natural surroundings. In nature there is no sorrow, and no repining.



A bird from a flock, or an animal from a herd, is taken by hawk or carnivorous beast and those that are left rejoice that their time had not come today, and have no thought of tomorrow”.

These words by Jim Corbett echoed in my mind which uplifted my spirits and thence I started enjoying every single moment of my stay in the core area of Bijrani Zone.

On the first day of the safari on the crispy cold winter morning the cold draft of air was the first to welcome me in mystical world of jungle as I opened the doors of my room. Being a typical Mumbai bloke from childhood, this sudden surge of cold draft combined with dew drops made me numb. A feeling of why the heck did I come in such cold climate brushed my mind; but this was a short lived feeling which disappeared when the orange ball of fire came out of its hiding from the east. This for any photographer is a dream to capture all that beauty in the camera. I for one did not miss it and kept on capturing these moments in my camera until it was time to start for the jeep safari.

Jeep safaris are one of the most popular means to see the jungles; though it can never beat the experience of an Elephant Safari. But it was better to follow my group in the comparatively cosy jeep in such cold weather. Sometimes common sense in unknown territories is helpful than rush of blood.

Our guide; a local lad, named Waseem; was our man for the tour. He made sure that we acustom ourselves with different elements of the jungle. These local guides might not be highly educated; but they have one thing which we urbanites lack. And that is sense of immense pride for nature which they call it theirs. Nature teaches them so much that they can take on any educated chap and beat them hands on. Ours was no exception to that. He had a sharp ear and was quick to spot any bird & animal by their sound.

We saw a herd of elephants merrily chomping the grass. We saw birds that were high on their metabolism and were busy searching for food and were merrily singing from branch to branch. I don't know where they get the strength and courage to battle such cold weather. For me I was still numb after gulping down 2-3 cups of freshly brewed hot tea by the prompt and ever helping staff at the guest house.

Somehow I managed to capture a few shots. It was a tough task but all my pain was forgotten when I saw what I managed to capture.

After the initial familiarisation with the jungle; my eyes were looking out for the Orange & Black Stripes. My anxiety to see a tiger was quiet clear to Waseem as well. He promised me that he will make sure I see the "Queen of Bijrani" on this maiden tour of mine. Queen of Bijrani: Sharmilee – Waseem said she was the most bold and beautiful tigress to have ever walked Bijrani.



Waseem was feeding me with information about Sharmilee when suddenly there was a call from the Spotted Deer.

Waseem knew instantly where it was from and followed our jeep from where the call was originating from. We stationed ourselves and I was getting more anxious when suddenly there was noise from the thicket and all I could see were the Orange & Black stripes passing by. Disappointed I thought this is it. I might end up in some sort of Jungle Jinx. But Waseem was sure where she would come out in the open.

We moved from our spot trying to track her and after a ride of almost 5-10 minutes stationed ourselves where Waseem thought Sharmilee might be spotted. Waiting some more time, getting more and more anxious was not helping me or my fellow passengers.

I must admit that this kind of silence with the sounds of birds, animals and for that matter the air humming in your ears is a meditative experience in spite of any sort of frustration that you are facing.

Suddenly out of nowhere the silence was broken when the Langur's started making a hullabaloo and my meditative phase was broken.

Waseem was sure that the Sharmilee was on the move and will cross our path anytime. Yes, he was correct she was on the move but was walking parallel to us through the thicket and all we could see was the stripes and tail at times. Waseem was driving slowly; following her cautiously. I was now sure that the Jungle Jinx has tightened its grips on me. But then I heard a voice from within to be positive and be ready with my camera. I kept myself ready to capture the action should she come out of the thicket. Sometimes one has to listen to the inner self.

We kept on following the stripes for quiet some-time; Waseem stopped the car and asked us to be ready. These blokes who are raised in the lap of Mother Nature have some sixth sense I presume.

They are raised in such surroundings that give them this extra edge over us urbanites. We kept on waiting for some more time in anticipation of the Queen. A lone Robin meanwhile was keeping us company with his merry songs. I was trying to understand what that Robin might be saying and to whom; just when Waseem patted on my hand and said "There she comes Sir!".

That was THE MOMENT for me or for that matter any wild life lover; The Undisputed Queen of Bijrani came out of the thicket to cross the road hardly 3 meters away from us, paused for a moment looked at us, and kept walking. This was a jaw dropping moment for me. Thanks to my Canon 7D and its ability to take 8 frames per second. I don't know how many times or how long I might have pressed the button in order to capture her in my camera forever; I don't remember. I don't remember how many times I might have thanked Waseem after that. Now I frequent Corbett National Park and all its zones. But my favourite till date is Bijrani Zone for it is ruled by Queen Sharmilee. To call her BOLD & BEAUTIFUL won't be any exaggeration. She is somehow not a shy tigress; she makes her presence felt to one and all. One such incidence was when we were driving in front for as long as 1 km. The Queen was busy marking her territory making sure there are no tiger dares to enter what is her territory.

After so many years I have come to a conclusion that Sharmilee represents the true spirit of Womanhood. She is proud mother of 4 cubs for whom she hunts tirelessly to make sure they are well fed. She is making sure that till they reach a stage to set up their own territories they are well protected from any predators. In keeping them safe and sound the Queen has had to sacrifice her 2 canines in half.



But this is what mothers are all about isn't it? Making sure their kids get the best of conditions to grow into strong individuals.

Observing Sharmilee for so many years has got me more close to my mother who I am sure would have taken all necessary steps to make sure I was raised well. At times we don't realise what our mother has done for us but watching and observing some mother like Sharmilee makes me feel it wouldn't have been any different. The only difference being they are Animals and we are Humans.

In the end I would like to quote from Jim Corbett's pearls of wisdom "Those who have never seen a tiger under favourable conditions in his natural surroundings can have no conception of the grace of movement, and beauty of colouring, of this the most graceful and the most beautiful of all animals in our Indian jungles."



Ravi Shastri

Self-taught photographer.
Digital Marketing Consultant.
Travel Freak. Wanderlust!

Founder Thrilltrails

THE BALLOONS ARE COMING!

By Benedict Savio



Pollachi is where's it all happened this January. We were in for a unique visual treat thanks to the Hot Air Balloon festival. A balloon festival of this nature is a new concept to most of us Indians. Elsewhere in the world countries like Mexico, USA, Belgium, New Zealand, Germany and Malaysia have successfully conducted mega events with the main focus being the hot air balloon festival. Thousands of people flock in with families to take in the stunning sights of hot air balloons taking flight.

Global Media Box is an international air adventure sports company. They have successfully conducted hot air balloon festivals in several countries. Considering that their main offices are in Tamil Nadu, it was but natural that they wanted to showcase a spectacle of this nature on

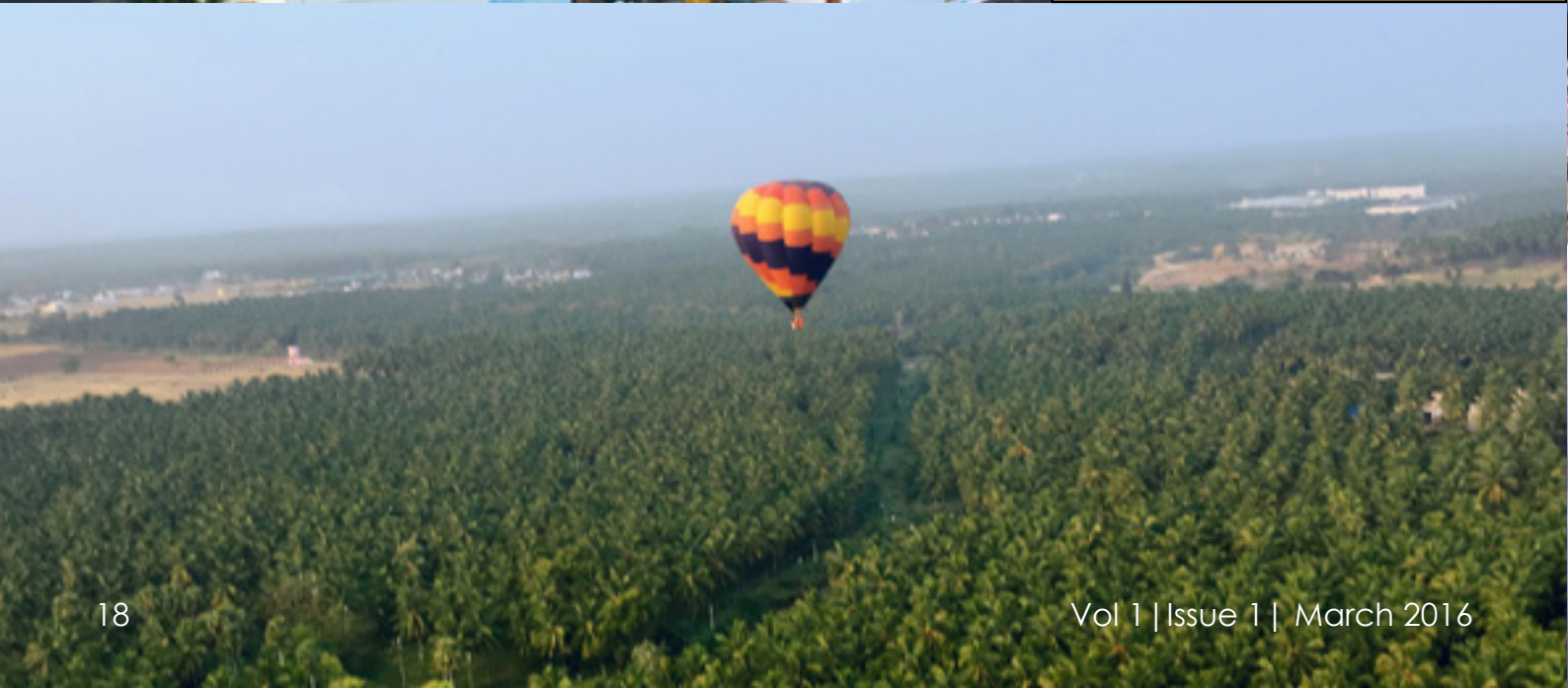
their home turf. In this regard they went scouting for places that were ideal not only from a technical flying point of view but also one that was scenic and had much to offer by way of touristic appeal.

Pollachi with its pristine landscape made up of coconut groves, dense forest cover and friendly people seemed like the perfect location.

In 2014 Mr. Benedict Savio and his team from Global Media Box conducted the first ever Tamil Nadu International balloon festival with five international pilots. The event was held in the last week of January and proved to be a huge success. The festival consisted of tethered flights and free flights at Pollachi, just after sunrise and before sunset.



1. Pollachi Balloon Festival (previous page)
2. Ben representing India at León, Mexico (top)
3. Passengers on the Angry bird balloon over Pollachi (left)
4. Balloon in flight over scenic landscape of Pollachi
5. Enthralled crowd watching a pilot prepare his balloon for flight. (facing page)



The supporting event was held at Coimbatore. This was a sound and light show featuring the hot air balloons. Not wanting to miss this unusual experience, a few of us made plans to take part in the action. I'm not sure if it was us the adults or the children who were more excited! On reaching the crowd filled KCT grounds the excitement increased.

The air reverberated with adrenalin infused vibes. The hot air balloons were just being inflated as we neared the show space. That by itself was quite a sight. The sheer volume of these balloons took one's breath away. That's when we realized that hot air ballooning was serious stuff indeed. The man power required to hoist these beauties is quite considerable. The licensed pilots take their job very seriously. Despite the work involved, being the cheerful sort, they did manage to share a bit of banter with the crowd. As the balloon was being inflated, one could feel the heat of the flames, even at a distance. The cane basket which carries the pilot and passengers is large enough to fit about 3 adults and the mandatory LPG cylinder. It's also a great deal more sturdy than it looks.

The one balloon that caught all our fancy was the angry bird balloon. We watched in fascination as it went from being flat on the ground to

being plumped up with air until it swayed in the mild breeze, pointy beak and all. As dusk fell, the music came on and these balloons were lit up in synchronization by their respective pilots. Boy, did the bird look red hot angry !!! It was quite an unforgettable sight. For this show, space constraints dictated that the balloons couldn't lift off the ground. Despite that it still proved to be a fun evening.

This is what makes these hot air balloon festivals so popular. It's not only about the flying. It's a fabulous spectator sport. We were in awe of watching 5 hot air balloons. This year they plan to showcase 8 hot air balloons in total and oh yes, the angry bird is definitely a part of that entourage. At Pollachi, last year they offered two types of flying experiences, which is the plan this time as well. The sponsors for the festival are allowed 'free flights', which meant that the balloon's course was chartered by the wind. The pilot can make the hot air balloon rise and descend whenever required but cannot decide the course. He will at all times be in contact with the ground staff, who will be following the voyage in a motored vehicle. The landing of the balloon at various spots has given many a happy surprise to the locals. Children rushing out to witness this amazing object just adds to the thrill of this sport.





In addition to this, people can pay to participate in 'tethered flights'. This is done where the balloon is anchored to the ground and is taken up for a height of 100 feet and brought down. To view the landscape from such a height is when one learns to appreciate and be grateful for all that nature has bestowed upon us. Many people in and around Pollachi went on these flights and are eagerly looking forward to doing so again.

Hot air ballooning is an event which respects the landscape and adds much to the economic development of the place where it is conducted. The hospitality sector, local craft and unique lifestyle of the people are focused upon to ensure that this activity is mutually beneficial to all.

The positive outcome of last year has led to the thought of making this an annual event in Pollachi during the harvest festival. The Pongal festival is deeply rooted in the customs and traditions of the land owners and farmers who call Pollachi their home. To share these time honoured customs with visitors gives a sense of pride and belonging. The future visualization is to have people from all walks of life thronging to this quiet hamlet, around the middle of January. It's a great way to discover a land that is far removed from the regular tourist route.

I have no doubts that guests will find such a package irresistible. . Not only does one get to soak in the festive village atmosphere but also to participate in a fun event that is truly global in nature How often do we come across easily accessible destinations that feed our soul?. Pollachi will do that for you and will have you coming back for more.

We have already explored the locations in Karnataka and Pondicherry for our next level of Hot Air Balloon expansions. Soon we will start our Balloon ventures in Hampi and Pondicherry.

Benedict Savio
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1. Special shaped balloons at Pollachi (Above)

2. The Angry bird Balloon In flight (facing page)



Ben is a Balloon enthusiast & the patriarch of Global Media Box. His infectious passion for hot air balloons has taken him to heights and his comprehensive knowledge about balloons has helped in organising various balloon events around the world.

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Game changers recognised at 2016 ATOAI Convention

The 2016 award winners of the Adventure Tour Operators Association of India (ATOAI) Convention, which was held from 12 - 14 February in Hanumantiya in Madhya Pradesh, are as follows-

1. Best Adventure Travel Website - Adventure Nation, Gurgaon (Award received by Ajeet Bajaj)
2. Best Popular Adventure Camp / Resort – Atali Ganga, Rishikesh
(Award received by Manoj Biswas)
3. Innovation in Adventure Activity
 - a. Air Adventure - Flyboy Aviation Pvt. Ltd.
 - b. Land Adventure- Jumpin Adventures Pvt. Ltd., Mohan Chatti at Rishikesh
(Award received by Brig. S P Singh)
 - c. Water Adventure- MV Mahabaahu | by Far Horizon Tours Pvt. Ltd. (Faridabad Delhi)
4. New Innovative Product (Eco Lodge in Remote location) - Binsar Forest Retreat, Binsar
(Award received by Rajesh Ojha)
5. Excellence in Community & Adventure based Tourism - Pugmarks Eco Tours Pvt. Ltd. Pune
(Award received by Anirudh Chaoji)
6. Innovation in "Adventure Travel"- based on Innovation, Strategy, Use of Technology, Safety Standards, SOPs & sustainability - LifeStraw / A&S Creations
- Awards of Excellence - Lifetime Achievement Award - Vasant Limaye(CEO High places management Pvt. Ltd.)
7. Hall of Fame – Mohan Tickoo, Managing Director KVT
(Kash Venture Travels Pvt. Ltd.)- President's Award
8. Game Changer in the Adventure Travel Industry - Decathlon Sports India – Alpesh Patel-
Best Indian State in Adventure Tourism
9. Innovation in Creating Adventure Destination | Madhya Pradesh Tourism
10. Promotion for Adventure Travel | Jammu & Kashmir Tourism
11. Sustainability in Adventure Travel | Sikkim Tourism
12. Upcoming State Promoting Adventure Travel | Maharashtra Tourism

Source - <http://www.voyagersworld.in/article/game-changers-recognised-2016-atoai-convention>



The 2016 award winners of the Adventure Tour Operators Association of India (ATOAI) Convention receiving their awards from Shri Venkaiah Naidu, Minister of Urban Development, Govt. of India and Shri Shivraj Singh Chauhan, Hon. Chief Minister, Madhya Pradesh



THE KANHA MUSEUM OF LIFE & ART

Kanha Museum of Life & Art opens at the premises of the Singinawa Jungle Lodge

Dear Friends

The Kanha Museum of Life and Art is now open at The Singinawa Jungle Lodge, Kanha, Madhya Pradesh. It was recently inaugurated by the French Ambassador to India, **H.E. François Richier** and we would like to extend an invitation to you, to come, visit us and experience the famed hospitality at The Singinawa Jungle Lodge. Please find the beautiful Exterior image of the museum, opened within the premises of Singinawa Jungle Lodge.

With the intention to promote the museum as an additional activity for all visitors to the Kanha National Park, we gladly invite your support, and we would be delighted to welcome your guests for a guided tour of the Solar powered Indigenous Art museum by our staff at the Singinawa Jungle Lodge. This is a unique model of indigenous art, wildlife, and energy conservation, and is being widely appreciated by one and all.

Timings: 9 AM to 11 PM.

Entry Charges: Rs. 500 per person

Includes full day access to the Kanha Museum of Life & Art and an escorted tour of the Singinawa Jungle Lodge.

Food & Drinks can be ordered on A-la Carte basis during the visit.

Please feel free to write to us in case of any queries/ comments.

Warm Regards,

Tulika Kedia

MD, Singinawa Jungle Lodge

A unit of Wild India Resorts Kanha Pvt. Ltd.

81/2, 4th floor, Aurobindo Marg, Adchini

Delhi 110017 ,India.



Coorg Valley

Karnataka

Driving through the verdant forests of any of the four sanctuaries of Coorg on a misty morning with the calls of the resident wildlife and bird-life in full song, is an experience unlike any other. The region is ornamented with grassy downs, paddy fields, sloping glades, waterfalls and deep ravines giving you endless and glorious surprises at every turn.

The Coorg region is also known by its local name Kodagu and the region spans about 4,100 square kilometres on the eastern slopes of the rich diversity of the Western Ghats of Karnataka. It is a hilly region with its highest peak, Tadiandamol, rising to 1,750 meters above sea level.

According to ancient Indian treatises this land was called Krodadesa, which later became Kodagu. It is derived from **kod**, which means give and **avva** meaning mother, in reference to River Cauvery that sustains life in this region.

The British started coffee cultivation on a large scale in the region and soon the local residents followed suit. Providing the largest contribution of coffee in the country,

Coorg is renowned for its monsoon-fed coffee, shade-grown under giant rosewood, wild fig, and jack-fruit trees that not only nurture but also infuse the bean with their unique aroma and flavour.

Coorg is also an important wildlife destination with its own distinct identity as a major travel attraction with its coffee and spice plantations and exotic flora and fauna. It also has its own unique long-standing social and cultural heritage. Its proximity to lesser known sanctuaries and National Parks like Nagarhole and the Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary make it an exciting destination for nature and adventure junkies.



Fun things to see and do

There are plenty of fun activities and adventures to do in this region. Check with your lodge or tour operator what they can arrange. Take a walk in the many plantations and learn about harvesting tea, coffee and spices; this is a patch of verdant green hills so you are sure to find plenty of birds and small creatures as you take a nature walk. Visit one of the nearby villages and learn about their unique lifestyle; and don't forget to take a coracle ride down the river and enjoy the serenity this place has to offer. The Bylekuppe Tibetan settlement is also an interesting trip where you can visit monasteries and sample traditional Tibetan food. For those more inclined towards wildlife, safaris can be arranged to a number of Wildlife Sanctuaries and Nagarhole Tiger Reserve. Remember to take a packet of Coorg pepper home with you - it has been considered the best in the world.

What to look out for

Keep your eyes peeled for sightings of the elusive tiger or elephants trying to cross your path. Herds of deer and troops of langurs and bonnet macaques entertain you on your safari. Monkeys swinging from branches might come to have a closer look as you drive slowly through the forests and birds will chirp to catch your attention. The Indian pied hornbill and the Malabar giant squirrel are native to the region and you might be able to spot a few on nature walks.

Conservation issues

Proposed new roads connecting Kerala and Karnataka that carve through many of the sanctuaries are being contested and long standing environmental plans for protection of much of these crucial Western Ghat habitats are bitterly opposed by many communities. Your visit is crucial to support the local economy, but please also report abuse or poor practice here.



PARK INFORMATION



Getting Around:

You can hire a car or get around in your own vehicle.

By Air:



Mangalore (135 km) is the closest airport. From here you can hire transport for your lodge.



By Rail / Road:

Mysore (118 km), Bengaluru (255 km) and Mangalore (135 km) are the nearest railheads and major towns. Coorg is within driving distance either in a hired car or in your own vehicle.





Orange County, Coorg



Bordered by the river Cauvery, Orange County is situated amidst a 300-acre working coffee and spice plantation, in a place often referred to as India's Scotland. Famous for its coffee, rubber and spices, a stay here is equivalent to that of a colonial planter's lifestyle.

Imbibe its aromas infused with a rich cultural history and living traditions; and relax within its villas and lawns with old growth trees.

Cropping seasons play a large part in Coorg's life ensuring a variety of harvest festivals. You can take a guided tour of the working coffee and spice plantation and try your hand at pruning or harvesting. Go bird watching with the resident naturalist or experience the rhythms of local life in the neighbouring Karadigodu village. Alternatively, ask to visit one of a number of National Parks and Sanctuaries in striking distance of the lodge, including Nagarhole and Bramhagiri.

TOFTigers MEMBERS - LODGES & RESORTS

**Activities / Special Features:**

Choose between a large communal pool and an exclusive infinity pool; go for a plantation or nature walk, bird watching, coracle ride, or a village visit by cycle. Trips can be arranged to Bylekuppe, the second largest Tibetan settlement outside Tibet, complete with a monastery, a Golden temple and a flea market.


Accommodation:


There are 55 luxurious accommodation options - Lily Pool Villas, Private Pool Villas, Lily Pool Bungalows and Lily Pool Cottages – spread out in clusters around this working coffee and spice plantation, which are inspired by ethnic Kodava architecture. Each villa has separate living rooms, spacious bedrooms with private courtyards, sit-out areas and private swimming pools.

Food:




Choose one of the three restaurants that offer varied cuisines from kebabs and grills to Indian and vegetarian delicacies. Private dinners can also be arranged at the infinity pool deck by the lake or by the poolside in your own Kodava-style Private Pool Villa. For a more intimate experience, ask for a romantic treetop dining experience. Alcohol is also served at the resort

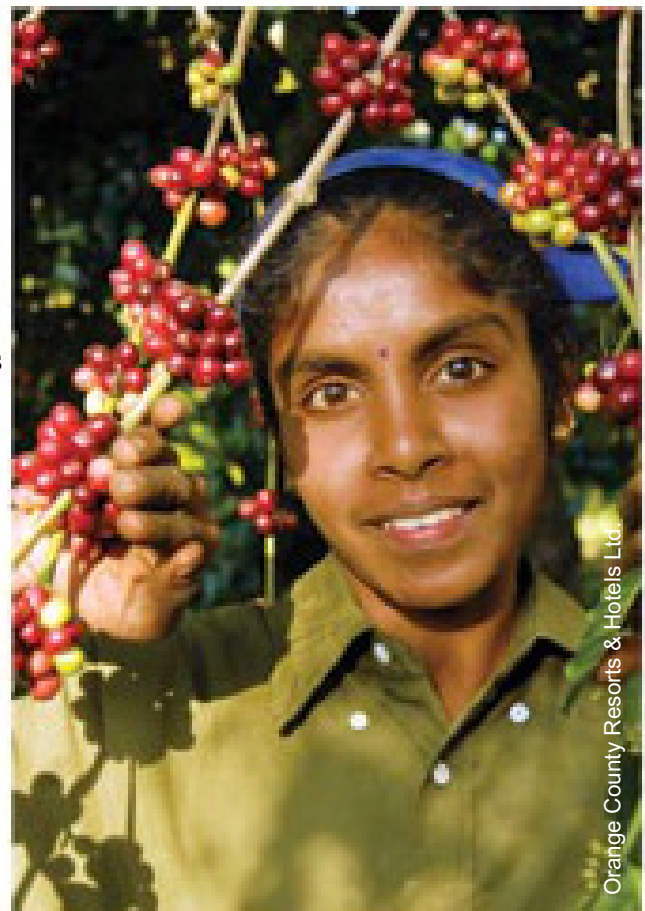
 **Opening Times:**
Open all through the year.

 **Location:**
Nearest airport -
Mysore (132 km), Bengaluru (297 km)
Nearest railhead -Mysore (122 km), Mangalore (170 km), Bengaluru (257 km)

 **Children Policy:**
Children of all ages are welcome. The resort also has an Activity Centre to keep children occupied.

**Further Information and Booking:**

 www.orangecounty.in/coorg-resorts
 info@orangecounty.in
 **+91 80 4191 1170, +91 80 41911171**



Orange County Resorts & Hotels Ltd.



Green Valley Resort



Set in two and a half acres of lush green plantation overlooking a valley in the South Coorg region, Green Valley offers a serene getaway in the lap of nature. Stay in one of the thirteen rooms that include cottages, tents and a machaan and wake up to a blanket of mist, chirping birds and the morning sunshine shimmering through the foliage.

Keep yourself entertained with activities such as river rafting, walks around a coffee plantation, bird watching and trekking.



Opening Times:
Open all year round.



Location:
Nearest airport - Bengaluru (269 km)
Nearest railhead - Mysore (100 km), Mangalore (180 km)
Nearest park gate - Nagarhole (22 km); Wayanad Reserve Forest(30 km)



Children's Policy:
Children of all ages are welcome. There is a play area for kids.



Further Information and Booking:



www.greenvalleoresort.in



simha.prime@gmail.com



+91 99866 30555, +91 93428 33848





TOURISM, THE ROPE THAT BINDS

But India needs a new breed of economists and leaders

By Bittu Sahgal, Editor, Sanctuary Asia

I was on the river in the wildlife-rich Tale Valley Sanctuary in Arunachal Pradesh on August 1, 2001 on an official site visit to the Subansiri on behalf of the Indian Board for Wildlife. I was investigating claims by the promoters of the Lower Subansiri Hydroelectric Project that “no threatened plants or animals existed in the Lower Subansiri Valley.”

The leopard and elephant spoor I had seen had put paid to that casual claim within five minutes

of disembarking from the boat. Several very credible naturalists had surveyed the area over the years and consistently affirmed that the Lower Subansiri Valley was one of the richest biodiversity vaults in India. Much more than countries such as Rwanda or Botswana, the North-east was made for tourism, which could guarantee every man, woman and child a dignified living, with a much, much higher standard of living than they now enjoy.

But such opinions do not sit well unfortunately, across planners and politicians who understand little about sustainability and even less about development. Their mantra is “Show me the Money” or “Show me the Votes, fast”. Consequently, Himalayan slopes have been deforested; mangroves in the Sundarbans and Orissa have been stripped; mighty rivers such as the Ganges and Brahmaputra have been poisoned; and cities have been assaulted by rapacious constructions with virtually no environmental

mitigation or protection steps taken. The consequences have been felt, less by planners and more by the people and wildernesses they write of casually as “acceptable collateral damage”.

Adding to this litany of environmental horrors, almost half a million poverty-stricken farmers and fisher folk have chosen to commit suicide in the decade gone by. Rather than face the climate-related crop failures that left them

“India is a multi-destination country with a variety of tourist attractions and facilities. It is the second largest net foreign exchange earner by way of invisible exports. Tourism creates more jobs than any other sector for every rupee invested. It has a major role in promoting large-scale employment opportunities.”

unable to pay back loans taken for chemical pesticides and fertilisers, or motorised boats and nets... heads of families chose to give up on life. This, if nothing else, should waken our Rip Van Winkles (Kumbakaranas) to the possibility of a win-win situation that welds the objectives of biodiversity conservation, social and economic welfare and climate change mitigation, using ecologically sensitive and socially just tourism as the rope that binds.

The Government of India

By returning farms and landholdings carved from forests to their natural state, millions of people living in communities close to our sanctuaries and National Parks could privately own and run wildlife conservancies on their own properties.

Of course this is easier said than done. For this happy occurrence, we must somehow cajole economists and planners into abandoning intellectual arrogance, ecological



ignorance and the ever-present avarice that is the handmaiden of big money.

Here is what the Indian Government says: "India is a multi-destination country with a variety of tourist attractions and facilities. It is the second largest net foreign exchange earner by way of invisible exports. Tourism creates more jobs than any other sector for every rupee invested. It has a major role in promoting large-scale employment opportunities."

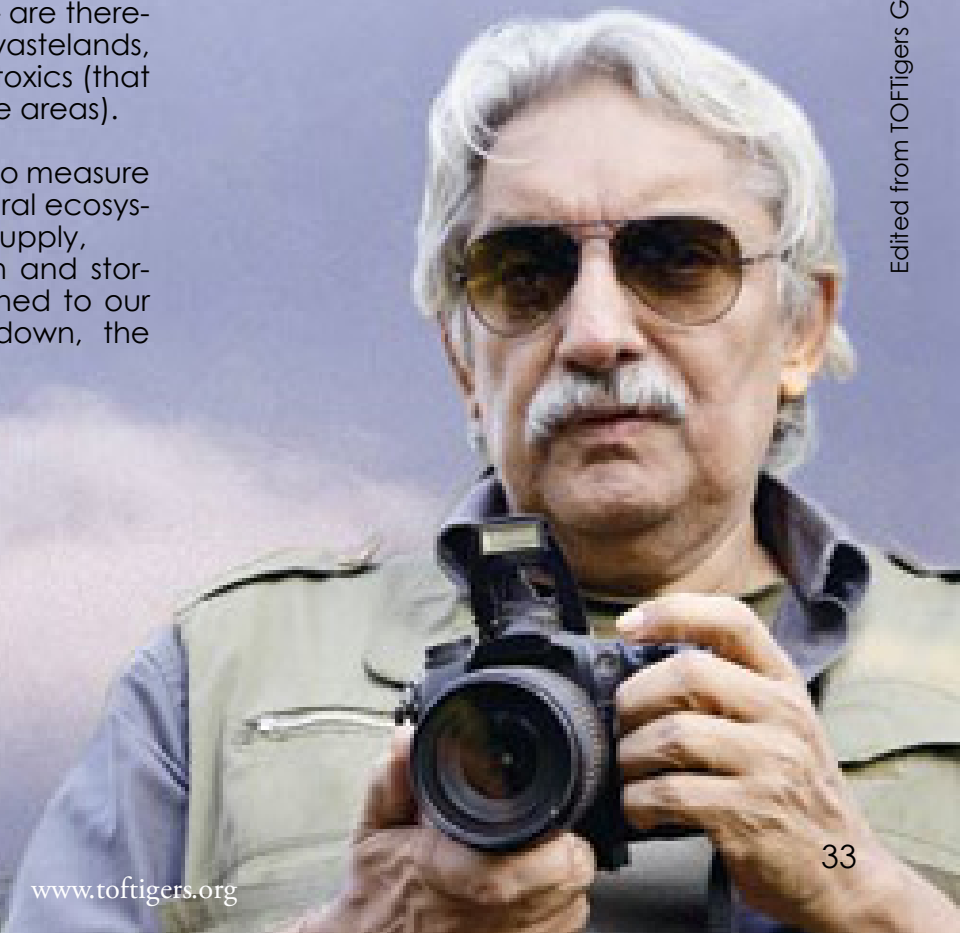
Here is what the Indian government does: Truncates the National Board of Wildlife to facilitate oil exploration, thermal power projects, highways, power lines, limestone and other mining, irrigation and water supply projects, oil pipelines, limestone mining, border fencing and other defence projects. Most of these will seriously hurt the sustainable tourism income that India hopes to earn, particularly close to Tiger Reserves such as Tadoba and Nagzira in Maharashtra, Pench in Madhya Pradesh, the Rann of Kutchh Wild Ass Sanctuary in Gujarat, Periyar in Kerala and Dampa in Mizoram.

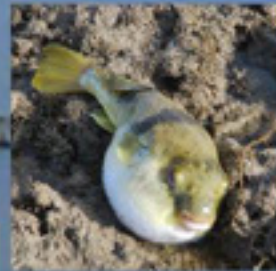
Tourism is not going to be the only casualty of this misadventure. Since economists have no tools to measure ecosystem services, the only way they will be able to satisfy their GDP ambitions is to allow forests to be cut, or drowned because standing trees do not show up on their faulty calculators. The most life-saving, economically vital infrastructures – forests, rivers, grasslands, swamps, glaciers, corals and coasts – are therefore considered less valuable than wastelands, which can at least be used to dump toxics (that is not yet allowed by law in bio diverse areas).

No smart economists have emerged to measure the immense services offered by natural ecosystems that gift us flood control, water supply, oxygen supply, carbon sequestration and storage and the fertility that is bequeathed to our farms. The moment growth goes down, the

GDP-chasers begin to dig into our natural resource vault to plunder a bit more to artificially boost the economy. Their vision extends only to the extent that their tenures last and they crave the accolades and spotlight that is shone on them by their peers. But their days (and reputations) are numbered. Nature is not going to send out judgments, only consequences. Deforest the planet...you get floods and droughts; deplete oceans...you get empty fishing nets and hunger; kill soils with pesticides and fertilisers... soil organisms die and, ultimately, soils will stop delivering food; burn ungodly quantities of coal and oil... you get a warped climate, with its attendant cyclones, diseases and the manifold uncertainties that make a mockery of all financial projections.

Nature tourism is a conservation tool, an economic tool, a social justice tool and a climate change mitigation tool. But as with any tool, it can be used expertly or inexpertly. TOFTigers is trying to nudge India and the world in the right direction. As the Editor of Sanctuary Asia, I am happy to be working towards the same objective, irrespective of how high that mountain promises to be.





Gujarat for Nature lovers:- Marine Park with Boat Safari – 2 night package

Narara Island / Marine National park is a unusual place to see marine life near Jamnagar. One has to visit it

around low tide times when the island is abuzz with a variety of marine life which includes Octopus, fishes, crabs, Puffer fish, sponges etc. It is a 2 km walk and takes 2 - 3 hours. Narara Island is good fun for nature lovers, families and anyone who is looking to do something different than touristy sightseeing.

The Khijadiya Bird Sanctuary is located about 12 km. away from Jamnagar. It is a unique wetland ecosystem having two fresh water lakes extending on an area of 6.05 SQ. km. Besides, marshes, mangroves, creek, of the Gulf of Kutch and salt pans are located in the adjoining area. It provides unique assemblage of fresh and saline wetlands providing micro habitat diversity to water birds. It is a paradise for water fowls, waders, terrestrial birds and nearly 259 species (Ask for list of birds) are found in the Sanctuary.

Chhejja creek is accessible from Rozi Port (30minutes drive from Jamnagar). Sailing on the tranquil waters of Chejja creek, taking the curves, with mangroves forest on both sides is a wonderful experience. You are sure to see lots of birds also have a chance of spotting playful dolphins, sea turtles, ray fishes.

Basic itinerary:-

Day 1: Arrive Jamnagar, check-into hotel, rest and by 3.30 PM proceed for bird watching at Khijadia, return back, have dinner. Overnight at hotel

Day 2: After breakfast, depending on tide timings, visit Narara for coral walking in the reef. Rest of the day free for local sightseeing and visiting the Lakhota Lake. Dinner & overnight at hotel

Day 3: After breakfast, depending on tide timings, do sailing, return and check-out or check out and sailing. (sailing maybe shifted to day 1 or day 2, if tide timings are in evenings.)

Above described itinerary is just to give you basic idea, all activities will depend on tide timing.

Cost:- Rs. 9,200/- per person + 3.63% Govt. service tax

Above cost (calculated for group of 6 people) includes:-

- 2 night accommodation in A/C deluxe room on twin sharing in hotel President / similar
- 2 breakfast (cornflakes with milk, eggs to order or vegetable cutlet, toast or bread with butter & jam, tea /coffee / milk / hot chocolate.)
- 2 Dinner (In amount Rs. 500/- per dinner), can choose anything they wish from a la carte Veg. & Non Veg menu
- 1 visit of Narara National marine park (as per timing of low & high tide)
- 1 visit of Khijadia Bird Sanctuary.
- 1 boat ride of Chhejja Creek
- 2 Veg. Sandwich & 1 bottle of purified water bottle of 250 ml. for all three visits each.
- Entry fee
- Guide charges
- Boat ride for approx 3 hours in Chhejja Creek

The above cost does not include:-

- Any transportation – even from hotel to any above said starting points. (Vehicle to be arranged at additional cost for reaching and coming back from the port / gate)
- Any personal expense
- Extra meal, which is not included in above
- Camera fee

Bimal Mehta
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Email: bimal@traveldesigner4u.com



Yana- Nature's wonder, Trekkers' paradise

by Palanetra

Sokkidre Yana, Kasidre Gokarna

As the above local proverb says, if you are adventurer you must visit yana once. Yana is a village located in forests of the Uttara Kannada district of Karnataka, India which is known for the unusual rock formations (Karst) or (Asteroid). It is located in the Sahyadri mountain range of the Western Ghats, The two unique rock outcrops near the village are a tourist attraction and easily approachable by a small trek through 0.5 kilometres (0.31 mi) of thick forests from the nearest road head.

Yana- nature's wonder- 40kms from Sirsi and 30kms from Kumta in Uttara Kannada district, located near the river Chandrika, is encircled by thickly wooded forest. It is known for two gigantic rock formations of a height of 90 meters and 120 meters respectively called the Mohini Shikhara (hill) and the Bhairaveshwar Shikhara. The needle sharp peaks of these two monoliths Jab the sky.

It is a trekker's paradise. One can eliminate his fatigue by bathing in the Beautiful cascades of Chandrika rivulet coming down the hills. Bhairaveshwara temple, Bhairaveshwara shikhara and a cave inside the rock formations are Added attractions.

Bhairaveshwara Shikhara(hill)

These two shikharas are the ones, which have made Yana distinct from other regions in the Sahyadri range and have captured the imagination of Generations of people. The place is also considered a biodiversity hotspot of the Sahyadri hill range.

Deep within the verdant forests and roving streams, Yana is a popular Paradise for hikers, rock-climbing and as adventure destination. Devotees and pilgrims flock here to worship Lord Bhairaveshwara (Shiva), especially on Mahashivaratri day with a belief that ritual worship of Lord Shiva here absolve them of past sins and they are blessed with Moksha (salvation).

The pilgrimage centre has a cave temple below the Bhairaveshwara Shikhara where a Swayambhu (self existent) Shivalinga. Water drips from the rock roof over the Shivalinga, adding to the sanctity of the place.

The creation of the Shivalinga in the cave is attributed by scientists to the geological phenomenon formed by the stalactites and stalagmites in limestone formations. The Geological Survey of India confirmed that rock formations in the area have rich minerals such as limestone, manganese and iron.

Yana has mythological significance as well. The legend links this place with mythological episode of demon king Bhasmasura chasing Lord Shiva to test the power of a boon (given by Shiva himself) by which the former can turn anything to ashes by touching with his hand. While episode ends with Mohini causing Bhasmasura touch his own head and perish, it is believed that the limestone formation in Yana were blackened due to the fire that emanated during the end of Bhasmasura. The loose black soil seen around the two large rock formations in the area is cited as the ash of the demon's death.

Mohini Shikhara(hill)

The two hillocks are also named for this event- the tall peak being Shiva's hill, and the smaller peak, a few steps down below, being Mohini's hills where an idol of goddess Parvathi is installed.

The vagaries of time have caused limestone structures to turn blackish brown. A plethora of beehives is an added attraction to the rock surface.

There are two ways you can get there, Route-1, Take a bus from Sirsi which goes to mattighatta,devanalli via hegadekatta. Get down at a stop called "vaddi cross" and walk 6+kms from there. Route-2.Take a bus either from sirsi or kumta get down at a place called Anegundi near Kathagaal. This place is after the Devimane ghats if you are coming from Sirsi.

From here it is around 16kms walk. You can hire a jeep in sirsi. Best season to visit is between December to February. Better if you take a local guide from Hegdekatta or Devanahalli.

**Travel Tips:****1. Connectivity:**

Yana is 18kms from NH 17. One can reach Yana by taking a deviation from NH 17 between Ankola and Kumta. The road is metallic except the tail end of 1km.

The other approach is from Sirsi to Mattighatta road, take deviation at Vaddi cross. The road is metallic Only tail end portion is unmetalled.

2. Food: It is better to carry food and beverages as no eating joints are available.**3. Accommodation:** Hotel accommodations are available at Sirsi and Kumta**4.TIME TO VISIT.** From November to April end.**5. Green Request.**

- Keep the environment clean, don't throw bottles, plastics and other waste.
- Be a friend of Nature- Keep harmony with nature.

Distance:

From Bangalore 460 kms

From Nearest Town 45 kms (Sirsi)

From Nearest Petrol Bunk 26 kms (Sirsi, kumta)

Nearest Medical Help-20kms (Hegadekatta PHC)

Nearest Hotel-50kms (Sirsi, Kumta)

Wikipedia article: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yaana>

Nearby cities: Sirsi, Yellapur, Hangal

Coordinates: 14°35'22"N 74°33'59"E

MV Mahabaahu River Cruise on the Brahmaputra, Assam



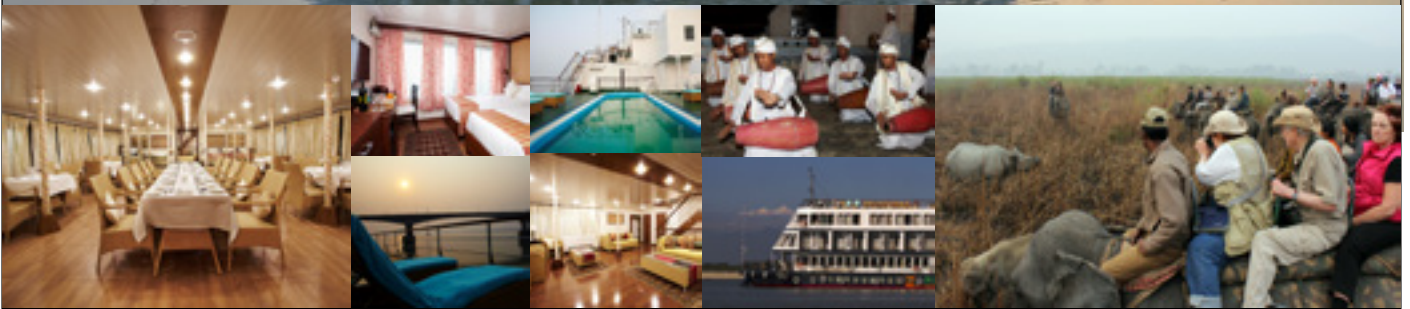
A twenty three cabin luxury cruise that takes you on an exquisite tour on the waters of the mighty Brahmaputra, one of the longest rivers and the third largest in the world offering incredible wildlife experience, learning the art of tea-picking, watching monks dance in tribute to Lord Vishnu at one of the largest River island and visiting villages inhabited by Mishing tribesmen who have not seen tourists before. One can get a view of 6,500 meter high snow covered Himalayan Mountains on a clear weather from the river. That is the essence of this cruise- delivering tranquillity and adrenaline in equal measures.

Some of the major highlights of the journey are a visit to Sibsagar, the ancient capital of the powerful empire of the Ahom Kings who had come from Yunnan, China. Majuli, a massive River island and the seat of Neo Vaishnavism is a cosmos of Assamese culture where various philosophies co-exist and thrive. Bishwanath Ghat, a charming village where almost all households have women indulging in the art of weaving cotton and silk. Kaziranga National Park which is one of the most memorable experiences of the cruise, where we search for the elusive rhinoceros through elephant safari, jeep safari and boat safari. Designated as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO, Kaziranga National Park is located in the flood plains on both sides of the Brahmaputra. Apart from the One-Horned Indian Rhinoceros, the Park is home to as many as 180 different mammals including wild elephants, tiger, deer, bison and a rich variety of birds. A leisurely walk through the Tea Estate, watching the tribal women pick tea leaves is another charming sight. We visit the tea factory and see how the tender shoots are magically transformed into the leaves for aromatic morning cup of tea. Kamakhya Temple is devoted to the eternal feminine, the goddess of desire. The temple symbolizes the fusion of faiths and practices of Aryan and non-Aryan elements in Assam. A visit to the Mishing village: the Mishings are Indo-Mongoloid group formerly referred to as Miris, are the second largest ethnic group in Assam and are unfazed by the outside world!

The Times of UK called this as amongst the 50 best adventure holidays of the world, CNN called this river as amongst the top 10 adventure cruises of the world, Nat Geo People Channel showcased this on a one hour long film in their Dream Cruises program. Please check on Youtube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2PmV63mntg0>) to enjoy the 8 minute clipping of the film. Daily Telegraph, Australian News and many more publications wrote features on this destination, which can be read on the media page of the website. We request you to please visit our website www.mahabaahucruiseindia.com to get a glimpse of this unique destination.

DISCOVER THE BRAHMAPUTRA RIVER

**MV MAHABAHU ON RIVER BRAHMAPUTRA, INDIA OFFERS
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UNDER THE EASTERN HIMALAYAS**



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WITH A REFRESHING
WAVE OF FRUIT.

SAIL THROUGH YOUR DAY



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CONSERVATION- SPARROW MAN OPENS HIS HOME AND HEART TO BIRDS STRUGGLING TO SURVIVE

While most of Bengaluru wakes up to the blaring of vehicle horns and screams from push-cart vendors, Edwin Joseph starts his day on a different note. The 64-year-old rises every morning to the cheery chirps of more than 200 sparrows.

Joseph, a retired BEML employee, has turned his house on Gospel Street in St Thomas Town into a sanctuary for these tiny birds, whose numbers in rapidly urbanising Bengaluru have plummeted from around 25,000 per sq km three decades ago to less than 50 per sq. km today.

The "Sparrow-Man," as he is fondly known in the area, celebrated World Sparrow Day a fortnight ago by distributing sweets to his neighbours. He said some of them laughed at him, but he told them, "Everyone has a day to celebrate. Why not birds? We should also care for them like we do for our family members and fellow humans."

Joseph's love for sparrows was kindled more than a decade ago, while watching them feed on boiled rice thrown by his wife, Sarah, under some small trees on a vacant plot inside his compound.

"The trees were removed to build a house which I hoped to give on rent and use the rental to lead my post-retirement life," Joseph said. "The birds moved to the hibiscus tree and lemon tree in front of my house but I decided I should do something for these birds. In fact, these two trees have been providing shelter to these birds for the last eight years."

Now retired, his daily routine is to wake up at 5 am, get ready, feed the birds, water the plants, and then do house work. "The pension amount that I get is Rs 2,500 per month, which I spend on these birds," he said.

He initially used to feed chicken, mutton and fish to the sparrows. But "after one of the sparrow conservation volunteers asked me not to feed non-vegetarian food to birds as it might affect their health and behavior, I stopped," he said. "They also advised me to give egg as food every day. But there are 200 birds, which need a minimum of 20 eggs in a day. As I cannot afford it, I continue to feed them grains."

He is not only touchy about the birds but also about the trees that shelter them—so much so that when a girl plucked the leaves from the lemon tree, he asked her to pull a strand of her own hair instead.



Edwin Joseph

"I just wanted her to realise that even plants have life and plucking leaves causes as much pain to the tree as what it feels like when one pulls their own hair," Joseph said.

Now, even his neighbours support his passion and do not allow people to pluck leaves from the lemon tree.

"Whenever he is out of town he would call up only to ask about these birds and if they are being fed on time—not about me," his wife Sarah, 63, complained playfully.

People who are interested to watch these birds they can contact Edwin Joseph on 9141441890

World Sparrow Day

Started in 2010, every year on 20th March

"World Sparrow Day" is celebrated on a large scale across the world. World Sparrow Day also has a broader vision to provide a platform where people who are working on the conservation of the House Sparrow and other common birds can network, collaborate and exchange conservation ideas.

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Birds of Coorg

Coorg is a haven for nature lovers and bird watchers. In a place like Coorg, watching birds is an enjoyable pastime, and could be a forerunner to a scientific study of the faunal world. Aesthetically, what is more beautiful than a bird? Also, bird watching is an invigorating activity requiring walks in treed areas and sometimes expeditions to trace rare species.

Here`s why Coorg remains a haven for birds and therefore, for bird watchers: most of Coorg lies in the Western Ghats, in the path of the South-West Monsoon. The annual rainfall in Coorg ranges between 4000 to 8000 mm over the Western Ghats, decreasing in the plains to the east to about 2000 mm. Coorg is one of the 34 environmental hotspots in the world with rich bio-diversity.

Some flagship species found at Coorg include the Great Pied Hornbill, the Nilgiri Wood Pigeon, Wynaad and Grey-breasted Laughing thrushes, Blue-winged Parakeet, Grey-headed Bulbul, White-bellied Tree pie, the Nilgiri and White-bellied Blue Flycatchers, Black Eagle and Ceylon Frogmouth.

Some Important Data Regarding the Birds of Coorg:

- >> Number of bird species in Coorg: 307 (in 62 families)
- >> Number of birds that migrate to Coorg during winter: 43 (Bar-headed Goose, Pintail, Sandpipers/Snipes, Rosy Starling, Golden Oriole, Wagtails, Warblers and so on).
- >> Number of critically endangered species: 2 (Indian White-backed Vulture and Nilgiri Laughing thrush)
- >> Number of vulnerable species: 28 (Darter, Storks, Grey Jungle fowl, Nilgiri Woodpigeon, Forest Eagle-Owl, Malabar Pied Hornbill, Grey-headed Bulbul, Broad-tailed Grass Warbler etc.)

So that ensures you have your Coorg bird facts right!

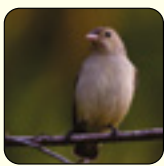


Naturalist at Orange County, Coorg

Ganesh H. R.

How often do you encounter someone who has a live birdsong for a mobile ring tone? How much rarer to meet someone who can imitate bird calls and insect sounds so convincingly that you are hard pressed to tell the difference between original and copy? Meet Ganesh, our resident Naturalist. Let him take you on a tour of our plantation animatedly explaining the hallmarks of Arabica and Robusta coffees, the subtle dynamics of pepper harvesting, the traces left by foraging wild elephants and boars, while, in between, calling out to a swallow in his own brand of bird language. "Enchantment unlimited", is how we would be prone to put it!

Birds at Green Valley Resort, Coorg



Pale Billed Flowerpecker



Black Lored Tit



Black Naped Monarch



Cattle Egret



Common Crow



Common myna



Crimson SunBird



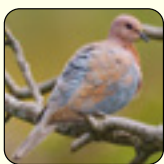
Dusky Crag Martin



Goldfronted Leafbird



Jungle Crow



Laughing Dove



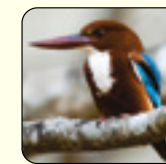
Little Cormorant



Little Egret



Magpie Robin



White Breasted Kingfisher



Pond Heron



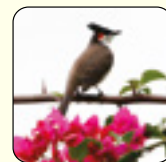
Purple rumped



Purple Heron



Red Vented Bulbul



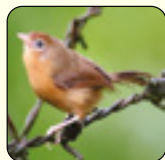
Red Whiskered Bulbul



Scarlet Minivet



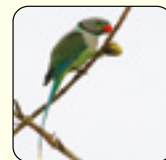
Spotted Dove



Tawny Bellied Babbler



Vernal Hanging Parrot



Malabar Parakeet



Common Iora



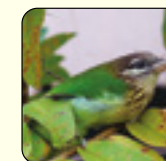
Jungle Myna



Median Egret



Rufus Woodpecker



White Cheeked Barbet

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THE JUNGLE BOOK & THE POWERFUL TIGERNOMICS OF SHER KHAN

By Julian Matthews

Tigermania is not new. It's been around for millennia. Hindu gods have ridden them for eons, and humans have been alternatively worshipping or terrorised by them throughout human history. The difference today is that in today's islands of wilderness, the remnants of India's great forests, many have learn to live with them nearby, even tolerate them, effectively exploiting them for monetary gain.

A lot has changed since Rudyard Kipling penned his famous set of stories entitled the Jungle Book in the 1890's. The English Empire has gone, so have huge swathes of those famous verdant jungles and the vast majority of its tigers with them. Thankfully some things haven't changed; Disney is reinventing its old 1967 hit favourite with today's extraordinary computer aided graphics, for launch in April this year.

Thankfully, and in the real world, grumpy Sher Khans still live near the town of Saone, the boy child Mowgli's home. There are still rare black panthers - really melanistic leopards - or Bagheeras in the southern Indian forests. Elusive slim legged wolves, aka Akela, still live amongst the villagers of the central Indian plateau, and cuddly Baloos, sloth bears, still look for honey in branches of tall Arjuna trees besides softly flowing waters of jungle nallahs, or streams.

Though Rudyard Kipling wrote his stories without having seen many of his imaginary and irrepressibly creatures in these jungles. This was not altogether surprising, few did see them. Tigers were still shot on sight as vermin, and many of the other animals formed part of the diets of tribal communities who were then still hunter gatherers. To reveal themselves in daylight, either to the white faced, topi wearing white hunters on their elephants, or the skilled trackers of forest hunters was almost certain death. Night time was their time to be out and about, not daytime.

Today in the best protected and most visited parks, many of its wild animals, especially the carnivores, can exist and carry out their lives in daylight without the dreaded fear of guns or poisoned arrows. So habituated are many of the tigers to the advent of us camera laden travellers in our gypsy vehicles that one tigress even parks her cubs nearby when visitors find her, and happily wanders off to find food, while another uses the line of vehicles to ambush prey nearby, ensuring memorable photographs for grateful visitors.

Like many writers, Rudyard Kipling anthropomorphised his characters giving them a range

of distinct personalities. Now nearly 40 years of continuous study and almost daily contact with their once arch enemy, homo sapiens, reveals just what personalities they each exhibit and just how often they mirror many of our very own human characteristics; extrovert or introvert, gregarious or sombre, brave or shy, tender or callous, impetuous or sensible. Krishna, a tigress labelled T19 by authorities in Ranthambhore, was born in one of India's most majestic wild landscapes.



Julian Matthews
Founder TOFTigers

Julian founded TOFTigers in 2004 in response to plummeting tiger numbers across Asia.

Brought up with her sisters like the spoilt offspring of a rock star, she lived amongst the lotus flowered lakes, ruined forts and palaces, in the glare of media, daily rounds of visitors, and countless pilgrims wandering through her neighbourhood. A first class mother, tender and caring, she enjoys her stardom, and has always been happy to show off her offspring to her endless fans. On the other side, in Maharashtra's Tadoba Andhari reserve is an old male tiger, appropriately nicknamed Scarface, with a scarred ugly face that would perfectly grace any mafia's family, is the exact opposite. Grumpy and temperamental, he is though like most mafia Godfathers, a strong family man. Beware the creatures that may threaten his wifelets and their family. His offspring now form the backbone of this little known reserve.

Tigermania is not new. It's been around for millennia. Hindu gods have ridden them for eons, and humans have been alternatively worshipping or terrorised by them throughout human history. The difference today is that in today's islands of wilderness, the remnants of India's great forests, many have learn to live with them nearby, even tolerate them, effectively exploiting them for monetary gain. I call it Tigernomics, but many derogatorily call it tiger tourism. I believe, far from being the great scourge that it is still portrayed by forest departments, media and NGOs across the continent, tiger tourism will be a tiger's saviour. If we can't change the capitalist system then let's work with it. It's simply about supply and demand – and how we can make wildlife worth far more alive than dead.

There is a rapidly expanding demand for nature based tourism in India, travellers like you and I, willing to pay for living breathing wild tigers, herds of elephant and unspoilt beaches where Olive Ridley turtles can nest. It's already growing at up to 25% per annum in India, with up to four millions people a year partaking, but this is only the tip of the iceberg. TOFTigers' research in 2010 concluded that a single tigress in a well visited reserve had generated US\$101 million in park fees and tourism revenues in a decade. When it only costs a few thousand dollars a year to preserve this tigress's territory in the wild, this huge 'rate of return' - the ROI in an economist's handbook - is a figure no self-respecting Government can possibly ignore, and more a more millions of Indian seek to view their national treasure. The global nature tourism industry is now worth close to US\$450 billion a year.

So we know nature tourism can create the economic value that today's forests need to survive the politicians red pen, but it funds can halt poor agricultural practices, rapidly decrease poach



-ing and the depletion of forest from overgrazing livestock with alternative livelihoods, and provide powerful economic arguments to stop exploitative industries like forestry or mining from gaining access to wild lands.

Nature tourism can raise the voices of a few lonely forest guardians to a great crescendo of concerned stakeholders, turns the media spotlight and visitors' eyeballs onto once unloved forests, gets their park guards out of bed every morning, and makes civil servants and politicians accountable like no other force can. Importantly it is a massive behavioural change mechanism. It can turn many rural communities from wildlife antagonists to conservation advocates, create jobs and local enterprises where few existed for these marginalised farming communities, buffeted by wildlife conflict, to join the brave new modern India.



Now what's the catch? The supply.

In fact there is no supply problem either. There are in fact over 617 national parks and sanctuaries in India, according to the 2013 figures of the Environment and Forest Ministry, but can you believe it, the vast majority were allocated only US\$1,600 a month to their protection. Peanuts? Yes, and you tell me if preserving a whole park full of irreplaceable natural heritage - a bulwark against climate change and a source for both clean air and water - is really only worth the monthly wage packet of a middle ranking Bangalore based IT professional?

Nature tourism in India is by no means perfect but in many well-known parks like Ranthambore in Rajasthan, and Bandhavgarh and Kanha in Madhya Pradesh, visitors' park fees are already doubling or tripling the budgets that park managers have to protect the park and support their neighbouring communities. It's still far too few parks and it's still too unevenly spread - but it shows us the power of the future to transform landscape tiger.

Many lodge providers still need major improvements to their environmental sustainability, far better land use and tourism planning is required by Government and planners, more constructive partnerships with Forest officers is essential, and a fairer distribution of the opportunities and job benefits to bordering park communities, but it still works.

Nature tourism is, nevertheless, already providing the much needed bonding - the very glue - that makes long term forest conservation possible and economically viable, against a deafening crescendo of calls for nature's destruction, to be replaced by concrete development, fences, farms and dams. Research today shows that over 75% of all visitors want more responsible holidays and 93% of nature travellers say travel companies should be committed to preserving natural heritage, so we now do have both better supply and ongoing demand.

Yes, tigers cannot survive without their protection staff, good management and large enough natural landscapes, but they will not thrive and expand without nature tourism's invaluable economics, its visitors' 'hearts on their sleeve' consciences, and communities willing to fight for living wildlife, because a tiger's worth more to them alive than dead.

Now both Mowgli and I really can grow up to manhood (or in my case old age) with hope for his animal family into the future.

FACT BOX

Julian Matthews is founder of the nature travel action charity, TOFTigers, and has spent a decade working on these issues. The charity operating a supply chain pressure programme, to drive up operational standards and highlight the very best accommodation provider in over 22 tiger reserves across India and Nepal.

Download the Good Wildlife Travel Guide here www.toftigers.org/GWTGdownload/

TOFTigers runs the PUG eco rating certification to monitor lodges' ecological footprint and working with parks, communities, guides and visitors to raise awareness, fund village guardian schemes, undertake training and campaign for better nature tourism and greater conservation support.

For more details contact www.toftigers.org.

TOFTigers
Sustaining the wild



Diving into the Blues

Planet Earth, is recognized as the "Blue Planet" for the obvious reason that more than 70% of its surface is covered in water. It not only covers a majority of the surface of the earth but also harbours majority of earth's life forms. Though playing a very significant role in human life and biodiversity, the amount of attention it receives is much lower than what it deserves.

Veteran Traveller and Photographer Nanda Kumar and his son Rithesh explore the underwater world and capture its marvels.



Water, a basic necessity for all, pouring down upon us as rain, flowing as rivers, joining the sea, lashing the shores as waves, is a gift to planet earth. One that we must embrace and protect today. Water is the lifeline of humanity and water bodies house plethora of creatures that we barely know of... This underwater world, still so alien to man needs to be explored and studied in finer detail. It is sad that we fuel studies about outer space exponentially more than we encourage study about the underwater ecosystem.

Diving, more popularly known as Scuba Diving has enabled us today to venture into these virgin spaces and make new discoveries.

SCUBA stands for Self Contained Underwater Breathing Apparatus and was first conceptualized by Jacques-Yves Cousteau which enabled us to dive into the depths and this revolutionized the way we enjoy the underwater paradises. Scuba Diving since then has come a long way and has helped explore and create awareness among people about the marine ecosystem around the world, so much so that certain parts of some countries such as Maldives, Indonesia, Palau etc. are majorly dependent on Diving as their primary source of income. Today's technological advancements have only made it more economically feasible for the common man, safer to use and enjoyable.

Scuba Diving as an Adventure Sport has rapidly gained popularity around the world and has become a favourite recreational sport among Indians.

How does it work?

Scuba Diving requires a special set of equipment to mainly enable us to breath underwater. Which naturally means that we carry a cylinder of Air, contrary to belief that we carry oxygen, the content of the cylinder is generally just normal air which contains 21% oxygen. Several other mixtures of gases are also available which are termed as 'Nitrox'. This compressed air in the cylinder is made available for breathing by a set of apparatus called the regulator which makes the air available at the right pressure for us to breath.

Scuba diving requires us to remain underwater with a neutral buoyancy to ensure that we neither sink to the bottom nor float up to the surface. Human body naturally is positively buoyant, which means that we would float on water and not sink. This positive buoyancy is compensated by carrying lead weights to help us stay at the bottom. In order not to sink, a buoyancy control device (BCD) is used to maintain neutral buoyancy underwater. The BCD is a simple jacket which houses an internal bladder which can be filled with air. This fine balance between the weights and the air in the BCD enables us to maintain neutral buoyancy underwater at all depths.

Talking about depths, diving does not permit us to dive as per our own will, it is required to keep a careful watch over the amount of air left in the tank and the depth we are at, we thus carry a depth gauge and a tank air pressure indicator to monitor the same.

Exploring the depths...

Don't let the technicality of diving scare you, what we can tell you from our experience is that starting diving is one of the best descriptions that we have taken so far...

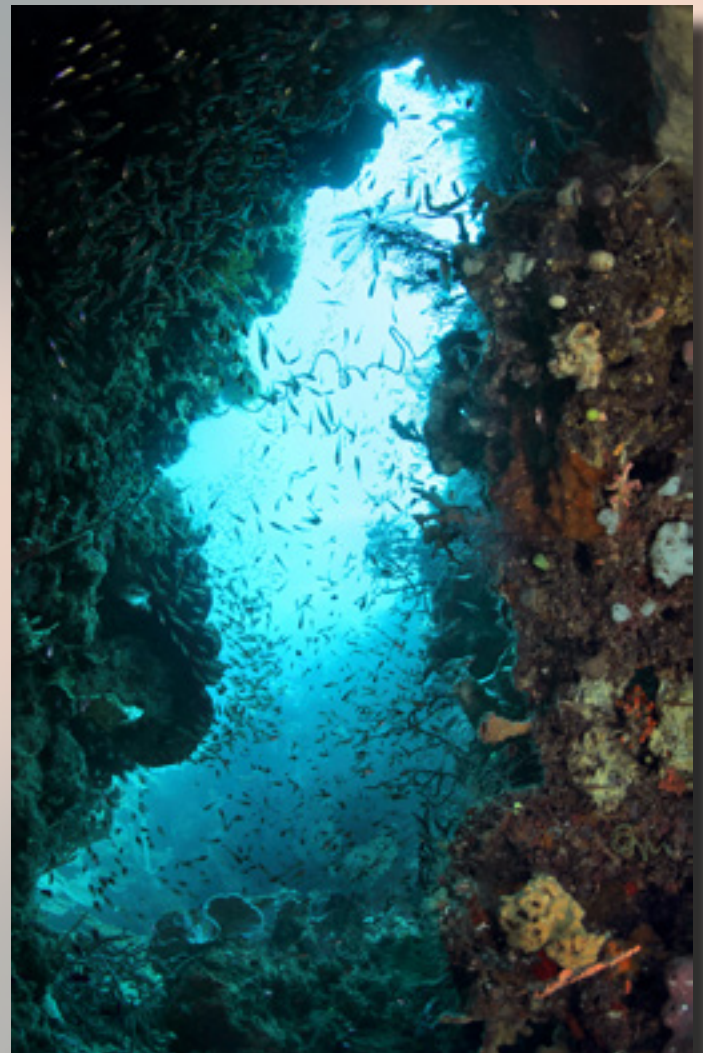
We ventured into diving about 6 years back. We still remember our first dive together in the Netrani Islands off the coast of Murdeshwar, Karnataka. It was a high that parallels none. The jolt of the first plunge into water makes you regret that you waited too long to do this.

The underwater world is a paradise in itself. Schools of fish racing past, a curious cuttlefish swims beside at a safe distance. A shadow creeps upon us as a school of barracuda swim past above us. It feels other worldly to experience and see it with our own eyes rather than

on our TV screens.

We haven't looked back ever since, we have always looked out for different places to dive and each place has been a thrilling experience. Best of our dives were in Maldives, swimming with numerous Manta Rays and in Tonga Island, snorkeling with Humpback Whales. It is not only these friendly giants that we look forward to see underwater. The marine ecosystem is heaven for Macro photographers and people who would love to appreciate the finer details in nature. We both enjoy shooting tiny fishes such as blenny or looking for Pygmy sea horses which are just about a centimetre or lesser in size. The Straits of Lembeh, Indonesia have been our personal favourite to hunt for these critters underwater. The joy of finding a Lembeh sea dragon (a member of the seahorse family, about 1.5cm large) among the muck is unmatched.

Diving has also involved a lot of risks for us, we have been stuck in currents too strong in Layang Layang while in pursuit of Hammerhead sharks, but the sheer pleasure in the pursuit outweighs the negatives.







As photographers, we partially started diving only to capture the wonders underneath. We have now come far from that and have now become divers first and then photographers underwater.

Underwater Photography has been a challenging genre of photography for us to pursue at the same time very unique and niche too. We are now a family of underwater divers and photographers who follow the hobby passionately.

Diving in India

The diving community in India is rapidly on the rise with more and more people of all ages taking up this amazing hobby. With a long coast line, the possibilities are endless, but as yet undiscovered! At present diving is limited to just four dive destinations namely Goa and Pondicherry on the mainland and Andaman & Nicobar Islands off the East coast and Lakshadweep on the West coast.

Goa & Pondicherry

While rather limited in underwater visibility, both these destinations offer a reasonable variety of marine life and are great training grounds for those looking to get certified internationally. Goa, in particular, offers more than 60 species of fish, hard and soft corals, sponges and an amazing shipwreck all in very shallow and safe waters

making it a perfect environment to learn the basics.

Andaman and Nicobar

572 Islands which house a vibrant array of corals all around them, offers hundreds of dive sites to choose from deep wrecks to caves and terrain with rocks or with coral reefs spread across miles.

Dive resorts are common around Havelock and diving these azure waters with enchanting fish life is a thrill to beginners and professionals alike.

Chidiya Tapu towards the south of Andaman's houses the best possible dive sites around there and when in luck one might be lucky enough to spot a Manatee.

Lakshadweep Island

An extension of Maldives, they form a chain of exquisite coral islands rising steeply thousands of meters from the sea floor. Offering an amazing variety of hard and soft corals and marine life, they are the quintessential diver's paradise with world class dive sites.

Fascination about the underwater world doesn't cease to amaze us! We now make use of every chance we get to pack our bags and dive into the Abyss. We consider ourselves fortunate to be able to experience the best of both worlds.





Zafar Futehally was born in Andheri in 1920. The family lived at Gulshun, a property bought from Homi Mody in 1918. This land was mortgaged by his father to establish N. Futehally & Co., one of the first Indian companies to deal in the export of cotton to and import of textiles from Japan. In 1924 the family moved to Kobe in Japan to run the company branch and returning to India only in 1927. He studied economics at St. Xavier's College in Bombay. Graduating with a BA in economics and political science in 1941 he wrote the public service commission examination, stood 84 among 3400 candidates and went through several interviews but did not get selected. He was then offered work at his brother's company, Dynacraft Machine Company from 1942. The company was run along with his brother and cousin but in 1985 the Futehally brothers were removed from the board. Zafar's maternal grandfather was Badruddin Tyabji, the eminent lawyer and president of the Indian National Congress and was a distant cousin of Salim Ali and was married to Laeeq Futehally (1921-6 July 2014), a niece of Salim Ali, on 19 December 1943. They had a son, Murad; and two daughters Zahida (Zai) and Shama who also took to writing. Zai wrote biographies of Romulus Whitaker and Salim Ali. Shama who died in 2004 was the author of novels "Tara Lane" and "Reaching Bombay Central", a translator of the Meera Bhajans and Urdu poetry apart from numerous other literary works.

In 1972 he moved to Bangalore where he lived for a while in the Palace orchards area before moving to a farm house in Dodda Gubbi on the outskirts of Bangalore. Laeeq took her skills in gardening and landscaping while also writing on the topic in a column in the Deccan Herald. A dacoit attack in 1987 at their home in Dodda Gubbi forced the couple to move to Kodaikanal with their daughter Zai for four years before returning to live in Koramangala in Bangalore. In Kodaikanal, they worked with the Palani Hills Conservation Council. In 2013 he left Bangalore to move back to his home in Kihim. He died on

11 August 2013 at his home in Kihim, following a bronchial infection. He was cremated at Kihim according to his wishes.



Zafar Futehally 1920 – 2013

"Birds and horses are my passion. They're better than wine and women"

In 1944 Salim Ali invited the couple to his camp in Palanpur, Saurashtra where he was running a bird survey. From this point, Futehally regularly joined Salim on camps. Somewhere in the 1950s a poorly written newspaper article in the Times of India on the magpie robin received the ire of Salim Ali and the editor, N.J. Nanporia, asked Salim if he could suggest someone who could write for the newspaper on birds. Zafar Futehally took the suggestion and started a column called Birdwatcher's Diary which ran for thirty years (second in longevity to the column of Madhaviah Krishnan). This also led to radio shows which became quite popular. Around the 1950s Laeeq joined Quest magazine produced by the Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom led by Minoos Masani and partly sponsored by the CIA. He founded the Newsletter for Birdwatchers,

a periodical, in 1959. In 1962 Futehally became a member of the executive committee of the Bombay Natural History Society and later its Honorary Secretary, a position that he held until 1973 when he moved from Bombay to Bangalore. A dispute between Humayun Abdulali and Salim Ali led to the latter resigning from the position of Vice President. In 1959 there was WHO interest in the study of Kyasanur forest disease and it was suggested that this was being carried by migratory birds. A study was begun with Salim Ali heading the project. Alfred Schifferli from the Sempach Ornithological Station helped train them in mist netting and other handling techniques.

The "Newsletter" included Salim Ali, Biswamoy Biswas and other eminent ornithologists of its time on the editorial board and was for many years mimeographed and distributed to subscribers in India and outside. In later years the covers were printed and still later the entire issue was printed. The newsletter encouraged an essay style of writing and some authors like Ramachandra Guha found their first opportunity to publish in it. The Newsletter for Birdwatchers continues to be popular among birdwatchers interested in the India region. The newsletter also pioneered large-scale collaborative studies on birds.

In 1965 he was involved in organizing the IUCN meeting at New Delhi and became a member of its executive board in 1966. He became Vice-President of the IUCN in 1969, received the Padma Shri in 1970, Order of the Golden Ark in 1980 and the Karnataka Rajyotsava award of 1983. In 1973, Futehally was a member of the committee that was set up to study the impact of a dam on the river Kuntipuzha which threatened to destroy the forests of the Silent Valley region. He was also a steering group member of Project Tiger, during the early years of its establishment.

Zafar was always active in matters close to his heart. He was witness to the degradation Bombay had suffered in the wake of its growth, and was determined to prevent Bangalore going the same way. Realising that a formal organisation was needed to engage with the government on environmental issues, he roped in a few friends, including the late Professor Satish Dhawan, and registered the Bangalore Environment Trust in 1987. Along with Satish Dhawan, Venkatraman Radhakrishnan (Sir C.V. Raman's son) and others in 1987. The organization took an interest in the conservation of lakes and trees in and around Bangalore

He cast his net wide, tackling noise pollution from horns, smoke pollution from vehicles, reck-

less driving on city roads, the cutting down of trees for road widening, the pollution of lakes leading to their slow death, the breaching of storm water drains, and the misuse of civic amenity spaces to name but a few. If there is some amelioration in these matters over the years, it is due in no small part to his untiring efforts.

Futehally wrote numerous popular articles in the media. One of his early publications on a Paradise Flycatcher inspired the Indian poet Nissim Ezekiel to write a poem about it. A newsletter was launched and he became an emeritus editor for the periodical, Indian Birds, he selected articles from bird enthusiasts and friends in India as well as from outside. The articles were selected for readability rather than dry scientific communication although many scientific observations were made in its pages. He also edited and published an anthology of writings by Indian birdwatchers, "India through its birds", which was published in 2007.





During his position at the BNHS and the World Wildlife Fund he was able to lobby for action, chiefly by influencing the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.[28] His letters to the government helped in the establishment of Karnala bird sanctuary in Raigad in the 1960s, instead of being earmarked for industrial development. In the 1970s, he supported Dillon Ripley and the Smithsonian Institution for a project that proposed to radio-collar and study tigers in India. The project met with considerable resistance, with Kailash Sankhala and Madhaviah Krishnan suggesting that Indians could conduct such studies on their own. Ripley's past in the OSS and politics related to PL 480 grants in India were also to influence the refusal of the Indian government to permit Smithsonian research. Futehally, who was then in WWF-India, was criticized for his support since the IUCN and WWF international did not support the Smithsonian proposal. Ripley subsequently engineered a coup in WWF-US which involved the overthrow of its president, C. R. Gutermuth, on the grounds that he had taken up a conflicting position as president of the National Rifle Association. The Smithsonian tiger tracking project was finally funded in part by WWF-US but were able to obtain permission only in Nepal.

In later years, he continued to write about conservation issues particularly in Bangalore. In one issue, the government of Karnataka handed over lakes (particularly Hebbal Lake) within the city to private hoteliers and water-based entertainment companies. This was opposed

by many citizens as being contradictory to the role of government in public welfare. Zafar Futehally held the view that private enterprise could be conservation and welfare-oriented, a view which did not receive widespread support.

He was the recipient of numerous awards, prominent among them the Padma Shri (1971), the Karnataka Rajyostava Award (1983), the Salim Ali International Award for Conservation (1997), Order of the Golden Ark (1981) and Member of Honour of the World Wildlife Federation (1994). He wore these plaudits lightly, remaining a genial and self-effacing person all his life.

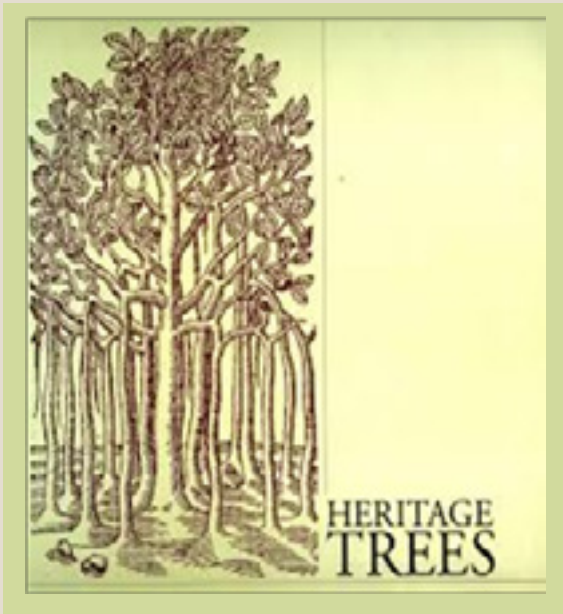
Well into his eighties, he brought together several birdwatchers' associations in India under one umbrella organisation — a necessary step to obtain international recognition. At a function to announce the new set-up, a guest asked about the disappearance of the common house sparrow in Bangalore. Several theories were advanced, none convincing, till Zafar stood up and said, half-jokingly, "You don't see them any more because you have stopped cleaning rice and dal in your backyard and prefer to buy them in plastic packets."

Zafar authored several books on birds and wrote innumerable articles on birds, the environment and our ecology. His writing style was simple and natural. He was no absolutist: he saw the need to balance environmental protection with economic development.

Zafar had an old-world charm. He was a rare soul and a true gentleman, for thousands of people whose lives he touched, it was impossible to meet him and not come away charmed by his gentleness, modesty and kindness.

In 2014, his memoirs were posthumously published as a book, *The Song of the Magpie Robin*
- Source-Wikipedia, Bangalore Environment Trust

Book Corner



Book Cover



Inside page of the well compiled book

This is the foreword in a new book, *Heritage Trees*, in and around Bangalore, by Vijay Thiruvady, 70, Koramangala-resident and Trustee at the Bangalore Environment Trust (BET). BET is also the book's publisher. Thiruvady is an engineer-turned naturalist better known in recent years for leading the Lalbagh Green Heritage Walks. No less than 140 trees - 'the fabulous tree wealth of Bangalore' as Thiruvady puts it - are captured one page per species in the book. They span the core area of Bangalore - Lalbagh and Cubbon Park - and around the city ranging from the far reaches of Hosur Road and Sarjapur Road in the south to Devanahalli and Gauribidanur in the north. The 400-year-old banyan major Dodda Alada Mara, spread over four acres is fittingly the first.

Thiruvady *Heritage Trees* book Cover. The heritage selection ranges from trees being of botanical significance to commemorating a historical event or religious tradition to trees who have thrived in Bangalore and whose loss will be felt keenly to just plain rarity.

Heritage Trees is available for Rs 500/- from Vijay Thiruvady at 524, 16th Main, III Block, Koramangala, Bangalore 560034.
Ph: 9845068416,
Email: vrthiruvady@gmail.com

Achievers Corner

BANGALORE BIKER - SANTOSH CHUNCHUNKUPPE SHIVSHANKAR
DAKAR RALLY – 9000 KMS, 14 DAYS, 3 COUNTRIES, ONE MAN

Billed as the most dangerous race in the world, about 61 people have died, either participating or watching as spectators, over the past 37 years!

What makes Dakar so dangerous? The rally pits drivers not only against each another, but also against some of the most extreme terrains in the world.

This feat of SANTOSH has put India on the world map many decades ahead of time. It has inspired the next generation of Indians to dream and to compete with the best in the world.

Competing over the last 15 years, he has won every single title that there has to be won. He won the National Supercross Championship, the Raid-De-Himalaya (on his debut attempt), the Desert Storm (twice), the Asian Supercross (6th Position) and was 9th in the World Cross Country Rally Championship in 2014 (which included the Abu Dhabi Desert Challenge, Sea Line Cross Country Rally & Rally of Morocco).

His defining moment was when he completed the Dakar Rally in 2015 and attained the 36th position, making him the only Indian and the 3rd Asian to have conquered the mighty challenge!

We salute you CS Santosh on your successful completion of Dakar Rally (36th Position). You are undoubtedly the best racer in India on 2wheels.



SANTOSH C S

“The Dakar was harder than I had ever imagined. I knew I could do it but the length was amazing. I really struggle a lot in the dust but learned so much. I finished 36th but just being able to finish was great. When I started the race, not that many people knew I was competing, but after two days of racing there was more and more media attention. All the biggest news channels of India were following me. I believe it was unprecedented in India. I was bigger than Force India in Formula One. Every day, there would be a quarter page in the newspapers about me. When I returned I was given a fantastic reception. It felt like I’d won the Dakar. In my mind there was no question of me not coming back. I didn’t compete in any World Cup races. I spent a lot of time training in Spain and worked on navigation a lot. This time I’ll be riding a Suzuki, supported by Suzuki India. I’ll have a bigger structure around me. I always come to do better although I might struggle with speed. Last year, I was too much in the comfort zone. I have to get out of that. I want to go to my maximum. I know that the media have big expectations.”

Quick snippets from my journey in the legendary Dakar Rally of 2015 where I am the first Indian to participate, in history of the event!



Beautiful shot of me snaking through the desert of Chile on my #ktmrallyreplica Dakar Rally





The last 3 days of the Dakar Rally coming back into Argentina were perhaps my best. Full gas snaking through the woods and mountains on 300km stages was spectacular. I'm happy that I found some speed towards the end of the rally. Already thinking of #dakar2016



"Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that."

Martin Luther King Jr

This photo pretty much sums up my #Dakar Rally. I struggled and fought everyday and in this epic race I managed to carve out a name for myself like all the hero's I have read about in history books. "What is life if not for the possibility of a seemingly impossible challenge" Great to see that you guys were behind me 100% I'm so overwhelmed by all the support.



Day 13: Stage 13 - I've shown that it's possible, an Indian can do it too. I hope there'll be more of us in the future.

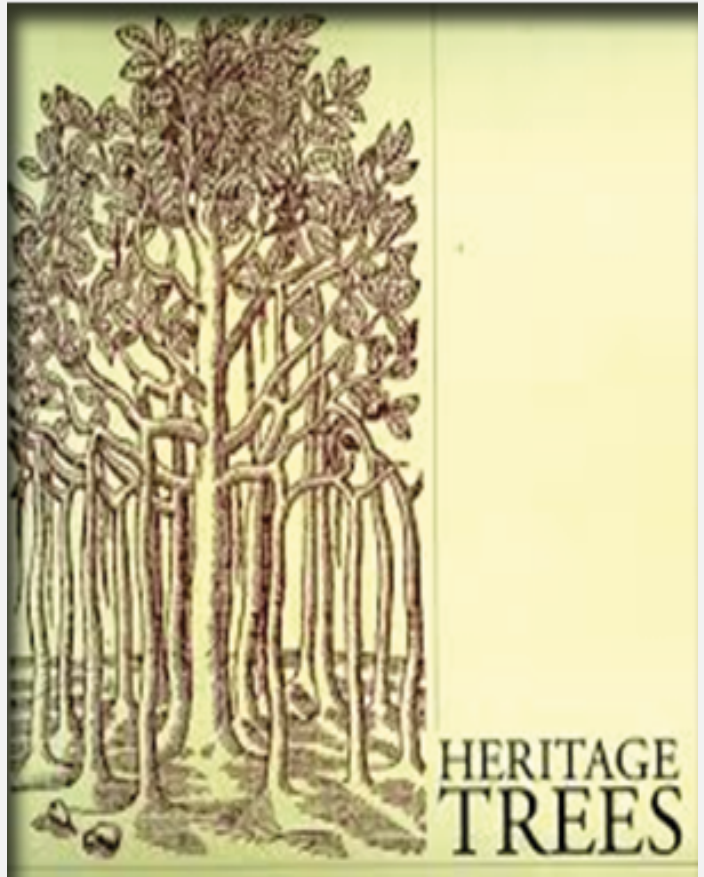


Devarakadus, Gundutopu and Heritage trees

An interview with Vijay Thiruvady, the man whose passion for preserving nature is evident in the two books he has compiled – Excerpts from interview with Poornima Dasharathi and Subramaniam Vincent

Vijay Thiruvady spent his early years in Delhi in his grandfather's (the famous physicist, K.S Krishnan) spacious bungalow that was a few houses away from Nehru's house. It was here that Thiruvady's interest in flora and fauna developed. He studied at St Stephens in Delhi and has been consultant to companies like Tata Engineering, John Brown Engineers and AMEC. He was also the Director of John Brown Engineering India. Keenly interested in nature, Thiruvady been conducting the Lalbagh Green Heritage Walks, a part of Bangalore Walks, since its conception in 2005. He is also a trustee of Bangalore Environment Trust.

Did you know your city was a rocky, barren plateau 250 years ago? Since then, starting with the Tigers of Mysore, followed by botanists and horticulture authorities, Bengaluru managed to become home to one of the greatest collection of trees from around the world.



Vijay Thiruvady – Author of book on Heritage trees

Pic: Rajeev Rajagopalan

A cluster of banyans that are home to seven thousand bats A 150 foot tall araucaria tree from New Caledonia! Gnarled and irregular trunks of ancient tamarind trees that are around 800 years old in a Devarakadu (god's grove) near Bangalore! A keelback snake just about to swallow its breakfast in Lalbagh. These are extracts from Heritage Trees and Green Heritage Sites by Vijay Thiruvady, published by Bangalore Environment Trust on behalf of their project sponsors. To say that Thiruvady is a walking encyclopaedia on trees and wooded areas in and around Bangalore would not be far from the truth. However, he is not only a botanist but also a historian; a photo in one of the books shows an ancient Banyan tree which was also the one under which Cornwallis' troops would have marched to confront Tipu Sultan.

You have recently compiled the book *Heritage Trees*. What, according to you, defines whether a tree has heritage?

I have given the definition of 'heritage' in the introductory chapters of the book. Age alone cannot be the basis for a tree being termed heritage. Age, size and species contribute to the heritage status of a tree. Trees that are rare, brought from far-off places or are home to other forms of life are some other factors. Also, trees that have special significance in history or that are associated with the life of a person or commemorate an event can also be classified as heritage trees. Having said that, I'd like to clarify the last point. During the post-Independence period, many saplings were planted by Gandhi at various places. So if you find a tree planted by Gandhi or Nehru, it may be special but certainly not heritage as there are many such plantings by them across the country.

What are Devarakadus and Gundutopus?

Devarakadus can be found across the country. These were protected wooded areas that were home to local village deities. Gundutopu is an interesting concept found in the old Mysore region. Many village communities planted trees in commonly held land and the produce from these topus was shared between the villages. It was also used for village fairs and funerals. The tourism department had commissioned us to do a compilation of all Devarakadus and Gundutopus in and around Bangalore. There were many such groves in and around the city. Unfortunately, due to rapid urbanisation, we have lost many of them. How many of them are present now? We have only considered groves that have not been severely encroached upon. In the final compilation we found only four of them that remain as they were originally. The Nallur topu is one of the oldest while others are much younger. We have also considered the Roerich Tatguni Estate and the Lalbagh garden as they help in preserving diverse species and are of great botanical value.

Can you tell us more about the historical trees in and around Bengaluru?

Bangalore was once a bare plateau. Some old photographs show the area as a barren land. Of course, there were many Devarakadus and Gundutopus near villages and village temples. But the actual greening of Bangalore started only after the British defeated Tipu Sultan. Ficus or rain trees that provide shade were planted on many roads that led to the city. Even now, on some roads where development has not eroded the green, you can spot Banyan trees. Banyans are one of the most revered trees in India. Even now, in many villages, the Banyan serves as the centre of village activities. It is home to many species of birds, bats and other life forms and is also home to village shrines. So you can see that the book starts with details on heritage Banyan trees followed by other Ficus trees.

You have a fantastic collection of photographs, such as the squirrel feasting on Colville's Glory. It must have taken a lot of time to research and shoot for these books?

Research with respect to the book did not take much time since I have always been interested in flora. But taking photographs, editing and coming up with the final compilation did take time. Overall it's been an interesting two years completing these books.





Banyan (PREVIOUS PAGE BOTTOM)- Hosur Road This is one of the two trees surviving from hundreds planted over 300 years ago on either side of Hosur road. Lord Cornwallis' army must have marched past these trees to confront Tipu Sultan in 1790. Height: 45 ft Spread: 20,000 sq ft Girth :25 ft (Courtesy: 'Heritage Trees' & 'Green Heritage Sites - Devarakadus, Gundutopus & Wooded Areas')

Bauhinia, Lalbagh(ABOVE) - This climber entwines many trees and has spread over 150 feet. The climber has now developed a huge stem with a girth of over 2 feet! This climber can be found in Western Ghats and sub Himalayan tracts eastwards to Assam. (Courtesy: 'Heritage Trees' & 'Green Heritage Sites - Devarakadus, Gundutopus & Wooded Areas')

Tamarind Tree, Nallur (BELOW) - This is probably the oldest tamarind tree in Nallur's Gundutopu and it has been split in half by lightning. The grove still has around fifty such trees whose age can be estimated to be 500 to 800 years old! However, despite their age and gnarled trunks, the tamarind trees challenge the concepts of the limitations of floral growth in a specific species. (Courtesy: 'Heritage Trees' & 'Green Heritage Sites - Devarakadus, Gundutopus & Wooded Areas')



India Bike Week

By Karthik Kumar

India Bike Week (IBW), touted as the country's largest biking festival, kicked off on February 19 and 20 with a high note at Arpora village in north Goa with thousands of biking enthusiasts from India and abroad participating in it. It's been a refreshing two-day bike mania for all motorcycling enthusiasts, meeting up with other bikers sharing stories and experiencing a get-together like never before. IBW was the stage to the stars of the festival - live bands, movie screenings, Bikini Bike Wash, the National Custom Bike Build-Offs, and National Stunt Championship, along with few of new Bike launches, custom and vintage bike displays, and sessions with international Biker Legends. With over 10,000 bikers attending India's biking event, the fourth edition of India Bike Week. Last two years the festival was a Harley Davidson dominated event and didn't really represent the larger biking community. That has really changed this year with new brands like Ducati, UM Motorcycles and Mahindra Two Wheelers debuting at the festival. Brands like Triumph and Ducati also had a large number of riders participating this year. Few companies that stole the show were:

Ducati's super-mid offering, namely the 959 Panigale was launched in India at IBW. The bike takes its inspiration and numerous styling cues from the larger 1299 Panigale, however the engine has been designed to offer a more than the day to day regular experience. The 959 is essentially an upgrade on the outgoing 899 model and the new bike is a bit taller and wider than its predecessor. Bookings for the bike have already opened at Ducati's dealerships located in Delhi, Gurgaon, Mumbai and Bangalore. The company has also promised that they are set to expand their dealership network even further this year.

Triumph Showcases entire range of motorcycles along with new Bonneville. The motorcycle manufacturer from Britain is making sure it gets heard and seen everywhere. Triumph displayed the newly launched T120 Bonneville and Thruxton R that were showcased during the IBW 2016. Triumph had also showcased the Tiger series of motorcycles, The Rocket III, Street and Speed Triple also made it to the event, there were nothing new from the brand except for the new Bonneville Street Twin. The Street Twin engine is a liquid-cooled, eight-valve, single overhead cam, parallel twin with sleeveless

Nikasil-coated cylinders and a 270° crank angle. It's a 900cc, with a claimed 67 horsepower, and 50 pound-feet of torque. Overall, the chassis is well controlled with properly tuned damping for both high-speed and low-speed suspension movement.

DSK Benelli Unveils 3 Bikes at the event. The first of these is the Tornado 300, which is a 300 cc bike well suited for the Indian market and to go up against the likes of the Ninja 300 and the upcoming TVS GS310R. Benelli Tornado 300 gets fire-power from a 300cc, parallel-twin motor producing 36PS at 12,000rpm and 27Nm of peak torque at 9,000rpm.



Karthik Kumar

An avid biker and automobile enthusiast. Most of the weekends are spent exploring more exciting roads and off tracks around the country. There is nothing compare to the simple pleasure of riding bike. Always believed in this quote, "Don't limit your challenges, challenge the limit".

Power is transmitted to the rear-wheel via a 6-speed gearbox. Benelli claims that the Tornado 300 has a top speed of 170kmph. The first of these is the Tornado 300, which is a 300 cc bike well suited for the Indian market. Next in their line-up was the BX 250, which is the off-road motard. The bike drives on a single cylinder 249.2cc petrol power-train mated to a six speed transmission gearbox. The suspension system comprising of 50mm upside down forks with 250mm of travel at the front wheel and a progressive link type mono-shock with 110mm of travel at the rear wheel. Next was the Benelli Trk 502 adventure motorcycle were unveiled. The styling of the Trk 502 has been inspired from the Ducati Multistrada with its beaky front fairing and twin headlamps which makes it a muscular looking bike. Powering the new Benelli Trk 502 will be a newly developed 500cc, parallel-twin motor churning out 48PS of peak power at 8,500rpm and 45Nm of torque at 4,500rpm with 6 speed gear box and hydraulic clutch.

Indian manufacturers like Mahindra two wheelers also displayed their new Mojo Scrambler and Mojo Adventure Tourer. Mahindra Mojo Scrambler concept with a classic round headlight a high set handlebar and a flat seat. The Mojo Adventure Tourer Concept on the other hand is an off road motorcycle with high ground clearance and a much higher seating position. Besides them were road going versions of the Mojo in a matte red shade and another one with a dual tone orange and white paint. Hearing the response from Mahindra two wheelers the two concepts mentioned above, we hope that the company introduces them in the market sometime in the future.

Some highlights and attractions at the event were, the presence of the Indian who conquered Dakar CS Santosh, was certainly a big crowd booster. 12 time Moto Trail World Champion Dougie Lampkin had the crowds cheering to his stunts. The women riders participating in India Bike Week is growing and this year we saw at least 20-30 of them. From the Diavels to the Speed Triples. Over 200 biking clubs from across the country participated at this year's edition of India Bike Week. Some of them even had dedicated stands at the venue showcasing their bikes and accomplishments. Most awaited for lot of HOG fans was Harley-Davidson's new 1200 Custom, bike is powered by a 1,200cc, air-cooled, fuel-injected engine which uses a five-speed gearbox to deliver the power.







All good things come to an end, so is it with the India Bike Week 2016. For the first time, IBW witnessed a film festival. In its first year itself, the film festival received 130 entries. It was really great to witness the biggest biking event in the country. With so many countries participating in the event, many innovative biking goodies and gadgets at its display were some of the highlight's to conclude. Let's hope to see some amazing new innovative inventions from Indian biking manufacturers as well. Till then stay tuned for next edition of IBW 2017.





Beloved Bangalore

This is where we do the things that need doing. Out of love. It's our little way of saying Thank You to the city we love.

And to all you wonderful people who support us and our Beloved Bangalore by joining our walks and tours.

Victorian Bangalore Walk



Traverse history from the fall of Tipu in 1799 to the turn of the 20th Century.

Queen Victoria ascended the throne in 1837, just a few years after the establishment of the British Cantonment in Bangalore.

This quiet little town in South India grew quite spectacularly over the next 70 years. The seeds of Bangalore's current persona - its leadership in technology, industry, scientific research & aerospace, its pubs, greenery, sporting culture and cosmopolitanism, as also the traffic chaos, demographic diversity and attractiveness to immigrants - were sown at different times and places in the Victorian era.

Great introduction to Bangalore. Breezy walk. Loads of information and entertainment. Walk down the history of a very happening city - Janardhan Roye, history buff and columnist in Deccan Herald

You know why Bangalore is on the minds of 21st century Americans - now learn why 19th century Britain was just as excited about this city - Manohar Rao, long-time resident Bangalore resident

A very good reason to be up early on a weekend. Perhaps as stimulating as golf on a three hour course. - Krishna Chidambi, another long-time Bangalore resident

Green Heritage Walk

with Vijay Thiruvady



Many thanks for the Lalbagh walk. I can't remember when I have had such a delightful time re-exploring a venue I thought I knew intimately. In three hours your 'walk' brings to life history, environment, botany, culture, landscape architecture, gardening and food---unpeeling an unknown Bangalore/Bengaluru. I have been recommending it to all my friends. More power to you and Arun. - Girish Karnad

Our walkers have included Zafar Futehally, Nirupama Rao Menon (Senior Diplomat), Dr. W Kalfoken (Harvard Smithsonian), Prof. J. Henry (Johns Hopkins), residents of over a dozen countries including Australia, Canada, Ecuador, Germany, Guadeloupe, India, Singapore, and of course, hundreds of Bangalore residents - those who walk here regularly as well as those who have never been to Lalbagh before.

Military Heritage Walk



Come and discover Bangalore's Military Heritage!

Join us on a walking tour of the MEG & C and hear the stories of the valour, gallantry and courage of the "Thambi" who has served from 1800 onwards in Egypt, Ava (Burma), Java, Persia, Abyssinia, Afghanistan, Sudan, Mesopotamia, Crimea, Gallipoli, France & Flanders, South Africa and German East Africa and most places in the Sub-continent.

The "Thambi" has built Bailey bridges at 18,300 ft., the highest airfields at 12,000 ft, roads from the Red Sea to the Abyssinian capital Magdala at 5500 ft, railroads in India and elsewhere, invented the Bangalore Torpedo used worldwide, has served and led UN peacekeeping missions from the Congo across to Cambodia. Though established as an engineering enabling unit, the 'Thambi' has also served as a combat/assault force in different theatres of war.

These were the Madras Pioneers and later - Madras Sappers & Miners who were the " First Soldiers Of The Empire" and Free India's Finest now housed (since 1865) in Bangalore.

Bangalore Walks is privileged to take you for a tour through the MEG & C Museum and War Memorial

How long is the walk?

We walk barely 1km over 2 hrs with several stops. That's easy!

And we treat you well. In addition to a guided walk, you get:

- A heartening breakfast
- An exclusive look at areas not normally open to the public
- A chance to meet others with similar interests

A testimonial from Ujjwala Murthy:

The Military heritage walk at MEG was truly truly

memorable. I am not a history buff and came on this walk out of curiosity but was totally blown by the history of the Madras Sappers and Miners. So many things made this walk memorable, just highlighting a few:

- The meticulous documentation from centuries back and the care with which everything is preserved at the museum
- Honored to place a wreath at the War memorial - just being part of the ceremony was such a privilege!
- The attention to detail and the importance to keeping everything spic and span at MEG. Saw the soldier picking small dry grass by hand at the Monkey House
- The salutes by the soldiers at every street/corner - when actually we are the ones who should be saluting them.
- The chivalry - at every occasion the women were served first. After a long time, really felt like a lady :)
- The attention to detail in getting the walk organized - the brochures, follow ups and ensuring everything goes as planned
- Last but not the least, the captivating story telling by Vijay - I think we could have all listened to you for hours. Your knowledge is truly amazing.

It was such a great experience to be part of the first military heritage walk and getting a glimpse of what is behind the MEG walls. Looking forward to the other walks now and hope more and more people sign up and experience the Military Heritage walk...I have started spreading the word around!! Thank you again for this opportunity to be part of the walk. Totally loved it!



Cubbon Park Walk



This central park is more than just a park - it is a repository of the city's history. The Walk will cover the architecture of some major buildings of the 1860s, the history and contribution of the 5 people whose statues are erected at Cubbon Park, the greenery at Cubbon Park and some special people who walk through Cubbon Park in the 20th century - including Rumale, Anderson and Ronald Ross.

Contact us

We are NOT on facebook or twitter

Not yet, at least! Despite repeated requests from all and sundry to do so. Well, we have bucked every trend in the past 6 years and revel in our maverick streak of doing things differently. We have no sales brochure, carry no ads, have no partnerships with hotels or travel agencies, provide very little information on what we do, and then expect people to get up at 6am on a weekend to join us. Quite crazy if you think about it.

For more information visit
<http://www.bangalorewalks.com/index.html>

We make your Bangalore experience special!

Take a walk, go on a tour, see a show.... enjoy this wonderful city.

We've done this every weekend since 2005. Come, connect with your city. Join us on a walk this weekend.

Over 30,000 people have experienced our walks & tours in the past 10 years. We respect those who took the time for a tour with us.

NR Narayana Murthy (Chairman, Infosys), Nandan Nilekani (CEO, Infosys), Rick Waddle (CEO, Northern Trust), Jack Little (CEO, The MathWorks), Eli Broad, Penny Brown (advisor to Madeleine Albright), Sophie Fallou (Director, Shell), Joe Podolny (Dean – Yale School of Business), Mitchell Adams (Dean, Harvard Medical School), Lord & Lady Cornwallis, Ravi Venkatesam (CEO, Microsoft India), Kevin Smith (President, Fidelity India), Marcel Hungerbuehler (CEO- Bengaluru Int'l Aiport), Anand Mahajan (MD, Saint-Gobain), Vijay Taparia (MD, Supreme Industries), S Salgaocar (MD, Salgaocar & Bros), Pradip Shah (Chairman, IndAsia), Venu Nair (CEO, Marks & Spencer India), Crissy Carpenter (CEO, Paley Centre for Media), Kanwal Rekhi (Co-Founder, TiE), Scott Stallard (HP), Christopher Perrigo (Target), Abhik Mitra (MD - TNT India), Dr Nagaraja Rao (former Dir Gen, Archaeological Survey of India).





12th ATOAI Annual Convention

12-14 February, 2016, Hanuwanthiya, Dist. Khandwa, Madhya Pradesh



The picturesque Hanuwanthiya Island, located in the reservoir of Indira Sagar Dam, a 4 hours journey by road was the venue for the 12th ATOAI Convention from 12th to 14th February 2016. On reaching the efficient team of ATOAI transported us to the convention location.



We reached Hanuwanthiya by 4 pm and were received by the MP tourism department who were the hosts for this convention and our tents were allotted. The climate was warm and the AC Swiss tents with attached toilet was of International standards and very comfortable and clean. The inauguration was in the evening at 5 pm in a specially constructed air-conditioned hangar.



The event was inaugurated by Shri Shivraj Singh Chauhan, Hon. Chief Minister and Shri Venkaiah Naidu, Minister of Urban Development, Govt. of India, along with other dignitaries like Hon. State Minister (Tourism), Hon. Chairman MPTDC, MD, MPSTDC, AMD, MPSTDC and presidents of trade associations.



A big support came from The Ministry of Tourism, Madhya Pradesh Tourism and Jammu & Kashmir Tourism towards the success of the event. Lifestraw gave 132 bottles as a part of the sponsorship for the convention delegates, which was a big hit.

A special dinner arranged by the MP Tourism for the ATOAI delegates who had come from all over India, Nepal and other International destinations helped in great bonding and helped in getting to know the various activities the members could indulge in along with conference tracks.

Eminent speakers like Himmat Anand- Founder Tree of Life Resorts, Ajay Jain- Kunzum Travel (traveler and writer), Rohit Hangal – Sphere Media, Megh Bahadur Ale- Borderlands, Nepal, Dr. Pranab Patar- Earthwatch Institute India, Anand Sankar- Founder Kalap Foundation, Varun Suhag – Flyboy Aviation, Alistair Gunn Scott- Flying Fox, Brig. S P Singh- Jumpin Adventures, Sanjay Basu- Far Horizons and Anirudh Chaoji- Pugmark Tours had very interactive sessions which were of great relevance to the adventure tourism community.

For the first time, there were “Success Story Sessions” where some of the speakers like Chinmay Divekar and Gurpreet Dhindsa shared their wealth of knowledge and success story with the delegates. These sessions were very inspiring and informative.

Another interesting session was the B2B Networking session with all the participating delegates where everyone had a minute to introduce themselves and talk about their company and products was a well thought out and the participants could sit down and exchange thoughts, ideas and information with the fellow delegates.



The ATOAI Convention delegates took part in a lot of adventure activities such as Para-motoring, Banana rides, Hot Air Ballooning, Jet Ski, Para Sailing etc. which were available at the convention.

The highlight was the sunset cruise specially organised for the ATOAI convention delegates on MV Narmada commanded by Commander.Rajendra Nigam.



Look forward the 13th ATOAI Convention, so long....



Simha Shastry

Simha is an Entrepreneur with over three decades of experience in sales, marketing, exhibitions and media industry, an avid adventure and wildlife enthusiast.

He is the Editor & publisher of Adventure & Wildlife Magazine

Can We Stop The Ecological Demise?

By Suresh Heblkar

For quite some time now, the topic of environment is being widely debated and discussed. Obviously because the neglect of past decades and unimagined outcomes of the industrial processes of the last century are not only becoming manifest but are exposing the hard facts of the diminishing natural resources and the fear of meeting the demands of the present and future generations. The poetry, art and literature that had so sensitively defined and described the varied forms and patterns of Nature got banally and unscrupulously neglected by the emergence of a flurry of technological innovations that gradually dominated the academic corridors and educational establishments overshadowing the importance of literary and environmental influences, especially on the minds of the younger generations.

The emphasis on economic growth pushed hard many parameters that either showed no relevance to the factors of environment or the protagonists of growth didn't realize the importance of the environment. Such a mindset among the

bureaucrats, technocrats and political administrators led to the gradual degeneration of the environment in most of the developing countries. The process of growth continues to push aside the importance of the environment which over a long period has caused irreparable damage to the ecology and various ecosystems of different regions. I am not trying to pin point any particular segment of the society or blame sections of the populations but placing before the readers as to how our environment has suffered badly due to callous indifference and neglect.

But at the same time not that all those involved in the processes of economic and industrial development were unaware of the environmental deterioration. Many were aware but didn't do much to stop the annihilation of the environment. The reasons as to why they didn't stop are best known to them!! One thing emerges clearly that the environment was relegated to seek more benefits from projects that encroached precious ecosystems.





The benefits that brought immediate comforts.

It's quite natural that humans forever are in search of comforts as they (comforts) make our lives easier, better and safer. And the way to get comforts is to transform the natural resources, which constitute our environment, into human needs and wants. Now, our comforts, as you understand, range from anything like a smartphone to a modern set of furniture to a relaxed sojourn on a lagoon on an exotic island far away from your destination.

Now these comforts, believed to have promoted the standard of living of human populations, have come to mean the symbols of modern civilization. But humanity was not aware that vast swathes of environmental ruin lay beneath the façade of imposing superstructures that symbolized power, glory & might of the modern civilizations. We only wondered at & praised the modern civilizations but hardly ever bothered to evaluate how and at what cost these societies have emerged.

Thanks to the ecological fraternity and the scientific minded environmental enthusiasts who began to notice the serious damages the unbridled development & economic growth were causing to the environment and ecology of vast regions of the Earth. Many times the environmental pollution and degeneration goes unnoticed because it's not easily felt and seen. The most painful thing is the vanishing of the wild life and other important plant and animal species.

We clear forests to make roads and many other projects thinking that we are only cutting trees and that trees / plants can be planted again. That's true, but forests are not just trees. They are complex ecosystems consisting of animals,

birds, butterflies, insects, bushes, climbers, creepers, grass & microbial life. And it takes hundreds and thousands of years for such a complex natural system to evolve and form. And there are several advantages and benefits of such forest ecosystems. These forests absorb solar radiation, produce oxygen, store water underground, purify air, regulate temperature, function like carbon sinks, create conducive climatic condition, etc., which in turn have soothing influence on agriculture, horticulture, animal husbandry & the like.

Similarly, the air that envelopes us and the air we breathe for survival is hugely polluted by the burning of fossil fuels which are used in enormous quantities to run the wide gamut of economic and industrial activities to maintain the modern civilized human societies. We do know that we need fresh, pure air to lead a healthy life and which is there all pervasive and in abundance. That really makes our life very comfortable. But we are not very happy with just pure air. We want material comforts, not ethereal comforts. And that's what makes the difference to our lives and to the environment. And we seem to like that difference.

In the olden days it was said that people lived healthy & happy lives. They had much less comforts compared to the modern times. Not much urbanization, industrialization, transport, communication, etc., as we have today. People had no cellphones, not many cars and so many other comforts that we have today. People also had simple habits and showed more concern towards animals and nature. They protected forests, grasslands, lakes and the soil because they were in direct contact with these elements of nature. Hence they depended upon these components of the environment for their existence

they respected and worshipped nature.

What distanced us from nature was the process of urbanization, triggered by technological innovations. We could transform forests, water-bodies, grasslands and vast stretches of fertile soil into industrial hubs, commercial layouts and community dwellings by using modern machines and equipment.

Just in a few decades, the entire Indian natural landscapes have been usurped, urbanized and converted into concrete jungles radiating enormous heat and causing an ecological demise on a vast scale. The anthropocentric mindset of the present generations has been chiefly responsible for the environmental ills that are threatening to wipe away all life forms on this Earth.

It's indeed a very serious matter – environment; it needs to be thought over, debated, discussed at every level and before every project that is launched in the name of development, lest it might jeopardize the very aim and object for which the project is conceived.

If we understand the importance of the environment now, let's begin to act as to how we can save it and protect it. The ideal thing is to kindle the children and the youth by imbuing their minds with a sense of curiosity and adventure towards this ecological wonder, our unique environment.





Suresh Heblkar
Founder, Eco-Watch

Key objective - spreading a message of environmental conservation through relevant, focused yet diverse programmes and activities. These outreach activities are aimed at building awareness about various environmental issues and concerns among student communities, organisations, corporate entities and the masses, in a simple yet effective manner.



Adventure & Wildlife Expo - 2016

Who Should Participate?

Adventure & Wildlife Clubs, Training institutions, Publications & Travel Agents, Manufacturers, Distributors & Dealers of equipment of activities such as Trekking, Wall Climbing, Mountaineering, Rock Climbing, Camping, Cycling, Zorbing, Bungee Jumping, Base Jumping, Bird Watching, Skating, Skiing, Ziplining, Photography, Go-Karting, Snow Mobile, Motocross, Jeeps, ATVs, Off-roading, Water, Swimming, Cliff Diving, River Rafting, Fishing, Kayaking, Surfing, Snorkeling, Scuba Diving, Water Skiing, Sailing, Pedal Boating, Wind Surfing, Skurfing, Jet Skiing, Fly Board, Sea Walking, Air Gliding, Para Gliding, Hang gliding, Sky Diving, Ballooning, Para Sailing, Wing suit Flying, Microlite Flying, Nutrition, Food supplement, Diet supplements, Fitness training, Healthcare.

For participation, contact
 Phone : 080- 3295 7575, 3295 7577
 E-mail : sales@adventurewildlife.in
 Website : www.adventurewildlife.in

Why participate?

As you may be aware, Adventure & Wildlife activities are increasingly becoming a passion amongst the urban population. The urban youngsters and even the elderly are engaging themselves in these expensive activities and some have made this into a hobby and full time profession.

With focused media campaigns aimed to attract the buyers across all age groups, this unique event shall give you an opportunity to meet, interact and network with buyers, professionals, Industry leaders and its stake holders, Central and State Government organizations.

VISITOR PROFILES

The event attracts a host of motivated, focused and "ready to experience" visitors. Here are some key points from a recent survey

- People of all ages plan to attend the expo, with around 75% under the age of 35
- 41% plan to spend big on adventure & wildlife related activities on their holidays
- 86% are planning adventure travel within the next 12 months

The expo provides exhibitors with the opportunity to talk to adventure & wildlife enthusiasts. It's simply an excellent and cost - effective way to interact directly with potential clients, build databases, enhance your product's brand awareness and market share and of course, generate leads.

As the only Adventure & Wildlife expo in the country, the event also offers a unique opportunity to build your network with the industry, grow contacts, keep an eye on the competition and the industry standards.



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Adventure & Wildlife Expo - 2016

In the early days, adventure in India was limited to trekking or climbing in the Himalayas. However, today the industry has matured and offers a variety of Adventure & Wildlife options.

India, is a 'one stop shop'. Only in India a person can indulge in a camel safari in the deserts of Rajasthan, Safaris in the jungles of India, Heli-skiing in the Himalayas, Rafting down the mighty Ganges, Kali and Barapole rivers, trek in the Garhwal, Himalayas and Western Ghats, experience Water sports, Scuba Diving & Dolphin watching, Camping & Fishing destinations in Goa, Karnataka and North India. In addition, Outdoor corporate training programmes, Aero-sports including Hot air ballooning and Paragliding, Bungee jumping, Skiing and ski-touring, Kayaking and Canoeing, Jeeping, Off roading, widen our scope of Adventure & Wildlife travel.

Large number of people are beginning to discover their passion for Adventure and Wildlife activities. There is an great amount of interest and enthusiasm by the stake holders. The growth rate of this industry is at 30-40% and expected to maintain this pace. And with the industry being in a nascent stage, there exists a huge potential for the brands catering to this target segment.

As Adventure & Wildlife industry is growing at a rapid pace and the knowledge among the consumers is high, it's a good opportunity for the brands to associate with this unique event and enhance their market share.

To be a front runner and reap the benefits of this fast growing industry segment, check out the Partnership Opportunities for designing a unique plan, please call on +91-99866 30555.

Offers high visibility and buyer traffic of
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