

Tiger Research and Conservation Trust



ANNUAL REPORT

2011-2012



Tiger Research and Conservation Trust
www.tractindia.org

CONTENTS –

Long Term Consolidation of Habitat

Voluntary Rehabilitation from within TATR

Facilitating Protection to Wildlife and Habitat

Capacity building workshops

Foot patrols

Fires Fighting

Intelligence gathering

Rescue of reptile

Monitoring Water sources

Monitoring Tiger outside Protected Areas

Monitoring Conflict – Loss of carnivores

Corridor Conservation Program – Mitigating Human Wildlife Conflict

Capacity Building workshops

Field Assistance for conflict mitigation

Village Awareness Program

Human Tiger Conflict

Presentations for Local Communities

Crop raid

Mobilizing Community Support

Monitoring conflict with livestock in buffer

Community support – compensation

Urban interaction

Schools / Rotary / Media Students / Villages

Generating Local employment

Volunteers

Wildlife Week

Surveys

Roshni – Rotary

Global Tiger Forum

TRACT Staff

LONG TERM CONSOLIDATION OF HABITAT

VOLUNTARY REHABILITATION

The Kolsa village, which has been partially rehabilitated out of Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve (TATR) in 2007, still had 97 families who had not shifted to Bhagwanpur, the rehabilitation site due unsatisfactory facilities and agricultural water issues. After a gap of almost 4 years, through which the villagers refused to have a dialogue with any revenue or forest official on this issue and rejected the package altogether, the impasse was broken by efforts of TRACT.

TRACT's efforts over few months resulted in 31 families giving a written consent to the voluntary rehabilitation program to the Divisional Commissioner. TRACT has since then facilitated in moving the process forward. The Kolsa families have been offered the new Rs. 10 lakh cash compensation. TRACT has been working closely with the concerned Forest and Revenue officials and till date 25 families have shifted out of Kolsa, of which 9 families have opted to move to the old rehabilitation site, Bhagwanpur, where each family received a house and an agricultural plot of 4 acres along with a cash compensation of Rs. 50,000-00 each.

TRACT is also playing a role of hand holding with the rehabilitated families, ensuring a speedy and just package.



Figure 1 – TRACT – Voluntary Rehabilitation from Kolsa village



Figure 2 – TRACT – Rehabilitation meeting in Bhagwanpur

FACILITATING PROTECTION TO THE WILDLIFE & HABITAT

CAPACITY BUILDING WORKSHOPS

TRACT has conducted capacity building and technical workshops for the Forest Guards and Round Officers at the Rangers colleges in Dadasaheb Choudhary College, Pal, near Yawal Wildlife Sanctuary and the Chandrapur Rangers College, Chandrapur.

300 forest guards were trained in the following –

Foot Patrols – Field methods

Man Large Conflict – Reasons and mitigating measures

Use of Camera traps – Theory and practical

Use of GPS – Theory and practical

Use of Map and map reading – Theory and practical

The forest guards have appreciated these workshops, as the content is application and result based, and empowers them with tools to be used in the field.

FOOT PATROLLING TO MINIMISE THREATS

The trained field staff of TRACT, comprising youths from local villages with sound knowledge of the topography, geography, flora and fauna, conducted extensive and thorough foot patrols in some sensitive areas in the north western area of the buffer of TATR forest, covering close to 30 sq kms of forested area. This daily patrolling was done to check for poaching threats like electrocution, jaw traps, snares and poisoning.

The team also monitored carnivore presence in these human dominated forests through indirect signs and checked threats to the habitat. Biotic pressures exerted by the local communities on the habitat, such as logging, bamboo extraction, grazing and collection of minor forests produce were addressed. The patrolling has been done on a regular basis to ensure its effectiveness.

All information has been shared with the local Field personnel of the Forest Department



Figure 3 – TRACT – Patrols by TRACT

FIRE FIGHTING – PROTECTION OF HABITAT

TRACT field staff responded promptly to incidents of man-made forest fires. The rates of fire incidents increase from December with the fire episodes at the highest in March and April, continuing at a low intensity through May. This trend is due to the Tendu (used to roll tobacco for hand rolled cigarettes) & Mahua picking season. The incorrect belief that heat by fire just before the new Tendu leaves emerge results in a healthy flush of leaves is the main reason for the human induced fires in forests. Local communities burn the forest again to ease the efforts of picking of Mahua flowers. TRACT staff worked through hours at end during the day and late at night, along with forest department employees or even individually, to control the blazes and to minimize their damage. Information about fire was sent to the head quarters during every episode. Measures were also taken to prevent similar occurrences elsewhere.



Figure 4 – TRACT - Fire fighting

INTELLIGENCE GATHERING – ANTI POACHING

Recognizing poaching as an ever-present threat, TRACT field staff was always on the lookout for any evidence and information about new visitors, and information about poaching threats. Our staff actively liaised with local villagers to know if there were any threats from poachers in the area. Information from the field has been shared with the concerned forest officials for further action.

RESCUE OF REPTILES

TRACT field staff is known in the landscape for their successful efforts in rescuing snakes. Monsoon months see a large number of snakes finding their way into homes of locals in the peripheral villages along with the overflowing lake water, which meanders through villages.

TRACT staffs have responded to emergency calls from locals and have rescued more than 75 snakes, which were immediately released in the adjoining forest habitat. The local beat guard is informed of the rescue and the release. Due to the continuous rescue work done by TRACT, local communities and resorts place a call to the TRACT staffer to rescue the reptile instead of the previous reaction of killing it.



Figure 5 & 6 – TRACT – Rescue and release of snakes

MONITORING WATER SOURCES – MINIMISE THREATS

TRACT field personnel have worked in some of the forested areas in the buffer of TATR, monitoring seasonal and perennial water sources. Water bodies have been monitored for wildlife presence and threat of poisoning.

The perennial water sources in the northwestern-forested buffer of TATR have been maintained and cleaned regularly. TRACT staff has ensured that the local labour working in these forested areas don't damage the source with litter clog it with plastic. Water sources have been deepened to sustain through the summer months. Water sources are daily monitored for threats.



Figure 7 – TRACT – Foot patrols and monitoring water sources

MONITORING OF WATER BODIES IN THE BUFFER AREA FOR THREATS

In the notified 1100 sq kms of buffer area of Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve TRACT has mapped 62 large water bodies last year. These water bodies are near human dwellings and are shared water sources by the local communities, domestic animals and wild animals. Due to this overlapping of space, the wild animals face threats by conflict, retaliation and poaching.

TRACT has been monitoring 27 water bodies in this buffer in the reporting period for signs of water poisoning and snaring, trapping on the animal trails leading to these water bodies. Snares for smaller herbivores have been found which have been reported to the local concerned field officer.

MONITORING TIGERS OUTSIDE PROTECTED AREAS – Camera Trapping

TRACT field personnel have been monitoring presence of tigers and leopards in the buffer area of TATR. Regular information is gathered from the concerned guards, local communities and local trackers. Water bodies in the buffer are checked for presence of large carnivores. Breeding tigresses with cubs are being monitored regularly too. Information of areas having presence of carnivores in the landscape has been of much use in identifying areas where capacity building workshops are needed.

Tigers near the periphery of TATR are monitored using camera traps. A tigress with three cubs near the boundary of TATR is being regularly monitored using indirect signs



Figure 8 – TRACT – Tigress and 3 cubs at tigress@ghosri

MONITORING CONFLICT – LOSS OF CARNIVORES

TRACT personnel have attended two post mortems of two tigers as representatives of the National Tiger Conservation Authority.

In the first episode, the tiger was found dead on the fringe of the Tipeshwar Sanctuary. He had managed to get trapped in a snare probably put for herbivores. He seemed to have had the metal snare around his neck for a day before it tightened due to the wire getting stuck in tree trunks as he moved around, and he was killed due to strangulation.

The second episode was due to electrocution, on a trail leading from the village into the forest. The animal was directly under a live wire, and had been electrified by a wire again probably meant for herbivores. He died a sudden death.

A dead tiger was found in a well, death due to drowning. TRACT staff visited the spot with the Forest authorities. In both cases the tiger movement was in human dominated landscape.

CORRIDOR CONSERVATION PROGRAM - MITIGATING HUMAN –TIGER CONFLICT

CAPACITY BUILDING WORKSHOPS

The Corridor Conservation Program was started in 2008 by the Maharashtra State Forest Department and TRACT to mitigate Human Large carnivore conflict in Chandrapur District. In a continuous effort to maintain the present low human tiger conflict the, Capacity building and technical workshops were held with Poonam and Harshawardhan Dhanwatey as resource persons by TRACT for the field personnel of the Brahmmapuri Forest Division. They were held at Chimur, Talodhi, Sindewahi and attended by forest department officials and field personals from Chimur, Talodhi, Sindewahi, Nagbhid, North Brahmmapuri, South Brahmmapuri, Saoli Ranges. Staff from some areas of the Forest Development Corporation of Maharashtra (FDCM) also participated in these training workshops.

Poonam and Harshawardhan Dhanwatey were also invited twice by the Rangers College in Pal (Yawal) in Jalgaon district and at Rangers College, Chandrapur to conduct these training workshops for the fresher's who have joined the Department as Forest Guards and Range Forest Officers.

The workshops were aimed at improving field monitoring skills, learning the techniques of camera trapping, using the GPS and the map in the field, creating awareness about the Human – Large carnivore conflict and motivating the participants.

Even as knowledge of the forest department employees and officials was augmented, they were also given motivational talks and told about the importance of their jobs in the protection of forests. They were also sensitized in the need to motivate local communities to help protection and preservation of the wildlife and the habitat.

422 forest personals were trained during these capacity building workshops.



Figure 9 – TRACT – GPS workshop for TATR staff



Figure 10 – TRACT – Conflict mitigation workshop – Rangers college, Pal, Yawal

FIELD ASSISTANCE FOR CONFLICT MITIGATION

April – The TRACT staff assisted in mitigating the conflict between the humans and a tigress in Saigata, Bharhmanpuri Division. Following 4 attacks on the locals by the carnivore, 2 of which were fatal, and the mob reaction and pressure on the management needed

October - In the month of October conflict with leopard was high in the Chimur Range lying in the northern peripheral forested area of Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve. A leopard had killed an 8 year old girl near Chimur, and attacked a villager who tried to scare the leopard away from the victim. This leopard was caged and then released in the nearby-forested area by the Forest Department. Post this release, three deaths were reported in the same area. TRACT teams assisted the management over a period of two weeks to track the leopard and assisted in caging the animal. TRACT teams also worked towards sensitizing the local villagers in this area to avoid retaliation towards wildlife or the forests and to pacify them. The locals were also informed about the code of conduct on their part to safeguard themselves in this situation. TRACT teams were on call 24x7 for two weeks, patrolling the area and assisting in the field.

After the leopard was recaptured TRACT teams facilitated in the post caging procedure. All attacks in this landscape have ceased post the capture of this leopard.

December - The leopard is still in captivity and will remain so. Efforts are being made to get a local zoo within the state to take it in. But all zoo's and rescue homes are full with a wait-listed situation. The leopard may remain in the cage for a while till an enclosure is made available.

Three leopard deaths have been reported in this quarter from this landscape. TRACT teams visited all three sites and checked the reason for the deaths, the adjoining areas for more carnivore presence and signs.

Two fatal attacks on human by tigers and one by a leopard were also investigated. TRACT field personnel assisted the field staff to check for carnivore presence. The local villagers were addressed about the carnivore presence and basic code of conduct discussed to reduce chances of attacks on the local villagers.

VILLAGE AWARENESS PROGRAM

In our constant effort towards mitigating human - large carnivore conflict, TRACT has commenced a Village Awareness Program in the buffer and corridors of TATR. Villages affected with conflict and which have carnivore presence in their adjoining forests were identified.

These programs were held in collaboration with the State Forest Department, wherein the concerned Range Forest officer, the Round officer and the Forest Guard participated.

The programs were held in the 19 villages. The Sarpanch, Police Patil and some of the prominent individuals and youth were sensitized towards conflict between humans and large carnivores, reasons for this conflict was discussed, they were informed about the mitigating measures through a presentation.

Their code of conduct required for their own safety was discussed.

These workshops were also a platform for the local communities to talk about their problems regarding unemployment, crop raid problems, delay in compensation for crop raids and cattle kills. The local communities were sensitized about hygiene and government schemes for toilet facilities. Posters giving information to villagers regarding how they should conduct themselves when they enter forest, etc., have been put up in all the 79 villages in the TATR buffer, bus stops and resorts.

HUMAN TIGER CONFLICT

VILLAGE AWARENESS – The TRACT teams have held regular informal meetings with the local communities in these areas in the buffer where presence of large carnivores has been seen near human dwellings.

In our efforts, we have been emphasizing the need to convert the tiger / leopard from a threat to a long term asset for the locals, by protecting the animal and understanding the potential of home stays for tourists and local tourism.

The teams have covered 21 villages where the locals have been met. The biotic pressure exerted on the adjoining forests is immense. TRACT teams also spoke about alternatives to the use of firewood in these areas, which would help in reducing the anthropogenic pressures on the green cover.

CONFLICT MITIGATION PRESENTATIONS FOR THE LOCAL COMMUNITIES

TRACT conducted presentations for the Local communities in villages, which have carnivore presence. Discussions were held with simple methods of communication, using enlarged photographs indicating reasons of conflict between humans and large carnivores, the code of conduct to ensure safe movement in the areas having carnivore presence and safe barns for their livestock.

CROP RAID issues were also discussed. Ways to reduce damage to the crops by traditional and local methods used were discussed. Other additional extensive ways of fencing were also spoken about.

These meetings were a platform for the villagers to talk about their problems about delayed compensation, unsatisfactory compensation amounts, and the concerned forest guard and officer took cognizance of these and suggested ways to facilitate these issues.

MOBILISING COMMUNITY SUPPORT

MONITORING OF CONFLICT WITH LIVESTOCK IN THE BUFFER

TRACT teams have been collecting field data on the conflict between large carnivores and the livestock in the forested areas of the buffer.

Data on cattle kills in the ranges has been collected from the locals and the range officers. Exact GPS locations of these conflict episodes are not available, so it is difficult to map the data

ASSISTING LOCALS WITH COMPENSATIONS

The people, who have suffered livestock depredation by tigers and leopards, tend to develop a negative approach towards the conservation of the big cats. TRACT has been addressing the issues of delay in payment of compensation to the locals for loss of livestock due to large carnivores. The locals have often approached TRACT staffers for assistance.

URBAN INTERACTION

Urban interns are involved in patrolling to make them aware of the situation and challenges faced on the field. They are also involved in conducting various surveys on village level to get a better understanding of the circumstances and problems faced by villagers. This interaction brings the young urban close to the nature and its importance.

SCHOOLS/ROTARY/MEDIA STUDENTS/VILLAGES

Both Poonam and Harshawardhan have been invited to schools and various clubs to show give presentations and talks about Wildlife Conservation and the need to conserve. They have also spoken in different arenas about the much talked about local issue of Human Tiger Conflict. Wildlife movies were shown to schoolchildren to sensitize them about wildlife and for better understanding of the work done by TRACT.

They were invited to Rotary Main Club to give a presentation on man-animal conflict, which was well attended. Every year Harshawardhan interacts with media students from Journalism Mentor, Mumbai and Department of Mass Communication, Nagpur University.

Movie shows and presentations are organized for the villagers in the TATR buffer. TRACT along with the local Club organized a show of the Nat Geo documentary on Tadoba. IT was well attended. The film show was held in Tadoba for the guides and Forest Department field staff. All appreciated the film.

GENERATING LOCAL EMPLOYMENT

Underlining TRACT's commitment to involve local communities and take help of their knowledge in conservation efforts, most of our field staff was sourced from villages surrounding forests. Thanks to our training and guidance and their hard work, many locals have also been absorbed into the forest department.

TRACT very often has youngsters wanting to join the foundation as they appreciate the work done and the stipend in this low employment generating area.

WILDLIFE WEEK

Wildlife week was observed in about 19 villages in the TATR buffer by TRACT. The marathi version of the documentary 'Truth about the Tigers' by Shekar Dattatri was shown in the villages and discussion was also held with the villagers after the show. The same documentary was also shown to urban school kids, when the schools observed wildlife week.

SURVEYS –

TRACT has conducted some surveys in this landscape, which will facilitate protection to the wildlife and the habitat.

Crop Raids – Survey in 14 buffer villages was conducted to gather information about the animals involved in crop raids, the extent of damage and ways to reduce damage.

Human – large carnivore conflict – Surveys were conducted in 14 buffer villages to gather information about the wells in the landscape that need to be covered. These open wells can be a threat to wildlife falling in which may be fatal or cause injuries.

ROSHNI – With ROTARY

TRACT conducted a program in the 13 buffer villages; where in all homes in these villages, which were devoid of electricity were given solar lamps. This was done in collaboration with the Rotary Main Club of Nagpur. TRACT staff first conducted surveys in the villages, listing homes, which were not electrified. Functions were held in 3 villages where the nearest cluster of villages was called and lamps distributed. Members of Rotary Main club of Nagpur and TRACT attended these functions. A total of 148 lamps were donated.

Locals are using the lamps in homes and also commercial areas. They were much appreciated.

GLOBAL TIGER FORUM

As a member of the Global Tiger Forum Poonam & Harsh have attended seminars and meetings hosted by the GTF and the Global Tiger Initiative in Delhi. They raised the issue of capacity building models to be initiated by GTF in the tiger range countries, wherein resource persons can be identified from the GTF members working on different subjects in the field.

PURCHASES & OTHERS –

3 Hero Splendour 100cc bikes (total 8 bikes in the field)

One of the bikes was totally damaged and needed major repairs.

3 bicycles were bought for the new staff

300 TRACT caps were ordered and distributed in programs and to staff

Projector was damaged, bulb needed to be changed

Field camp in Moharli was shifted to new premises

TRACT had interns coming from Nagpur, Hyderabad and Mumbai. The interns presently in their 2nd year of the Masters program in the Institute of Science, Bombay worked with TRACT staff for a period of 2 months in Moharli. Poonam is assisting them in their dissertation report, which will be submitted at Mumbai University.