



# TIGER AWARENESS

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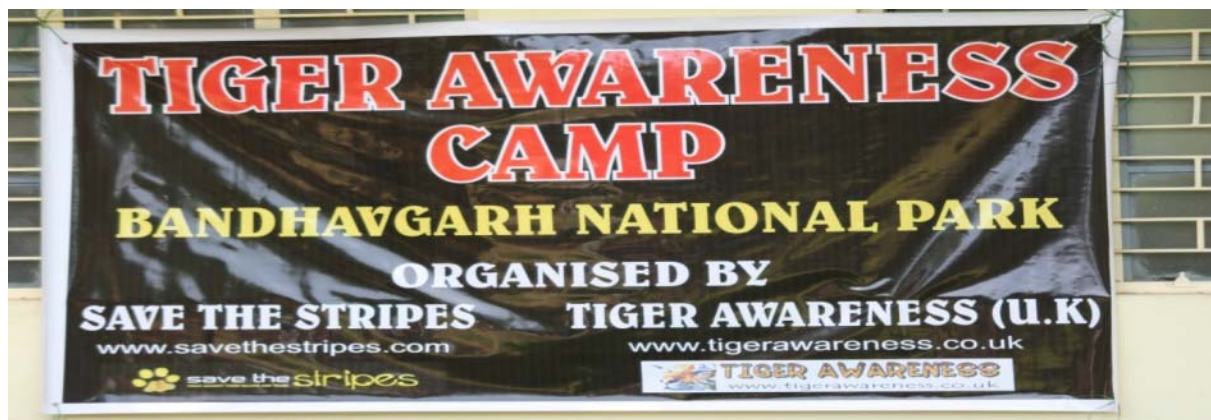
BANDHAVGARH AND RANTHAMBHORE 2009.

We departed Heathrow, November 12<sup>th</sup> at 20.50 hrs, with me on this trip is Adrian Craven my friend, and this is his first trip to India. We flew by Jet Airways and arrived in Delhi at 10.40 am local time next day, India is 5.5 hours ahead at this time of year. After collecting our baggage and changing our money, we met with Amit of " Save The Stripes " organisation. He took us for lunch; we met with his partner who dropped us off at Nizamuddin railway station. The train departed for Katni at 16.10 and was due to arrive at Katni 08.00 next morning, we arrived at 10.10, and I have had longer journeys, though this was longer than the Gondwana Express. Once arriving at Katni, we were met by our taxi, this was the same driver as last year, he took us to Tala, Bandhavgarh, which is a 2 hour drive. once arriving in Tala, we dropped Amit off at the CUM CUM resort, this is where the rest of the "Save The Stripes " organisation where staying, we had 5 minutes talking about the agenda for the next couple of days, then went to Wild Haven, the resort I stay at each year, it is 2 minutes further away .

We had some lunch, then went for the afternoon safari, this lasts from 14.00 to 17.30 at this time of year. We observed many animals, though NO TIGERS on this visit. After the safari, we went back to Wild Haven, just before being collected by "Save the Stripes" team, we met Bhavni / Trishant who had come from Mumbai, to learn more about our work, we had a quick chat, as we would meet on Sunday at the Awareness Camp. We where collected by the "Save the Stripes "team 20 minutes later. We went to visit some villagers; the first village was called Damna, which is a sensitive village close to the Bandhavgarh National Park boundary. There had been Tigers poisoned there recently, due to the fact that they where not getting compensation for loss of cattle from the forest department. A couple of the villagers also showed me there scars, from

where they had been mauled by Tigers a few years earlier. I asked their thoughts towards the Tiger, they said that they had no animosity towards Tigers, this village has little electricity or amenities as we know. I gave some monies to the villagers we met, asked them, if they get anymore cattle lifted by the Tigers in the area, to get in touch with "Save The Stripes" team, who would investigate the incident, we could compensate on verification of the case, hoping that it would then stop any more being poisoned. We went to another couple of villages, letting all know about the "Awareness Camp", we were to have at the Interpretation Centre in Tala the next day at 11.00. The idea, was to look at the claims of the individuals, to see if they had been reported correctly to the forest department, if so, why they had not been paid. We arrived back at Wild Haven at 21.30, had our evening meal and went to bed around midnight.

The next morning November 15<sup>th</sup>, we went to the park around 05.30 for the morning safari. We went into the park at around 06.10, this time we went to the area of Bandhavgarh Fort, the Chakradada female there with her cubs and a Sambar Kill. We were above the cloud base; we could not find her and the cubs after much looking. After the safari, we had our breakfast, then went to the Interpretation Centre around 11 am, where we were to have the "Awareness Camp". The "Save the Stripes" team arrived around 11.30 am; we put up a banner that they had made up, which had both their logo on and also "Tiger Awareness" logo. Bhavni and Trishant arrived with Bhavnis mum, we all had a look around the Interpretation Centre whilst waiting to see how many villagers would turn up, also in this time, one of the forest guard officers was to be part of answering any questions.



After a further 45 minutes, some villagers arrived and presented their cases, the forest official, made us aware that cases of cattle compensation at this time were taking from seven days to one year. Also at this time my friend Aqeel from Vunraksha organisation arrived. I introduced him to the "Save the Stripes" team. We explained the situation so far, after looking at the paperwork, we compensated 8 cases, with a further 4 to be paid, once they had been verified, I also left funds to cover these cases. We compensated 2500 rupees per case, the government were giving between 3000- 6000 rupees per case. I observed that some cases were from 2007, the cases we gave for were in the last 12 months. The forest department need to compensate quicker, also ensuring that NO BRIBES are paid to register the claim.

At 14.00 we went on the afternoon safari. We observed a young cub 5 / 6 months old, it was one of the MIRCHANI females' cubs. After the safari, I said my farewells to the "Save the Stripes" team, as they were to go back to Jabalpur, which is around 4-5 hours drive from Bandhavgarh. I also met Brij from a NGO called "Tiger Initiative Group for Earth Review"; they work outside the Gohri gate side of the National park. We spoke for about 15 minutes about various agendas, looking to visit their work on my next trip. We then went back to Wild Haven, spent some time catching up with Aqeel, discussing the work our charities will be looking to do in the future. We are looking to start a FOREST COMMITTEE PROJECT, in the KHITOLI AREA which adjoins Bandhavgarh National Park; it covers an area of 216 hectares. We compensated 20 plus cases for cattle compensation in December 2008

The next morning we went on safari, there was a slight drizzle, which is unseasonal at this time of year. We had no Tiger sightings on this visit. After the safari, I put my bicycle together, I had left it after last years cycle ride from Bandhavgarh to Kanha. Then I borrowed Ady one of the cycles from the camp, we then had a cycle ride round the Tala village for about 20 mins, there were a few cows in the street, as well as the normal traffic. On arriving back there was a villager there, with his paperwork looking for cattle compensation. I looked at the paperwork; it had the official seal of the forest department. I decided to compensate him, giving him 2500 Rupees, also keeping the paperwork for my records and getting him to sign for the money.

The afternoon safari, we had no Tiger sightings, the weather was again wet, after we went to meet with the guide Rajesh Trevedis family, he showed us and talked about his love in helping the TIGER. We had also been made aware of 2 sub adult Tigers that had killed 2 buffalo outside the park, near the Damna area that afternoon.

The following morning, November 17<sup>th</sup>, our safari was cancelled due to it had been raining all night and was still raining heavy at 05.00. We had breakfast latter this morning. We then went to Khitoli area around 11am; I had visited it also on last years visit. This time the building we are looking to use for a base, was more dilapidated, also there was more encroachment by the villagers with cattle. It is a good extension of forest for the Tigers / animals from the national park. The cost for the project would be 80.000 Rupees per annum.



After the visit to Khitoli, we then went straight to the afternoon safari; this also yielded no TIGER sightings. On our arrival back from the safari, there were some villagers, who were looking for cattle compensation. I looked at the paperwork again, to ensure it had correct seals. I compensated a further 12 cases, keeping the paperwork and getting them to sign for the 2500 Rupees. I turned away some with cases older than a year, also some were for jackal bites and crops destroyed by Chital deer from the park.

Next Morning, our safari had no Tiger sightings, though near the end, there were Chital alarm calls, VIP visitors could observe the Tiger from elephant.

This is something you pay a lot of money for, it should not be allowed. I was also invited after the safari to a presentation of equipment by TIGER GUARDS OF INDIA, a NGO, that was presenting the forest department with £90,000 worth of equipment. We went to the presentation at 11am, there were a lot of foreign tourists there, also forest guards, though no villagers. The equipment given was 10 motorcycles, mosquito nets, boots, jackets and a tractor, that would be used for the grasslands, as 2 villages, Maghdi and Kullva Bah where to be relocated. There was a talk by the NGO director, the new field director of Bandhavgarh, who also said that CATTLE COMPENSATION would be paid by end of January 2010. I left after the speeches / presentation of some of the equipment. I arrived back at Wild Haven, I decided to go back and have a chat if possible with the field director, Mr Patil. I cycled there, found Mr Patil inside talking to a couple of people, I gave him a Tiger Awareness card, and he was slightly surprised it was in Hindi. I asked, that I hoped that remaining cattle compensation cases would be paid by the end of January 2010, as we had paid some 24 cases, also the reason the Bamera and Banvai Tigress, where poisoned, is that they had to pay a bribe to forest officials to get it registered, also they were not getting the compensation. We discussed a few other points, including that it might be an idea to set up a committee, that included local villagers, guides, NGOs and forest department, he said we could have a meeting, I explained I was to leave shortly for Ranthambhore, so this was not possible and that I would send him the cases, we had paid cattle compensation for, so it was not duplicated. We had to first go to Katni to meet the Conservation Forestry Officer, about the project we would like to set up in Khitoli with Vunraksha. We arrived there about 17.00, this was a positive meeting, he would send a template to Aqeel, who would send costs, so that we could look to go forward with the project, I hope in mid 2010. After the meeting we had an evening meal, then arrived at Katni Railway Station for 21.00. We said our goodbyes to Aqeel, Sadiq and Lippu, just before our train departed at 21.55.

Next morning November 19<sup>th</sup>, we arrived at Sawai Madhophur at 09.55. a train journey of 12 hours. We were picked up by a taxi, then taken to the Regency Hotel. After some breakfast my friend Vipul, took us to the Ranthambhore Fort. I have visited before; we took some photos going up the stairs, with Vipul explaining the history to Ady. Vipul took some photographs; we then went to

the Ganish temple. After visiting the temple, I realised I had not picked up my camera bag, I ran back there, I found the bag, it was empty, my money and DVD camera had gone from it. The period of 10 minutes had elapsed, from leaving it to finding the camera bag. We asked around though nobody had seen anything. I did not go on the afternoon safari, as I needed to report this to my travel insurance, also the police locally. I made a statement and got a crime report number later that day. I also visited Vipul's house that evening.

Next morning November 20<sup>th</sup>, we went on the safari, there were no Tiger sightings by anybody on this visit. At 11.30 I met Yadvendra Singh, the president of the Nature's Guides Association.

We chatted about various issues for an hour and we both feel that the guides have an important role to play in the conservation of Tigers.

The afternoon safari, we observed crocodiles, Nilgai, wild boar, Sambar, Chital and many different species of birds, though no Tigers. After having evening meal, I met with Kemchand Soni, we have been talking by phone for a couple of years, it was good to meet in person at long last. He was also the tutor of Dharm Khandal (Tigerwatch), who I was to meet next day. We spoke for an hour; we would also meet next day with Dharm.

November 21<sup>st</sup>, we were picked up by Dharm Khandal of Tigerwatch, a local NGO that is working to rehabilitate the MOGIYA tribe people, who would normally make a living by hunting animals, including Tigers. We first of all went to the office of Tigerwatch, Dharm showed me the work that the Mogiya people are doing, such as craftwork to earn a living, he also gave us some examples of the work for ourselves. He also explained that over the last 4 years they had been involved in catching 44 cases of poaching. He asked me about Tiger Awareness work, how it came about, also the future. I explained we help in Sundarbans, Bandhavgarh and Ranthambhore and that at present they would remain our focus. We then went to the Mogiya School where there are 20 children they are educating, have to say they showed a lot of respect for Dharm. We also met some informers, who are ex poachers, one had recently started to come to talk to Dharm about his knowledge of poaching incidents, he also had killed a Tiger, around 2005, for which he will serve a prison sentence at some stage. The informers are paid 3000 Rupees per month plus

travel money. We then went to visit a Mogiya village, this was situated near to Balas, the villages are due to be relocated away from the area shortly. It was about a 45 minute drive. We met some school children, who again showed great respect for Dharm. The children get 100 Rupees per month, if they attend over 20 days per month as an incentive. We then travelled back as Dharm was taking Khemchand into the National Park around 14.00 hrs. We were due to have a short meet the day after, before we departed to Delhi. The evening we got our bags ready for the next day, November 22nd, I had a short meet with Yadvendra Singh just before our departure at 12.00, as our train was due to leave Sawai Madhopur at 12.35. Dharm was not able to make the meeting at 11.30, as he had to inspect 5 villages who had new solar lighting installed by TERI. I left one of our t-shirts at reception for him.

We arrived back in Delhi around 19.00 hrs, we then got a taxi ride to our hotel, as our flight was not to depart to the UK, until 13.00 next day.

## CONCLUSION

The work being done by organisations such as Tigerwatch to rehabilitate the Mogiya tribes people is critical to control poaching, as it has been minimised in Ranthambhore by this work.

The work such as cattle compensation in Bandhavgarh is also critical, as the forest department in a lot of cases are too slow to compensate. As mentioned earlier in the report, 2 such Tigress would not have been poisoned if the cattle compensation had been paid. I feel that the forest department, have to work more closely with the local people, to ensure Tigers are protected better both inside and outside the park.

We will look to raise funds to help with the projects mentioned in this report, also to help with some equipment for the forest guards.