

# Survey in bandhavgarh national park

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Bandhavgarh National Park lies at the geographical centre of India. It is said to be a heaven for Tigers and other wildlife. Declared as a Tiger Reserve in 1993, Bandhavgarh holds the highest density of Tigers in India. Off late there have been some cases of poisoning of Tigers as retaliation by the local villagers but still the King roams freely in and around Bandhavgarh. With a few Tigers left in the wild, every life is precious. The very famous Banbei Tigress of Bandhavgarh, who was successful in raising many cubs to maturity, was found dead under mysterious circumstances.

The body was decomposed and it was hard to determine which tiger it was. The forest officials after scrutinizing the body declared it was some male tiger. But when the guides and tourist drivers did not find the female for many days, it was clear that the Banbei Tigress was poisoned and the forest officials were just covering for it. This was not all.. A Tigress, in Pataur area was also found dead after eating the carcass of a cattle dragged from a nearby village. The carcass was in turn poisoned and the Tigress died after consuming it.

The officials were intimidated about the tigress by the locals. The officials and the villagers could see the tigress struggle for life near Bamai Nala, where she lost the battle for life in front of everyone. The only thing that comes out of both the cases is POISONING. And without local hands, it is not possible. The Save the Stripes Team, on 1st November 2009, did a survey in and around the Park, to find out the reasons behind this. The survey was conducted in Pataur, Bhamsa, Ghangaur and Damna. Bhamsa and Ghangaur being small villages have a population of about 6080 people.

Damna has about 200 people and about 500 livestock. Bhamsa, Ghangaur and Damna lie in a straight line and are about 20 kms from Manpur, which is the nearest market for the villagers. Manpur is about 25 kms from Tala. After Manpur, The first halt for the team was Bhamsa, where the team met the locals. It was enquired that when was the last cattle lifted from the village. And the answer without any pause came “ Yesterday”. It was a tough task.

With a cattle kill every second day, and no compensation reaching the locals, this was expected. The team asked them, Do they report the cattle losses to the forest officials. They said, they used to, but not anymore. As they have to bribe the officer -in-charge there. He asks for 200 rupees as a bribe for using the stationary provided by the department. After writing down the report, a Doctor for scrutiny is called up. The doctor charges another 600 rupees for preparing the report.

Else a negative report is sent. As it is they aren't compensated on time, what when the negative report is forwarded. To get the compensation of Rs. 000/- the villagers have to put in Rs. 1000/-. They aren't left with much, Money or Choices..

!!!! Sad.. The team headed to Ghangaur. The locals gathered near a grocery shop. The last kill here was a week ago. The story was the same. The locals were asked “ What do they think of the Tiger? ” The Tiger is our God, our savoir Sir, said Mandoop Sahu, who had lost nearly every cattle he owned.

The deer and boars ruin our crops and the tiger takes away our cattle's. We hardly get to eat once a day and our children get milk from the cows, He

added. The process to get money for the losses was the same here. There were many pending cases. The documents relating to the reports were also not with the people. They said it was with the Babu who was posted there. Named after the Damnar River that flows through the village, Damna is 2 kilometers away from Ghangaur.

It is a bigger village and is also said to be the most sensitive area for the wild cats. The geographic position of Damna is laid along side the park boundary in the core of the forest. There is a fence to cover the park but its nothing for a Tiger to jump over it. With the large number of cattle in Damna, the king is a frequent visitor. " Bagraj" as the locals may call it, but Banbei lost her life very close to the village. Banbei left behind 3 cubs, a year and a half old, she was one of the beloved tigresses of Bandhavgarh, thank fully her cubs are keeping well now and with a father like B2 they are being feeded well. The past isn't good either.

Many poaching cases have been reported in and around Damna, Sita the most famous tigress had a territory very close to this place and went missing, B1 was electrocuted in Damna, and B3 also went missing. But still there has been no action taken after so many incidences. A temple dedicated to the " Tiger God" is at the centre of the village. We worship the Tiger, Why would we kill it? Werespectand we know that he is our saviour, the saviour of the forest says the locals. CONCLUSION During our time here in Bandhavgarh in the last few months we have witnessed the challenges of conservation in India and this region in particular, many incidents have happened which have saddened our hearts and brought despair to us. India

is home to the most majestic animals that roam on the earth, each possessing a quality that makes them stand head and shoulders above the rest. With the rise in Man-animal conflict it is hard to find a way that these magnificent creatures will find a way to survive, it is surely only with local support and their respect for the wildlife, that our grand children may visit here and experience what we have been privileged to.

Escalating man animal conflict is the root-cause to the depletion in the number of Tigers. Concern over crops being destroyed by wild animals is growing; in agricultural fields adjoining forests the farmers should exercise caution while choosing crops. In Bandhavgarh all the villages in, and around the park area, need to be relocated to reduce the risk of man animal conflict. Park Boundary should be repaired/rebuild to the height that no tigers are able to cross that. There is also a need to enhance awareness among people about animal behaviour. The laws of the jungle should be respected; Grazing should be stopped inside the park area. Their privacy should be accorded priority and intrusive behaviour should be avoided.