

# LIFE E-NEWSLETTER



## *Editor's Desk*

BY JOANN FERNANDES

Dear readers,

Welcome to our latest edition of the Zoology Newsletter, where we delve into the fascinating realm of human-animal interactions. From the earliest days of our existence, humans have shared a deep and intricate relationship with animals. This connection has shaped our cultures, societies, and even our own understanding of the world around us.

Throughout history, animals have served as sources of sustenance, companionship, and inspiration for human societies. From domesticated animals like dogs and cats to the majestic creatures of the wild, our interactions with animals have shaped our lives in profound ways. However, these interactions are not always benign; they can also lead to conflicts and ethical dilemmas, particularly as human activities increasingly encroach upon natural habitats and disrupt ecosystems.

In this issue, we will navigate the intricate web of relationships between humans and animals, let us remember the importance of empathy, respect, and stewardship towards all living beings. Through education, advocacy, and responsible stewardship, we can ensure a sustainable future where humans and animals thrive together in harmony.

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# *The Man-Eater Tigers of Sundarbans*

BY RAKSHITHA SHERIGAR  
(SYBSC-A)

The dense mangrove forests of the Sundarbans, straddling the border of India and Bangladesh, are home to one of the most fearsome predators on Earth: the Bengal tiger. Within this tangled labyrinth of waterways and thickets, a unique phenomenon has emerged - man-eating tigers. For centuries, the Sundarbans have been a challenging environment for humans and tigers alike. The region's shifting tides, treacherous terrain, and dense foliage create an ideal habitat for these elusive big cats. However, as human settlements encroach upon the tigers' territory, conflicts inevitably arise.

The man-eating tigers of Sundarbans have become notorious for preying on unsuspecting villagers and fishermen who venture into the mangroves in search of livelihoods. These encounters often end tragically, with humans falling victim to the stealth and ferocity of these apex predators. But why do tigers in the Sundarbans develop a taste for human flesh? Several factors contribute to this behavior. Firstly, the dense vegetation makes it difficult for tigers to hunt their natural prey, such as deer and wild boar. As a result, some tigers turn to humans as an easier source of food. Additionally, the Sundarbans are heavily populated, with millions of people living in and around the forest. Human activities, such as fishing and collecting honey, bring people into direct contact with tigers, increasing the likelihood of confrontations. Furthermore, the unique geography of the Sundarbans complicates efforts to manage human-tiger conflicts. The dense mangrove forests are crisscrossed by countless waterways, making it challenging for authorities to track and monitor tiger movements. This presents significant challenges for conservationists striving to protect both tigers and human communities.



Efforts to mitigate human-tiger conflicts in the Sundarbans have been multifaceted. Conservation organizations work tirelessly to raise awareness among local communities about the importance of tiger conservation and safe practices in the forest. Education initiatives aim to equip villagers with the knowledge and skills needed to coexist peacefully with these magnificent predators. In addition to community outreach, authorities employ various strategies to prevent tiger attacks. This includes the construction of elevated walkways and watchtowers to allow safe passage through tiger territory, as well as the relocation of problematic tigers to remote areas away from human settlements. Despite these efforts, the challenge of managing man-eating tigers persists. The complex interplay of environmental, social, and economic factors makes finding a solution to this problem incredibly challenging. However, there is hope that by working together, conservationists, governments, and local communities can find sustainable ways to protect both people and tigers in the Sundarbans.

In conclusion, the man-eating tigers of the Sundarbans represent a complex and pressing issue at the intersection of conservation and human-wildlife conflict. As human activities continue to encroach upon tiger habitat, finding effective strategies to mitigate conflicts and protect both people and wildlife becomes increasingly urgent. Only through collaboration and innovation can we hope to ensure the survival of these magnificent animals while safeguarding the lives and livelihoods of those who call the Sundarbans home.

# *Balancing Act: Rhinos and Human Interaction in Assam*

BY INDRANI THAKUR  
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In the lush landscapes of Assam, where the mighty Brahmaputra River winds its way through dense forests and sprawling grasslands, a delicate dance unfolds between humans and one of the world's most magnificent creatures: the Indian rhinoceros. Assam is home to the largest population of Indian rhinoceroses, also known as the greater one-horned rhinoceros, in the world. Kaziranga National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, serves as a stronghold for these endangered animals, offering them refuge from the threats of poaching and habitat loss. However, the proximity of human settlements to rhino habitats presents a complex set of issues that demand careful management and innovative solutions.

One of the primary challenges facing rhino conservation efforts in Assam is human-wildlife conflict. As rhino populations expand and their natural habitats shrink due to agricultural encroachment and development projects, confrontations between humans and rhinos have become more frequent. Rhinos, often wandering beyond the boundaries of protected areas in search of food and space, sometimes find themselves in conflict with farmers whose crops they trample and devour.

To address this issue, various measures have been implemented, including the erection of physical barriers such as fences and trenches to deter rhinos from straying into farmland. Additionally, compensation schemes have been put in place to reimburse farmers for crop damage caused by wildlife, thereby reducing retaliatory killings of rhinos. Despite these efforts, conflicts persist, highlighting the need for holistic approaches that consider both the needs of local communities and the imperatives of wildlife conservation. Community-based initiatives, such as the involvement of local villagers in rhino monitoring and anti-poaching patrols, have proven effective in fostering a sense of ownership and stewardship among residents, thereby fostering greater tolerance towards rhinos. Furthermore, ecotourism has emerged as a promising avenue for promoting coexistence between humans and rhinos. By providing alternative livelihood opportunities for communities living near protected areas, ecotourism not only generates revenue but also fosters a sense of pride and responsibility in conserving the natural heritage of the region and offers visitors the chance to witness these majestic animals in their natural habitat, fostering appreciation and supports conservation efforts. However, challenges remain. Poaching continues to pose a significant threat to rhino populations, driven by demand for rhino horn in illegal wildlife markets. Despite stringent anti-poaching measures, including increased surveillance and enforcement, the lure of quick profits persists, fueled by the belief in the medicinal properties of rhino horn in traditional medicine. In addition to poaching, habitat loss and fragmentation continue to degrade rhino habitats, further exacerbating human-wildlife conflicts.

In conclusion, the relationship between humans and rhinos in Assam is multifaceted, characterized by a delicate balance between conservation and human development. While challenges abound, there is cause for hope in the collaborative efforts of governments, NGOs, local communities, and conservationists to protect these iconic creatures and their habitats for generations to come. Through innovative approaches that prioritize coexistence and sustainability, we can ensure that Assam remains a sanctuary for both humans and rhinos alike.



# Tribes of India and Their Interactions with Animals

BY VEDANT KHOKRALE  
(TYBSC ZOOLOGY)



India with its diverse landscape and rich cultural tapestry, is home to a multitude of indigenous tribes whose lives are deeply intertwined with the natural world. For centuries, these tribes have maintained a symbiotic relationship with the animals that inhabit their surroundings, relying on them for sustenance, spiritual guidance, and cultural identity. From the dense forests of Northeast India to the arid deserts of Rajasthan, these tribes have adapted to a wide range of environments, forging deep connections with the animals that inhabit their surroundings.

The Bishnois of Rajasthan, for example, are renowned for their reverence for wildlife. They follow the principles of environmental conservation laid down by their founder, Guru Jambheshwar, which include a strict prohibition against harming animals or cutting down trees. The Bishnois' commitment to protecting wildlife has earned them the title of "India's First Conservationists." Similarly, the Gond tribe of central India has a deep spiritual connection with nature, including the animals they encounter in their forests. Many Gond myths and folklore revolve around animals, portraying them as divine beings with whom humans share a sacred bond. This reverence for nature permeates every aspect of Gond life, from their rituals and ceremonies to their traditional art forms. For tribes like the Santhal and Baiga, who traditionally practiced hunting and gathering, animals played a vital role in their survival and cultural identity. These tribes possess an intimate knowledge of their local ecosystems, passed down through generations, which informs their hunting practices and resource management strategies.

However, it is essential to note that for many tribal communities, hunting is not merely a means of sustenance but also a deeply spiritual activity. Rituals and ceremonies are performed to honor the spirits of the animals they hunt, seeking their blessings for a successful hunt and expressing gratitude for the gift of life. Despite their deep respect for nature, tribal communities across India are facing increasing pressures from modernization, deforestation, and encroachment on their traditional lands. These challenges not only threaten the livelihoods of these communities but also disrupt the delicate balance between humans and wildlife. In some cases, conflicts arise between tribes and conservation authorities over land use and resource management. Efforts to establish protected areas and wildlife sanctuaries can inadvertently marginalize tribal communities, depriving them of their ancestral lands and traditional ways of life.



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# Jim Corbett - Field Report

BY SUBIKSHA YADAV  
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Jim Corbett National Park is one of the most exquisite pieces of beauty in the world, located in the Nainital district of Uttarakhand. Being one of the oldest National Park, the park is home to a huge number of tiger population, and also being the first to implement Project Tiger in the country. It has been named after the legendary 'James Edward Corbett', who was renowned for his skills in tracking, a firm believer of wildlife conservation, hunter, author and naturalist.

We as TY.B.Sc Zoology students along with the faculty members went to Jim Corbett National Park as a part of our excursion trip from 8th January to 13th January with the objective to witness a tremendous learning experience. Truly, a perfect example of the unscathed natural beauty with sheer greenery, hills, grasslands, lakes and what not!

Our very first visit was the visit to Dhikala Zone by a canter safari. This beautiful zone has the most picturesque landscape with Sal forests, river beds, grasslands supporting a paradise of diverse flora and fauna. On entering this zone we were welcomed by termite hills, we spotted Sambar deers, we could see pugmarks of tiger just from the side of the canter, and also heard the call of barking deers. The prime attraction here was the Brown fish owls that we saw sitting on top of a tree, having prominent ear tufts and rufous brown upperparts with a plain face, and bright yellow eyes. On coming back, we saw 3 wild boars coming behind each other.

The very same day we proceeded to the Birjani zone, and this time it was a gypsy ride! Tiger sighting is often reported by the safari tourists here. This zone has a mesmerizing landscape with dense Sal Forest and plenty of waterholes, large grass fields known as Chauras all together making it one of the best zones after Dhikala Zone. We spotted the Stork-billed kingfisher with a large scarlet bill, a Blue whistling thrush that was dark violet blue with shiny spangling on the tips of the body, woodpecker, several jungle fowls, serpent eagle, flame-back woodpecker, also spotted a tree with fresh claw marks.

The next day was a visit to Jhirna zone, we entered the zone from the Dhela gate where we saw some beautiful peahens as

if waiting there just to give us a warm welcome! The zone has a spectacular view with large grasslands (Chauras) making it one of the favourite places for elephants, deers, nilgai and chitals here. We spotted Blue whistling thrush, Rhesus macaque, Brown headed Barbet Brahmini starling, Black drongo.



We had a visit to the famous Garjia temple on the outskirts of the park which is regarded as very sacred by the locals. It is one of the very old temples in India, situated over a giant rock in Kosi River, dedicated to Goddess Garjija Devi. On the last day, early morning we set for birding session and witnessed a wide range of birds.

Overall, it was truly a wonderful excursion and a great learning experience. We explored various trails of the park and sighted different species of animals. We heard an alarm call of the Sambar deer and as we tried to get into the direction of the call we stumbled upon the pugmarks of a Tiger! And ofcourse how can one miss on the pictures that we took of Corbett which was equally rewarding in terms of capturing each and every moment. And above all, I cannot express how happy it makes me feel while writing this enlightening experience which was truly magnificent. We finally left Corbett with our hearts and cameras full!!

# PHOTO GALLERY



Greater orange white tip  
caterpillar

BY VEDANT KHOKRALE  
(TYBSC ZOOLOGY)



Tawny fishowl

BY VEDANT KHOKRALE  
(TYBSC ZOOLOGY)



Common tiger butterfly

BY VAISHNAVI NAIR  
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