

PENCH TIGER RESERVE, MADHYA PRADESH

February 2019 activity report

Team:

Conservation Officer – Sumit Kumar Kar

Field Assistant – Niranjan Hinge (Turia cluster)

Field Assistant– Kamlesh Pawar (Khamarpani cluster)

Major highlights of the month

- Awareness meetings on forest fires attended by 26 villagers
- Two shramdhaan activities organised to dig soak pit and de-silt percolation tank
- World Wetland Day on 2nd February and Global Recycling Day on 18th February celebrated.
- Two nature trails and bird-watching sessions
- Birdbath preparation and installation
- Education programme at 10 schools attended by 262 students
- Film show program attended by 338 students
- Selection of 10 unemployed youths for driving training
- One unemployed youth placed in a local job
- Training session on cooking organised for women’s SHG at Turiya
- Mobile Health service camps at 6 villages treating 157 patients

Conservation Action and Awareness

Sr. no.	Date	Village / Place	Activity	Participants
1.	Feb 14	Durgapur	De-silting of percolation pit	5
2.	Feb 18	Khamba	Anti-plastic drive	5
3.	Feb 2	Potiya	World Wetland Day celebration	33
4.	Feb 18	Turiya	Global Recycling Day celebration	26
5.	Feb 15	Khamba	Nature trail	09
6.	Feb 9	Turiya	Biogas unit repaired	02
7.	Feb 11	Turiya	Biogas repaired	02
8.	Feb 27	Satosha	Awareness meeting on forest fires	12
9.	Feb 28	Turiya	Bird bath installation	02
10.	Feb 12	Thuyepani	Soak pit construction	07
11.	Feb 02	Chirrewani	Compost pit	04
12.	Feb 07	Kundai	Compost pit	05
12.	Feb 24	Doodhgaon	Nature trail	11
13.	Feb 17	Khamarpani	Bird bath installation	3
14.	Feb 25	Thuyepani	Bird bath installation	40
15.	Feb 26	Thuyepani	Awareness meeting on forest fires	14
16.	Feb 28	Kundai	Meeting to discuss stall feeding for	4

			livestock	
17	Feb 17	Kundai	LPG registration	5
18	Feb 19	Bisenpur	LPG registration	5
Total Participants				194

Forest fire in a deciduous forest with plenty of teak trees, as in Pench Tiger Reserve, can result in devastating consequences for the forest and all the animals in it. The recent forest fire at Bandipur Tiger Reserve in Karnataka state can be considered as an example of how damaging forest fire could be and highlighted the need to be prepared for such an event.

With a view to avoid such tragedy, meetings on forest fires were organised by Niranjan and Kamlesh at Satosha and Thuyepani on 27th and 26th February respectively.

The agenda of the meetings was to increase awareness on the various causes of forest fires and their impact. Various measures to prevent such fires were also discussed. Volunteer groups were formed to assist the Forest Department in fire-fighting operations if required.



Meeting on forest fires at Satosha (left) and Thuyepani (right)

February 2 is celebrated as World Wetland Day to celebrate the adoption of the Convention on Wetlands on February 2, 1971 in the Iranian city of Ramsar. One of the key findings of the Ramsar Global Outlook Report published recently is that wetlands are under far greater threat than forests.

Wetlands in the vicinity of forests provide drinking water to wildlife and humans and help in waste management as well. In order to explain the importance of wetlands, a nature trail and classroom lecture program was organised at Potiya Government Middle School.



Potiya –Students on a nature trail to a lake

On February 12, Kamlesh assembled a group of volunteers at Thuyepani to construct a soak pit. Kamlesh had explained to the villagers the concept of groundwater recharge and how soak pit construction can help in faster percolation of waste water and reduce the spread of water borne insect vectors. The soak pit was constructed near a hand pump used for drawing water for drinking.



Thuyepani –Volunteers dig a soak pit

On February 14, Niranjana organized a shramdhaan programme to de-silt a percolation tank in Durgapur village. Five villagers volunteered for the activity along with our team. Due to silt accumulation, the waste water from the hand pump was not able to percolate and was stagnating.

Niranjana had earlier explained to the villagers the importance of cleanliness and how water stagnation could create mosquito problem. The villagers cleared the area of weeds and cleaned the soak pit from which the excess water from the hand pump operations, mostly grey water, now percolates into the ground effectively without overflowing.



Durgapur – De-silting of percolation tank next to a hand pump

With the arrival of summer, water availability for birds reduces. In order to involve students in conservation of avifauna, our team organised bird bath making in villages of buffer region. On February 18, Niranjana held an activity at Turiya Middle School to make bird baths out of used plastic bottles. Bird bath making from clayware was undertaken by

Kamlesh at Khamarpani and Thuyepani. The bird baths were installed by the students who also volunteered to regularly fill these water baths through the summer.



Khamarpani–Kamlesh with students while making a bird bath (left), after installation



*Turiya – Niranjan shows students how to make bird baths from used plastic bottles (left)
Installation of bird bath by a farmer (right)*

LPG is a cooking fuel which reduces the need of firewood for cooking purpose, convenient to use and also improves indoor air quality. The Government of India, through the Ujjwala Scheme, is providing free LPG connection to women of below poverty level (BPL) households.

Satpuda Foundation has been connecting the needy families with the nearest LPG distributor so they can avail the benefits of the scheme and reduce their firewood demand. During the month of February, Kamlesh aided in filling forms and submission of documents of ten households of Kundai and Bisenpur villages.

Abundant cow dung in rural India is tapped via biogas plants to convert the organic material into biogas which mainly consists of methane. Biogas is a sustainable form of energy which is used mainly for cooking purposes, reducing the need for fire wood and thereby reducing pressure on forests. Biogas is produced from slurry of cow dung through anaerobic decomposition. Satpuda Foundation has been undertaking repair of

faulty biogas production units and stoves. During the month of February, Niranjan repaired a faulty unit at Turia.



*Turiya – Niranjan undertaking repair of a faulty biogas stove (left)
Stove after being repaired (right)*

Plastic pollution is creating a menace all around. With availability of plastic packing in numerous products, the rise of plastic waste is significant. The plastic litter not only makes the surroundings look dirty, it is often mistaken by herbivores as a food source. This results in death in some instances due to blockage of digestive tract. Plastic waste often finds its way into water and results in water pollution. Satpuda Foundation organises anti-plastic programmes in which volunteers help in gathering plastic waste and dispose of it properly. During the month of February, Niranjan organised an anti-plastic drive on Feb 18 in Khamba village.



Khamba – Anti-plastic drive by volunteers

On February 24, Kamlesh organized a nature trail for students of Doodhgaon Middle School. During the nature trail, Kamlesh spoke about the various birds found in the vicinity of the village and their role in the ecosystem. Kamlesh also explained the utility of various plant and insect species found in the forest. Niranjan organised a similar trail on February 15 in Khamba village.



Students on a nature trail in Dudhgaon (left) and Khamba (right)

Grazing in the forests by livestock is an issue which affects wild herbivores and has the potential to lead to human-wildlife conflict. In order to address the issue, Satpuda Foundation is motivating farmers to adopt stall feeding practices. High yield cattle with stall feeding practices and proper fodder management techniques can help reduce grazing pressure on forests and supplement the income of cattle owners.

During February, our team met various farmers to identify those who could be motivated and demonstrated to them the benefits of stall feeding.

Mr. Jagdish Gohte of Kundai village was identified as one of the resource persons to train other farmers. He was identified by Kamlesh as a progressive farmer cultivating Napier grass (a perennial tropical forage crop) on his plot for stall feeding purposes. He would be assisting us in coming months in providing technical support and would be providing samples of Napier grass to all interested farmers.



Kundai – Mr Jagdish Gohte at his farm showing Napier grass used in stall feeding

Excess use of chemical-based fertilizers has led to dropping farm yields and has turned many farm lands barren. Satpuda Foundation has been working to address this issue through the construction of compost pit. Composting recycles various organic materials otherwise regarded as waste products and produces a soil conditioner (*compost*). Compost is rich in nutrients. It is used, for example, in kitchen gardens, horticulture, and

organic farming, thus completing the nutrient recycling process. Kamlesh organised the construction of two compost pits at Chirrewani and Kundai with the aid of volunteers from the villagers during February.



Chirrewani – Volunteers construct compost pit

Environment Education

In the month of February, a total of ten school education programs were held by Niranjana, Kamlesh and Sumit in which students were given lectures on a wide range of topics such as pollution, man-animal conflict, biodiversity conservation and other issues related to nature conservation. A total of 262 students were addressed through these programs.

School Education Programs

Sr. No.	Date	School	Village	Number of students
1.	Feb8	Govt. Middle School	Aamajhiri	29
2.	Feb 9	Govt. Middle School	Turiya	33
3.	Feb 25	Govt. Primary School	Potiya	21
4.	Feb 26	Govt. Primary School	Satosha	36
5.	Feb 03	Govt. Middle School	Thuyepani	28
6.	Feb 04	Govt. Middle School	Deori	34
7.	Feb 06	Govt. Middle School	Sauri	26
8.	Feb 08	Govt. Middle School	Mohgaon	12
9.	Feb 10	Govt. Middle School	Pulpuldoh	23
10.	Feb 14	Govt. Middle School	Chirrewani	20
Total participants				262



Potiya - Niranjan conducts environment education program (left)
Chirrewani – Kamlesh addressing students at an environment education program (right)

During February, we organised film shows in which 338 students from six schools participated. Documentaries related to various tiger reserves of India, Western Ghats and bird diversity of India were shown to students.

Sr. No.	Date	School	Village	Number of students
1.	Feb 21	Government Middle School	Thuyepani	70
2.		Government Primary School	Chirrewani	65
3.		Government Middle School	Sauri	54
4.	Feb 22	Government Middle School	Kundai	40
5.		Government Middle School	Mohgaon	20
6.	Feb 23	Government Primary School	Marjatpur	25
7.		Government Primary School	Pulpuldoh	64
Total participants				338



Middle school students watching a wildlife documentary at Sauri (left)
Briefing showing documentary at Pulpuldoh (right)

Satpuda Foundation has been conducting IT education program for students free of cost since the year 2013. Basic computer skills are taught to the students to make them feel comfortable with the technology and improve their IT skills. During February, a computer awareness and hands-on practice session was held at Kohoka Middle School on 9th February in which a total of 16 students were involved.



Students trying their skills on a computer during computer awareness session at Kohoka

Nature games

Nature games are a critical part of our education programme as they impart important conservation-related messages through simple, interesting games. They are more interactive than traditional lectures and are more effective in capturing the attention of young minds. During the month of February, three such nature games were organised.

SL no	Date	Village/Location	No of Participants
1	15 th Feb	Khamba	09
2	5 th Feb	Doodhgaon	08
3	9 th Feb	Thuyepani	12
Total Participants			29



Nature game in progress at Khamba (left) and Thuyepani (right)

Employment Cell

Satpuda Foundation has been assisting local youths in obtaining employment by connecting them to potential recruiters. During the month of February, one youth from Gorakhpur was placed at the Arnyaani Pench Resort as a waiter with our assistance.

Sr. No.	Name	Village	Age	Qual.	Job	Organisation	Salary (Rs. Per month)
1.	Manish Takre	Gorakhpur	20	12 th pass	Waiter	Arnyaani Pench Resort	5000



Turiya - Mr Manish at his new job in a resort

One of the activities related to employment at the foundation is supporting Self Help Groups (SHG) consisting of women for starting and sustaining new ventures which can give them adequate financial returns. A women's SHG in Turia started a canteen in December, with our support and we have been mentoring the members in sustaining and improving their venture.

In February, we organised a training program to improve the members' cooking skills with the help of Mr. Naveen Thapa, a local chef. The training program was oriented towards providing a first-hand training in salad making, serving to guests and improving standards of cooking.



Turiya- Member of Shristhi SHG at a cooking training session

Separately, Kamlesh organised a preliminary meeting with SHG members of Kundai village on 27th February to discuss training of members and new business ideas for implementation.



Turiya- Members of Shristhi SHG discuss the revenue generation from their new shop

During the month of February, Kamlesh selected 10 unemployed youths of buffer zone villages around Khamarpani for a commercial driving training programme at Ashok Leyland Institute. The training of the youths will be funded by the Panchayat and Forest Department. The list off the youths has been submitted to the Forest Department.

Mobile Health Service (MHS)

During February, 157 patients were treated through our free medical camps in the Turiya cluster.

Sr. no.	Date	Village	No. of Patients
1	Feb 5	Potiya	46
2.		Durgapur	13
3.	Feb 6	Jamuntola	21
4.		Aamajhiri	35
5.	Feb 7	Satosha	16
6.		Turiya	26
Total Patients			157



Dr. Khode treats patients at free medical camp at Durgapur (left) and Jamuntola (right)

Research

A research project to understand the awareness level of farmers in the buffer region was undertaken by us. A questionnaire was prepared which included basic information regarding agriculture, knowledge about impact of fertilizers and pesticides on environment as well as crop raiding and significance of insects and birds in agriculture. The project is intended to study the awareness level among farmers and to identify areas which could be improved through training. The study was launched as a pilot project at Potiya village.



Interview with a farmer of Potiya village