

SATPUDA



FOUNDATION



**Defending the
Highlands
of
Central India**

The Satpura mountain range in Central India is the largest contiguous tiger habitat in the world and as such is crucial for the big cat's continued survival into and beyond the 21st Century. The Satpuras are not only home to the majestic tiger, but also a host of other endangered species like the Forest Owlet, otter, pangolin, chinkara and mouse deer. Its grasslands are home to the beautiful barasingha, while giant squirrels inhabit the canopy of its moist deciduous forests.

The forests of the Satpuras need to be protected for their contribution to augmenting India's supply of that most precious of resources – water. The Satpuras give birth to important rivers such as the Wardha, Tapi, Purna, Denwa, Tawa and Narmada, which sustain millions of Indians.

The entire Satpura landscape includes 13 Protected Areas (PAs) covering approximately 6,500 sq. km. These PAs are connected by vital wildlife

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The Satpura ranges, one of the largest continuous tiger habitats in India.

corridors and the inclusion of these takes the range's contiguous forest cover to around 10,000 sq. km. The famous tiger reserves of Melghat and Pench in Maharashtra and Pench, Bori-Satpura and Kanha (partly) in Madhya Pradesh all lie within the Satpuras.

The origins of the Satpuda Foundation

Despite its significance as a tiger habitat, the Satpura region has received little attention and support from both NGOs and the government. As a result, the continuity of tiger habitat is increasingly under threat from development and infrastructure projects, logging, poaching and the wildlife trade. There is an urgent need for ground surveys and scientific assessments to guide conservation action aimed at maintaining the viability of existing tiger habitat and even expanding them. The Satpuda Foundation has thus been established to highlight the biodiversity of the Central Indian Highlands (i.e. the Satpuda mountain range), educate different sections of the society about its importance and to tackle threats to the area's forests and wildlife through well-coordinated research oriented conservation actions. This seems to be the only way to protect this region, the world's largest contiguous tiger habitat.

The Satpuda Foundation was thus formed with the specific aim of protecting wildlife, conducting research to support conservation action and educating sections of the society about the short and long term benefits of protecting the world's largest tiger habitat.

Satpuda Foundation's key strategy has been to establish a force of young, educated, trained and dedicated conservationists at different regional nodes throughout the Satpura range. This 'Green Force' aims to educate local youngsters, help conduct projects and initiate conservation action.



Mahua collection in Melghat (above) and the Gavilgarh fort (below).



Poaching and felling are serious threats.



Among the Satpuda Foundation's key programmes are:

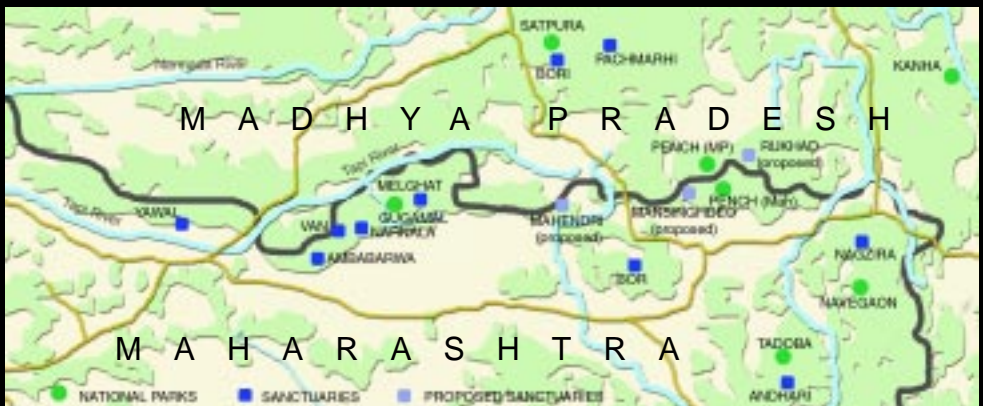
- Imparting conservation education to young naturalists.
- Imparting anti-poaching training to forest and wildlife wing staff and other select individuals.
- Conducting anti-poaching operations to counter the wildlife trade in central India.
- Conducting workshops for NGOs, enforcement authorities and government agencies.
- Conducting detailed field investigations in areas that are considered particularly important for the tiger.
- Assisting those villagers who are seeking rehabilitation from PAs.
- Assessing the environmental impacts of developmental projects like dams, mines, etc.
- Undertaking research programmes to guide wildlife conservation policies.
- Research and conservation programmes for specific threatened species in the Satpuras, such as the Forest Spotted Owlet.
- Undertaking community conservation programmes, initially around PAs and at a later stage in the corridors between PAs.



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Nature camps conducted by SF focus on the role all creatures, including the Forest Owlet play in a natural ecosystem.

The Satpuda Foundation is at the moment focussing on major PAs such as Melghat, Bori-Satpura, Pench (Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra) and



Kanha, as well as the corridors that maintain the genetic continuity of tigers and other large fauna between them. SF also conducts activities in adjoining PAs in Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Chattisgarh.

With the generous help of donors and patrons, Satpuda Foundation has been able to take up a range of activities:

“Green Force Donors”, by paying Rs. 250 or Rs. 500, have funded Satpuda Foundation’s day to day conservation campaigns, while “Green Force Patrons” have helped build a corpus fund of Rs. 50,000 in last three years, by paying Rs. 10,000 or more.

Balachandran Anti-poaching fund for Melghat.

On March 21, 2004, World Forestry Day, SF donated 30 bicycles and a kit containing a torch, water bag, sweater and shoes to 80 lower rung forest staff (chaukidars, trackers and forest guards) in the Melghat Tiger Reserve. The material was given away by the Additional Chief Secretary, Government of Maharashtra. This package, worth Rs. 1,04,500 was funded by Mr. R. Balachandran and has helped boost the morale of the staff and will enable them to carry out forest and wildlife protection work more efficiently.



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Wildlife Conservation Trust and Satpuda Foundation working in TATR

The Wildlife Conservation Trust (WCT) and SF started working together in the Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve (TATR) from March 2004. Local SF volunteers kept a constant watch on happenings in and around the park, informing conservationists in Amravati, Nagpur and Mumbai. Issues such as massive fires, illegal grazing and the threat of poaching by gangs from Katni in Madhya Pradesh came to light in this manner, and SF and WCT were able to take steps to rectify the situation.

The report produced on the proposed resettlement of three villages (first phase) from TATR has proved to be very useful for both organisations as well as the agencies implementing the resettlement. As a result



gaps in the resettlement process were identified and individuals from WCT and SF were able to pursue the matter through the office of the Governor and Additional Chief Secretary and ensure that required action was taken and certain notifications issued.

“Vasanta Iyer Tiger Conservation Fund” for Yawal Sanctuary

Yawal wildlife sanctuary is one of the most neglected tiger habitats in the Satpura mountains. It is situated in the western part of the Satpura mountain and located in Jalgaon district of north Maharashtra, bordering the Khargaon district of Madhya Pradesh.

A team from SF visited Yawal in February 2004 and brought to light issues concerning the protection of the sanctuary, prime among them being encroachment on forest land. A conservation action report was prepared and a package of methods to assist the sanctuary was drawn up, consisting of material assistance, management and conservation measures as well as research inputs.

SF donated six tents and 20 sleeping bags to forest staff for setting up six protection camps, from the ‘Vasanta Iyer Tiger Conservation Fund’. With funds provided for anti-poaching programmes by Mr. Balachandran, SF also provided uniforms, shoes, caps and torches for 15 chaukidars deployed to stop massive illicit tree felling.

Harrier Communication Fund

Mr. Amit Badiyani , vice-President of SF and Executive Director of Harrier Systems Pvt. Ltd. has sponsored expenses for the organisation’s office administration, communications and website.

Vulture Conservation Programme

In 2003, SF sought to assist a local NGO based near Navegaon National Park which had started feeding a breeding colony of vultures nesting nearby. This effort has seen the population of Long-billed and White-backed Vultures increase in and around Navegaon. The effort is led by Mr. Madhavrao Patil, together with his son and grandson. In response to SF’s appeal for funds to support the effort, Rs. 3000/- was received from two donors in 2003. However,

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in January 2005, SF received Rs. 10,000/- from Mr. Dinesh Kothari, which will go a long way in ensuring a sustained food supply to these endangered birds.

Wild buffalo survey, Gadchiroli

Acting on unconfirmed reports of wild buffalo in Maharashtra's Gadchiroli district, Satpuda Foundation members undertook a survey in June 2002 which resulted in the evidence being gathered that wild buffalos do inhabit the forests of Sironcha bordering the Indravati river. A proposal was prepared to declare the 400 sq. km. Kopela-Kolamarkha sanctuary, which would protect not only the wild buffalo and its habitat but also other species such as the tiger, leopard, giant squirrel and mouse deer. This protection is essential given the critical status of the central Indian wild buffalo.

Sanctuary Asia-supported education programme in Tadoba, Pench and Melghat.

Sanctuary Asia, a leading wildlife magazine, through its "Kids for Tigers" nature education programme, helped SF conduct wildlife awareness activities in Pench, Tadoba and Melghat Tiger Reserve, along with the three cities of Chandrapur, Nagpur and Amravati. SF has run this programme in 30 schools in Nagpur from 2002 to 2005 and has also conducted the programme in 17 villages in the Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve, 12 in the Melghat Tiger Reserve and for the forest staff in Pench Tiger Reserve.

Sandalwood scandal exposed

A massive sandalwood oil extraction scam in central India has been exposed by the Satpuda Foundation team. Over the past three or four years, there have been scattered



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reports (and rumours) of illicit sandalwood felling (and oil extraction) in many parts of Maharashtra, including from Protected Areas such as Melghat, Gautala and Chaprala. Due to investigations by SF, it came to light that there are 42 oil extracting units in Maharashtra which are utilising illegal sandalwood from traders.

Conservation Assistance to the Maharashtra Forest Department

April 2002: SF also helped the Pench Tiger Reserve staff with the removal of encroachments from Totladoh.

May 2002: Helped wildlife staff to remove encroachments from Sukali in the Bor wildlife Sanctuary.

Jan 2003: SF helped to set up three bio-gas plants in the Bori village, which was relocated from the Melghat Tiger Reserve to the Akot tahsil.

For the continued success and further growth of Satpuda Foundation's efforts in Central India, we require public support and voluntary donations. Get involved. Undertake simple conservation action in your neighbourhood. Contact the local forest department to see how you can help protect India's wildlife.

Indian citizens who would like to contribute financially to Satpuda Foundation's work can become 'Green Force Donors' by paying Rs. 250 or Rs. 500 and 'Green Force Patrons' by paying Rs. 10,000 or more. Satpuda Foundation is a non-profit NGO registered under Society's Registration Act 1860 and also under FCRA 1976 (Reg.No.083740068). Please send your donations by demand draft or cheque to:

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