Annual Park & Lodge Update
May 2019

Tigers occupied centre-stage in public discourse concerning wildlife conservation this past year. Experts say most tiger reserves in India have reached their carrying capacities, posing fresh challenges to the big cats’ dispersals and territorial conflicts. News from the ground seems to confirm this. Last November, conservationists around the world passionately debated the state-sanctioned killing of tigress Avni, who is said to have fatally attacked 13 villagers. For a short period of time in February, Gujarat became the land of the three big cats – Asiatic lions, leopards and Bengal tigers. A male adult tiger known to have left Madhya Pradesh’s Ratapani trekked 300km for two years completely undetected only to be photographed entering Gujarat. As forest officials excitedly awaited its arrival at Gir, the tiger breathed its last due to starvation a few days after its sighting. Meanwhile, unusual incidents of cannibalism among tigers have been reported from Kanha’s forests this season, forcing authorities to conduct a study into it.

Taking forward the belief that well-managed nature tourism in the sub-continent is the best way to save its forests, their iconic tigers and extraordinary biodiversity, TOFTigers once again celebrated the ‘best of the best in nature tourism’ at the 5th TOFTigers Wildlife Tourism Awards held last September in New Delhi. The theme of the awards was Inclusive Conservation – People and Wildlife. As India votes in another parliamentary election, TOFTigers hopes inclusive conservation remains a priority area for the region’s political leaders as well.
INDIA

Assam
Kaziranga National Park

Conservationists hailed the Supreme Court’s recent decision to ban mining and construction activities along the Kaziranga National Park & Tiger Reserve, and in the catchment area of the rivers originating in the Karbi Anglong Hills. With fewer incidents of poaching of the one-horned rhino being reported in recent years, there are 2,413 of them left in this UNESCO world heritage site. Waterfowl stole the show last year during a baseline survey of the bird populations in the wetlands that recorded about 80 species; including many rare ones like red-headed vulture, endangered Pallas’s fish eagle, greater adjutant stork and swamp francolin. This year’s sightings include rhinos, Royal Bengal tigers, elephants, eastern swamp deer, wild water buffalo and hoolock gibbons.

Manas Tiger Reserve

Home to 61 species of mammals and more than 20 endangered species on last count, this reserve is a crucial part of the international corridor for elephant migration between Indian and Bhutan. Earlier this year, a pair of hand-raised rhinos that were rescued during the 2016 floods were translocated from Kaziranga to Manas. Safari-goers have also been enthusiastically keeping track and sharing photos of a melanistic leopard recently spotted in the park. The other visual treats for tourists have been the one-horned rhinos, wild elephants, water buffalos and swamp deer.

For more information, write to info@toftigers.org
Bandipur Tiger Reserve remained closed for a while earlier this year due to a five-day fire that raged through the forests, destroying more than 15,400 acres. Arson stemming from tensions between forest-dwellers and park authorities is said to be the source of the fire; this was compounded by strong winds, a failed monsoon and an invasion of the weed lantana camara that turns forests into tinderboxes when dry. Though not many large animals were found dead, birds and reptiles have suffered. With recent rains giving a fresh lease of life to the ravaged forests, park authorities have embarked on a mission to sow 25 tonnes of bamboo, grass and other seeds with a hope to revive the lost vegetation. This past year, tourists spotted tigers, elephants and leopards near watering holes and lakes outside of the park’s core area on different occasions. Bandipur is also home to more than 200 species of birds.

Lodge News

Dhole’s Den

Beginning this season, Dhole’s Den has introduced a tea estate drive for guests. The drive will take them to various vantage points from where they can observe Bandipur’s birds and take in its landscape.

The farms at Dhole’s Den now supply its kitchen with fresh salad vegetables and even broccoli, helping them cut down on trips to the market and in turn, their carbon footprint. Going that extra mile for the community, the lodge continues to support the local school in various capacities. They organise a regular waste management programme at the school, during which students collect, segregate and safely dispose of garbage. Folks from Dhole’s Den will once again undertake painting work in the park’s anti-poaching camps this year. They have also provided vehicular support to the forest department. For bookings, write to them at manager@dholesden.com

For more information, write to info@toftigers.org www.toftigers.org
Coorg Valley

Coorg’s sweet-smelling coffee plantations and spice gardens attract a large number of tourists seeking laidback holidays. Bison, elephants, tigers, wild pigs, spotted deer, sambar, barking deer and langurs are all spotted here. With an increase in tourist footfall, lodges in the region have persisted on with efforts educate tourists in captive centres on means to reduce the generation of plastic waste. Awareness programmes on reducing plastic waste are conducted in schools and colleges as well.

Lodge News

Green Valley Resort, Coorg

Green Valley Resort has planned a season packed with various activities – for guests and the local community. Besides going on jungle safaris, travellers can now spend time indulging in some outdoor rope activities being set up at the lodge. The folk at Green Valley also intend to put up bee-keeping boxes that can be adopted by guests. They have initiated several community programmes to help the park’s tribal population supplement their current income. For ease of access, the public road entry to the resort will soon be metalled. To book your next trip, contact simha.prime@gmail.com

Evolve Back, Kabini

Evolve Back (formerly Orange County) has undergone a facelift this past year. To begin with, they have introduced the ‘Pool Reserve’ room category offering a charming hut that comes with an ozonized and temperature-controlled private pool and a unique ‘Star Bed’ to enjoy the clear Kabini night skies. Some of the ‘Jacuzzi Huts’ have been upgraded to ‘Pool Huts’ that come with private pools. A ‘Sun-Downer Deck’ overlooking the Kabini river has been set up. Here, guests can wind down by the fire at sunset with a cocktail in hand. To know more, write to them at info@evolveback.com

For more information, write to info@toftigers.org www.toftigers.org
The Kabini side of the Nagarhole Tiger Reserve has emerged as a top safari zone, all thanks to the bold personalities of the big cats that lurk the forests there. Land and boat safaris give tourists a chance to spot elephants, tigers, leopards, dholes, gaur, spotted deer, bonnet macaques, grey langurs, crocodiles, smooth-coated otters, Indian rock pythons, black naped hare, stripe-necked mongooses, Malabar giant squirrels, Indian flying squirrels and a rich variety of birds. One of India’s three often-sighted black panthers (melanistic leopard) roam these forests.

A thriving population of big cats in the forests is suggestive of a healthy prey base as well. While safaris can be booked through lodges, it is operated entirely by a government-owned company. Private lodge operators have been complaining about the unfair edge given to tourists staying at government-run resorts in the allocation of safari jeeps and buses. They fear it may affect the quality of their guests’ experience and tarnish Nagarhole’s reputation in the long run.

Lodge News

Waterwoods Lodge & Resorts

Situated by the backwaters of the Kabini dam, Waterwoods Lodge and Resort has made a constant effort to introduce initiatives and activities that bring travellers closer to nature. Their fruit orchard is a haven for birdwatchers and their organic gardens supply to the lodge’s kitchen. A pair of wild smooth-coated otters residing in the backwaters near the lodge provide an experience of a lifetime for guests who get to observe these otherwise shy creatures.

A ‘Clean Kabini’ initiative with other resorts is also afoot to rid the backwaters and its banks of fish nets and other waste that endangers wildlife. Waterwoods is the only property involved in aiding snake rescues in the nearby six villages. The rescue team also run campaigns to create awareness about venomous and non-venomous snakes among villagers. The lodge has recently designed an eco-friendly bamboo-holder for glass bottles that guests can carry on their safaris. To plan your next holiday here, contact reservations@waterwoods.in

For more information, write to info@toftigers.org

www.toftigers.org
As floods wreaked havoc across Kerala last August, the Periyar Tiger Reserve too bore the brunt of destruction. Tigers, elephants, peafowl and bison were among the animals found dead in the landslides and flash floods. The state has since recovered from the devastation and tourism is certainly picking up. Elephants, gaurs, sambar deer, dholes, Indian wild dogs, smooth-coated otters and stripe-necked mongooses were all spotted in Periyar this past season.

Thermal sensor cameras have been effectively installed across the park. The long-term impact of the floods on the park’s eco-system is still being studied. A recent study led by the Periyar Tiger Conservation Foundation and the India Dragonfly Society found 80 varieties of dragonfly species after the floods, including eight new species – three of these are possibly entirely new to science itself. A part of the buffer zone is open for boat safaris and other community-based eco-tourism programmes. Availability of tickets for the boat safari is a major issue that tour operators have been concerned about.
Lodge News

Spice Village, Thekkady (New Outstanding PUG eco-rated lodge)

Nestled in Kerala’s spice-scented Thekkady highlands, Spice Village was conceived as a resort built with local materials, native artisans, mountain spirit and traditional wisdom. Wildlife safaris, birding trips, village walks, cultural performances by native communities, bonfires and visits to the interpretation centre are some of the activities organised for guests. The 52 spacious cottages for accommodation here are modelled on the eco-conscious dwellings of the native Manan tribe. Beginning this season, the lodge will organise birdwatching trips to their manmade forests. They also intend to arrange a traditional teacart experience in Thekkady’s mist-covered tea gardens. Guests will be given a chance to learn indigenous culinary skills from the local tribal community. The lodge has brought onboard a new naturalist whose knowledge of the park’s flora and fauna will add much value to safaris. For your next trip, contact spicevillage@cghearth.com

Cardamom County by Xandari (New Quality PUG eco-rated lodge)

Set against the picturesque cloud-hugging cardamom hills of the Periyar reserve, accommodation at Cardamom County reflects the lodge’s pursuit of sustainable eco standards. Its cosy and spacious cottages are constructed along the natural contours of the hillock. Guests can choose from a range of exciting activities like birding, village visits, spice plantation tours, native cultural performances, jeep and boat safaris, and bamboo-rafting during their stay here. To know more, write to reservations@xandari.com

For more information, write to info@toftigers.org
Gujarat
Gir National Park

With conservationists advocating for the translocation of Asiatic lions from the Gir National Park, as many as 25 of these big cats died in a span of two months last September after contracting the deadly canine distemper virus (CDV). There is higher growth in lion population reported outside of the protected areas, adding to the load of already-stretched security staff. Incidents of harassment of lions and illegal ‘lion shows’ have been a source of constant headache for the authorities. However, all is not gloomy in Gir; tourists have reported fantastic sightings of large prides of 14-22 lions in the past year. Moreover, two more safari parks are likely to come up near Ahmedabad and the Statue of Unity in Narmada to accommodate the growing number of lions.

Lodge News
The Fern Gir Forest Resort (New Quality PUG eco-rated lodge)

For a memorable vacation in Sasan Gir, The Fern Gir Forest Resort has 40 well-appointed, air-conditioned villas, suites, cottages and tents inspired by vernacular architecture such that they can perfectly balance the region’s hot summers and chilly winters. Indoor and outdoor games like table tennis, billiards, volleyball, badminton, tug of war, musical chairs, environmental quizzes and drawing sessions are regularly organised here. Riverside trails, bird watching, wildlife movie shows, lion safaris, tree plantation drives and star gazing are some of the other activities the lodge offers. To know more, write to them at res@ferngirforestresort.com

Woods at Sasan Resort and Spa (New Quality PUG eco-rated lodge)

Sitting pretty in an eight-acre orchard of about 300 mango trees in Bhojde village, Woods at Sasan Resort and Spa offers 37 rooms and one villa for accommodation. Guests can choose to indulge in spa treatments, cooking classes, puppet shows, pottery classes, and dining experiences in the nearby village. The lodge organises nature walks, vintage car rides and jungle safaris as well. Local art and culture are promoted through various performances and workshops. Write to them at info@1000island.in

For more information, write to info@toftigers.org
Wildlife enthusiasts around the world bade a tearful farewell to Rajbehraji – Bandhavgarh’s famed queen who is said to have helped greatly in its repopulation – as she roared her last in August 2018. Later that year, locals panicked as a herd of 23 wild elephants entered villages near Sanjay Dubri and destroyed property. The sight of three 11-month-old tiger cubs splashing in a lake deep in the forests brought much joy to safari-goers earlier this year. Much of the past season’s wildlife sightings in Bandhavgarh included tigers, leopards, sloth bears, chinkaras, blue bulls, spotted deer, sambhars, barking deer, jackals, jungle cats, bison and wild dogs. The resident tiger population has increased over the years, and big cats have started venturing out of the jungles in search of their own territory.

Natural sources of water are few in the park as well in the corridors, leaving animals thirsty in the searing summer heat. Park authorities now plan to introduce safaris to the nearby fort, a buffer zone area and more elephant-centric activities.
Lodge News
Bandhav Vilas

Bandhav Vilas is buzzing with activity as they prepare to welcome guests this season. The lodge plans to introduce cycling tours, birdwatching excursions, tribal village tours and activities to promote the region’s local cuisine. It has undergone a minor facelift with a nature-inspired theme depicted in its newly-acquired linens, curtains, sofas, rugs, etc.

Newly-installed net doors and windows have helped reduce electricity consumption. Solar energy is also being harnessed and folk at the lodge are generating awareness on it. To maintain the quality of their services during the tourist season, the lodge has recruited new naturalists; masseurs; and housekeeping, security, reception and kitchen staff.

Not leaving the community out of their efforts, they run educational programmes centred on conservation for school children and awareness drives on the ‘Swach Bharat’ campaign for villagers. They support local youngsters in their efforts to gain profitable employment in the park, hotels and with tour operators. To know more, contact reservations@consortiumhotels.org

Kanha Tiger Reserve

Tourists thronged the Kanha Tiger Reserve last season to spot tigers, leopards, sloth bears, swamp deer, sambhars, northern plain langurs, Indian rock pythons, barking deer, jungle cats, blue bulls, gaurs and wild dogs. Mukki Zone was the favourite among safari-goers. The zone’s dominant male tiger Chhota Munna (T29) continued to steal everyone’s hearts.

Sadly, the Kanha Zone lost three cubs earlier this year, leaving tigress Naina (T76) with only one left in her litter. On the other hand, Neelam’s (T65) cubs have grown up and are looking to mark their own territory. At least two separate incidents of cannibalism between tigers came to light in the park, and is currently being studied. The number of barasingh as and blackbucks has reportedly risen. Quite admirably, the forest department has installed GPS devices on safari vehicles in a bid to monitor their movement, control speed and avoid zone jumping. The forest department has also started a night safari. A nature trail has been started in the Khatiya buffer zone. The limited availability of safari permits has remained a source of worry for tour operators all of last season.

For more information, write to info@toftigers.org www.toftigers.org
Lodge News

Kipling Camp

Kipling Camp has had a year packed with activity to look back at and to prepare for. They recently hosted a six-day ‘Forest Creators’ workshop in collaboration with Afforestt - a team of young experts who specialise in creating natural, maintenance-free native forests.

In the coming year, the lodge plans to hold two such workshops separately targeted at school students and adults. Highlights of the workshop included creation of a small forest in the buffer zone of Kanha using the Miyawaki method, practice of natural methods of soil health restoration, study of the potential native vegetation (PNV) of Kanha, and learnings on how to adapt the Miyawaki method to any geography, climate or soil-type. Kipling Camp has already created two small forests in the past two years, and intends to carry the work forward. The lodge has brought onboard naturalist Jeswin Kingsly D, who has vast experience in animal rescues, wildlife photography and a particular interest in butterflies. For more information, contact info@kiplingcamp.com

Singinawa Jungle Lodge

Singinawa Jungle Lodge has carried forward with a range of initiatives aimed at good travel, community development and conservation this year as well. To begin with, the Singinawa Conservation Foundation funded a ground-breaking study on Diversity Documentation of Reptiles and Anarchids in India (carried out in association with National Centre for Biological Sciences and authored by Zeeshan A Mirza). The study published in several international journals documents the discovery of a new species of fan throated lizard in Kerala, two gecko species from Pachmarhi, scorpion species from Tripura, and a new genus and species of mygalomorph spider in West Bengal. It has also been a season for giving at Singinawa. The foundation distributed socks and gloves to forest guards in Kanha, procured a bus for park authorities, donated solar power generators to two forest department camps and bought furniture, water purifiers and musical instruments for the Bhoorsingh School. They also distributed solar lamps to Baiga tribesmen at Lagma village, where there is no electricity. The foundation has also lent financial support to rescuer Sudarshan Sureshwar’s work in rescuing snakes, generating awareness about them among villagers, and mitigating snake-bites. For bookings, contact bookings@singinawaijunglelodge.com

For more information, write to info@toftigers.org
Chitvan Jungle Lodge (Quality)

Chitvan Jungle Lodge is all set to show guests a glorious time this season. Cycling trips through the forests and villages have been planned. Nature trails have been identified along the Banjaar river and deep into the forests in Bandariya Tola. Guests will also be given a chance to visit nearby native villages and learn about the lives of the local populace while trying their hand at some tribal jewellery-making. An effort to popularise the local cuisine among guests is also underway. To add to guests’ in-house experiences, a new souvenir shop, spa and conference hall have been set up. Just like at their sister concern (Bandhav Vilas), Chitvan Jungle Lodge runs a number of awareness programmes centred on conservation, Swacch Bharat and harnessing solar energy for the local community’s development. For bookings, write to info@chitvan.com

Kanha Jungle Lodge (Quality)

The folk at Kanha Jungle Lodge are celebrating the critical acclaim received by a recent documentary featuring the Sankhala family’s contribution to big cat conservation in Kanha. Premiered at the Sundance Film Festival, Tigerland talks about two conservationists who dedicated their lives to saving tigers – Pavo Fomenko in Russia for Siberian Tigers and Kailash Sankhala (whose son manages the Kanha Jungle Lodge) who was the first director of Project Tiger. The film also introduces you to Jai Bhati, the 13-year-old son of the lodge-owners who has been guiding guests from the age of 5. The movie, directed by Academy Award-winning director Ross Kauffman and produced by Discovery is available on most platforms, and has been well-received worldwide. Contact them at tigerresortsindia@tigersindia.com

Flame of the Forest Safari Lodge

Flame of the Forest Safari Lodge aims to create for guests an intimate nature-centric experience set in a cosy boutique lodge. With a renewed focus on women’s empowerment, Flame of the Forest has founded and housed HATHI GmbH, a social enterprise providing skills training to indigenous women. They currently employ 13 women, out of whom 10 are working in the Mindful-support project. This project reaches out to about 40 villages to provide women with eco-responsible and culturally-sensitive sanitary pads. Besides, the lodge also organizes waste management programmes to involve villagers in the process. Flame of the Forest recently added one more member to their family as Arkapravash Gosh took charge as their newest naturalist. A photojournalist who has worked for Times of India, he has won several awards for his work. To plan your next holiday here, write to them at info@flameoftheforest.in

For more information, write to info@toftigers.org  www.toftigers.org
Tuli Tiger Resort

Tuli Tiger Resort is gearing up for an eventful season. To begin with, they will soon open up a wellness centre focusing on yoga and meditation. They also intend to set up a butterfly garden to give visitors a chance to observe these winged wonders. The lodge will organise trips to the sunset point in Ratnahipath and the waterfall Gidglighogra for those interested. Experienced naturalists Pramod Bopche and Saily Subodh Gokhale have been roped in to enhance guests’ nature experiences. Both Gokhale and Bopche have taken part in and led nature awareness programmes in the park last season. After having brainstormed on means to reduce plastic waste, the team at Tuli Resort now use bamboo to make napkin holders, spoon holders, flower vases and even menu display stands. For more information, contact info@tuligroup.com

Panna Tiger Reserve

Ten years ago, all of the native tigers in Panna had been wiped out. Subsequently, five females and two males were relocated to the reserve with the intention of repopulation. Today, the park director proudly puts the big cats’ estimated number at 47 tigers (including adults, sub-adults and cubs). An additional fifteen tigers are regularly spotted in the buffer zones. Recent visitors to the park have seen several tigers, a tigress and her litter of four, leopards, and a wide variety of birds, among others. Conservationists have expressed concern about the declining vulture population in the reserve, particularly when it is on the rise in the rest of the state. The proposed Ken-Betwa river linking project is likely to result in the submergence of 100 sq km of tiger habitat in the park. Whereas it would benefit the area from an irrigation perspective, the already-stressed territorial demarcations of tigers would increase.
Lodge News

**Tendu Leaf Jungle Resort (New PUG Eco-rated Member)**

Located at a distance of just 500 metres from the Panna Tiger Reserve’s gate, Tendu Leaf Jungle Resort is spread over an area of 12 acres of thick vegetation without earmarked boundaries. The lodge organises wildlife safaris, boating, night safaris, fishing trips, pottery classes, bird watching trails, village walks, bonfires and treks for guests. Twelve spacious cottages adorned with Gond art offer guests a comfortable stay set in serene forests. To book your next trip, write to them at info@tenduleafjungleresort.com

**Pench Tiger Reserve**

Pench has been in the limelight recently for news both good and bad. A hailstorm in the reserve’s buffer zone in early March killed 1,102 birds. Conservationists have raised alarm over the proposed expansion of NH7 that will impact the Pench Tiger Reserve both in Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh. They say the project will destroy the animal corridor between Kanha and Pench, besides affecting the Navegaon-Nagzira Tiger Reserve. Following weeks of intensive searches, forest rangers managed to capture one of Avni’s cubs, who has since been shifted to Pench for rehabilitation. Meanwhile, supermom Collarwali (T15) gave birth to quadruplets, taking her total tally of offspring
Turia Zone has witnessed a predominant increase in its tiger population. Here, tigress Langdi and her four sub-adult cubs can often be seen taking a stroll near Gate No. 1.

The otherwise shy tigress Pardeyo is spotted near the watering hole with her three cubs in the evenings. Barash, a photo-friendly tigress, is seen posing for the cameras near the watering holes in Khursapar. Dholes (wild dogs), Indian grey wolves, gaur, jackals, sambar, Hanuman langurs and rhesus macaques were all spotted in Khursapar and Turia. The park’s seasoned guides say the best time to visit is between February to May for wildlife sightings and from November to March for birdwatching. Viewings are good in buffer and in core areas – so do not worry guests about this.

Lodge News

**Pench Jungle Camp**

Pench Jungle Camp has a trove of plans in store for guests this season. For the slightly adventurous folk, they will organise nature trails, walks in their private eco-park, visits to the potters’ village, birdwatching trips and camera-trap studies. Sundowners and stargazing nights will be arranged for those looking to spend some quiet time.

They have recently hired two new naturalists – Raghuram Rajagopalan and Vishal Sharma – to provide guests with educational safari experiences. They have also started night camping in the lodge’s 37-acre eco-park. Camps will be set up on a raised platform in the middle of the forest. The lodge has also recently installed two cameras in the eco-park to track the more elusive animals. Instilling the spirit of conservation, guests are encouraged to plant trees on the lodge premises. Pench Jungle Camp has introduced solar lanterns and torches to make best possible use of renewable energy. To plan your next trip, write to freedom@penchjunglecamp.com.
The Riverwood Forest Retreats
Riverwood organises jeep safaris, canter, birdwatching trips, photography tours and nature walks that provide guests with an opportunity to see the different animal and bird species living in the forest. They also arrange night safaris to the nearby wolf sanctuary.

The 21 spacious accommodation options come with private gardens and huge windows with picturesque views. Guests can spend a leisurely day browsing books on flora and fauna in the library, play indoor or outdoor games or relax in the lodge’s jungle-facing swimming pool. Riverwood’s recently-opened spa, Vankasa, is ideal for a relaxing massage or spa treatments. Their all-day restaurant serves authentic Madhya Pradesh. For bookings, write to info@riverwoodresorts.com

Satpura Tiger Reserve
Satpura Tiger Reserve has started two drives in the evenings in buffer zones. The night patrol drive with forest guards gives tourists a chance to observe nocturnal animal movements. A boat ride through the Denwa will allow you to catch glimpses of birds gathered here from around the world – stints from the Tundra, bar-headed geese from Tibet and black storks stopping by all the way from Sahara. New areas for buffer zone camping have been opened up in Sehra and Parsapani. Tourists

For more information, write to info@toftigers.org www.toftigers.org
can also now cycle through the buffer zone; cycles are available on rent at the buffer entrance gate. The park has recorded some great sightings this year with sloth bears, leopards, dholes, giant squirrels and gaur being the regular showstoppers. In line with a philosophy of using non-motorised ways of exploring forests, walking, canoeing and camping are promoted to all tourists. This year, however, the canoeing/boating activity had to be stopped due to low water levels. In what can called an act of daredevilry, Sudha Dhruve, a woman forest guard on duty was able to avert harm to her colleagues by staring down a tiger for one-and-a-half hours, eventually forcing it to retreat.

Lodge News
Forsyth Lodge

Folk at Forsyth Lodge are celebrating the chance sightings of honey badgers on two separate occasions on lodge property. Captured on their camera traps, this is the first-ever record of this elusive animal within the property and shows how a protected patch of wilderness can provide a safe haven to such rare species. In the past year, they have also focussed on creating new revenue streams for the local community. They started a model organic garden within their property to train farmers on organic vegetable farming practices. Forsyth Lodge is engaging more women in this project and have started working with them to produce merchandise like macramé plant hangers. Keeping tourists’ interests in mind, the lodge will organise trips to Pachmarhi and Churna this year. Armed with a team of four trained naturalists (Vineeth Mahadev, Saee Gundawar , Animesh Manna and Sidhanth Narula) with specialised areas of interest, Forsyth is all set to show guests an exciting time. To book your holiday, contact them at bookings@forsythlodge.com

Reni Pani Jungle Lodge

In line with the ethos of responsible tourism that underlie their operations, Reni Pani Jungle Lodge has contributed extensively to improving the conditions of the local school. Besides donating furniture for the classrooms, they have distributed shoes and uniforms to the students. The lodge has also donated filter-fitted water bottles to all 600 forest department guards of Satpura Tiger Reserve. They have added four new tents that offer minimal-impact camping experiences. They are also constructing a new eight-room lodge towards Bori in the southern side of the park. Their team of five expert naturalists are all ready to impart their vast knowledge of Satpura’s wildlife to guests. Cycling expeditions and camping trips have been lined up as well.
Cheetal Resort (Quality) (New PUG-rated Member)

Situated near the beautiful backwaters of the Denwa river, Cheetal Resort organises jungle safaris, nature walks and night safaris for guests, while also providing facilities for games, swimming, sports and barbecues. The lodge offers panoramic views of the Satpura ranges. Cheetal Resort has been constructed using locally-available and natural materials, wherever possible. To book your stay, contact them at manager@cheetalresort.com

Pugdundee Safaris

From October this year, Pugdundee Safaris is introducing forest bathing in India for the first time. Also known as Shirin-Yoku (in Japanese) or forest immersion, this is an immersive healing experience akin to working out, doing yoga or meditating in nature. Sessions will be taken by trained and specialised guides. Of special interest to nature enthusiasts would be the PRONAT (professional naturalist training) courses offered by Pugdundee Safaris in association with Wildlife and Forestry Services from August to September at Denwa Backwater Escape (Satpura). On completion of this course, participants will be ready to get inducted as trainee or resident lodge naturalists in the nature-based tourism sector, start guiding wildlife tours or just enjoy nature from a different perspective. With an aim to rid their lodges of hazardous plastic waste, Pugdundee Safaris has now adopted a 100% single-use plastic-free policy. In this direction, packaged mineral water bottles have been replaced with reusable steel ones, saving over a 100,000 bottles over the course of three years. Milk powder and coffee sachets will be replaced by glass containers for storage, allowing them to rid the properties of more than 21,000 pouches that are used for the same every season. They have also been providing organic toiletries in glass dispensers to guests in place of travel-sized plastic bottles. All lodges also promote non-vehicular and non-tiger centric activities in the parks. To know more, write to them at enquiry@pugdundeesafaris.com. Pugdundee Safaris run the following PUG eco-rated lodges in Madhya Pradesh:

King’s Lodge (Bandhavgarh)

King’s Lodge recently attained an ‘Outstanding’ PUG eco-rating for the positive impact it has had on the environment, communities, and clients.
Treehouse Hideaway (Bandhavgarh)

In its most recent audit, Treehouse Hideaway attained an ‘Outstanding’ PUG eco-rating for the positive impact it has had on the environment, communities, and clients.

Kanha Earth Lodge PUG Outstanding rating (Kanha)

For more information, write to info@toftigers.org
Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve

Tadoba’s ‘ghost cat’ has been playing hide and seek with visitors in the Kolsa area. This newly-spotted melanistic leopard has kept the park’s naturalists on their toes in anticipation of their next meeting. Tigress Chhoti Tara and her cubs have posed for many cameras this year, mostly on the Jamni road. The park’s Sirkada Zone, which was very recently opened up for safaris, has revealed a curious inmate – a majestic male tiger with a lion-like mane. Maya, Matkasur and Sonam – the park’s other star cats – are all often seen around the Teliya lake. Sightings of tigers, four-horned antelopes, blue bulls and Indian gaur in the Madnapur-Kolara Buffer Zone have improved. Meanwhile, leopards, sloth bears and brown fish owls are increasingly seen in the Alizanza Buffer Zone. Night safaris are now permitted from the Padmapur gate to Kondhe gaon gate. Differential pricing has been introduced; though a tatkal permit system has been started, there are multiple issues with availability. Mobile phones are strictly banned in the park, even for photography. Authorities have also failed to act on tourist’s feedback on standardised seats in jeeps.
Lodge News

Limban Resort (Quality)(New PUG eco-rated lodge)

Sitting pretty near the stunning Tadoba range of the park, Limban Resort is surrounded by thickets of bamboo and local flora. Limban’s machan offers panoramic views of the buffer forests. The lodge has recently set up ‘Cub World’ - a fun space for kids to absorb the jungle’s experiences. A dining shed has also been put up in their farm for relaxed evenings over scrumptious local fare. As Tadoba remains open this monsoon, Limban is planning a ‘Wild Monsoons’ experience for guests who want to indulge in rice farming with the local farmers to experience village life. This year’s highlight has been Limban’s initiative to convert waste land and scarcely used farmland into forests. Borewells that are operated on solar power have been dug to replenish water bodies and planting of native species of trees are underway to create more space for animals to move about. Local farmers have been employed to tend to these forests, thereby providing them with an alternative source of income. To book your next trip, get in touch with them at reservations@limbanresorts.com

Svasara Jungle Lodge

A salient feature of Svasara’s eco ethos has been their focus on preserving the local cuisine of the region. For many seasons now, the lodge has been employing women from the neighbouring Kolara village to help serve authentic Vidharbha cuisine to guests. A new initiative for 2019 is to promote culinary holidays as an additional attraction. They are also upgrading a few rooms to create additional space for outdoor private sit-outs and powder rooms. Since its opening, the lodge has planted more than 3,000 indigenous species of plants on the property.

To retain a seamless boundary with the forest, Svasara now has removed its periphery fencing, and is now a natural forested extension to Tadoba. One can sight beautiful butterflies, birds, reptiles, small mammals like civet cats, and even predators like leopard at the camp! To know more, write to them at info@svasararesorts.com

Irai Safari Retreat

Irai Safari Retreat has a season of activities planned for guests this year. Besides arranging bush barbeques near the Irai lake and nature walks, the resort will also organise trips to nearby attractions like Chandrapur city, Kali Mata Mandir, Bhadravati Jain Temple and Anandvan Baba Amte’s Ashram. Irai Safari Retreat now has a tennis court, souvenir shop and an open restaurant. They recently recruited naturalist Deepak Pate, who has good knowledge of the region’s flora and fauna. The past season at Irai has also been about giving back to the community and the forests. Fresh water is being supplied to the village in summer. Colouring books and stationary were distributed to school children in nearby villages. An awareness programme on snake rescues led by a qualified trainer was organised on the resort.

For more information, write to info@toftigers.org www.toftigers.org
Rajasthan
Keoladeo National Park

Record numbers of pelicans (more than 800) turned up at Keoladeo National Park this season. The first good monsoon in many years has provided the park with ample food and water; conditions for avian breeding and feeding have been excellent. Painted storks, cormorants, darters, spoonbills and sarus cranes have been enjoying the park. A flamboyance of flamingos that arrived in December are still around. Waders, geese, sand pipers and plovers all paid a visit and the number of birds recorded by enthusiasts remains high as the park continues to flourish. The forest department has several conservation projects in place – removal of water hyacinth has helped reinvigorate this wetland. In addition to birdlife, camera traps placed across the park have captured images of a leopard almost every night.

Lodge News
The Birder’s Inn
Making room for the flocks of birders coming in this season, Birder’s Inn is opening a new wing with 12 more rooms. This summer, they will carry out annual replacement of soft furnishings in the rooms and
common areas. While training their current staff in all areas of operations, they are also hiring more employees from the local community. The inn will be open from October this year. Contact them at bookings@birdersinn.com

Ranthambore Tiger Reserve

Ranthambore’s tiger population is thriving, and interesting patterns in their dispersal are being observed. With a population of big cats way above its carrying capacity, the park’s young male tigers have started turning against each other and even attack and kill villagers. Tigers from Ranthambore have also been translocated to other parks in the country. Arrowhead (T-84) and her four cubs have drawn huge crowds to the park in the past year. A visitor and a tourist guide were jointly fined Rs 51,000 for throwing stones at a sleeping tiger in an attempt to capture a photo. The act was caught on the thermal imaging cameras placed in the park and forest guards immediately took the offenders to task. Tourists and lodge owners were inconvenienced last year due to multiple last-minute safari booking policy changes imposed on them by the forest authorities, and they hope all stakeholders would be taken into consideration before such changes are implemented in the future.

Lodge News

The Oberoi Vanyavilas (Outstanding PUG rating)

The Oberoi Vanyavilas has adopted a slew of measures to improve guests’ experience, while also ensuring tourism has minimal impact on the eco-system. They have upped the number of in-house naturalists from three to five. For the coming season, the lodge has planned ‘Night-time adventures’ for those who can appreciate the nocturnal mysteries of the forests. They will also offer a ‘Tale of paws’ activity to cast animal tracks. A new photo booth has been set up to capture all your precious holiday moments. Guests can choose the ‘On the Banks of Banks’ package for birdwatching and interactions with the local Gurjar community. For effective solid waste management, the lodge has admirably installed an organic waste converter machine. The Oberoi Vanyavilas has provided search lights to the forest department, besides conducting training sessions for forest guides. The lodge has also taken up the upkeep responsibilities of one of the public washrooms in the park. Other eco-friendly measures, including the use of bio-degradable food packaging boxes, have been implemented to slowly reduce the

For more information, write to info@toftigers.org
usage of plastic; by October 2019, the hotel expects to completely rid itself of single-use plastics. To know more, write to them at reservation@oberioigroup.com

Uttar Pradesh
National Chambal Sanctuary

The National Chambal Sanctuary continues to provide a stable and robust habitat for its numerous resident and migratory species. Unusual sightings from this year include a flock of more than 70 greater flamingos, marsh crocodiles eating soft-shell turtles, and a new addition to the checklist - Baillon’s crake. The river safaris, jeep drives for sarus cranes and blackbuck, and nature walks remain popular with visitors.

Lodge News
Mela Kothi – The Chambal Safari Lodge

If you have a flair for writing, a writer’s retreat is being planned at Mela Kothi in October as part of the Wildlife Week celebrations they host in the first week of October every year. The idea is to encourage a more diverse group of people to engage with nature/wildlife and possibly inspire writings on the same. The lodge has also started hosting writers, artists, economists, architects, conservationists and scientists to stay at the lodge, and interact with a small invited audience to initiate an open dialogue and create a space for free sharing of ideas and information. The first in this series was with Roy Moxham, author of several books on India including the Great Hedge. The lodge has four trained naturalists as part of their core team. For more information, send them an email at rpsjarar@chambalsafari.com

Tamil Nadu
Nilgiris - Cherambadi – Mudumalai Valparai

Sightings of elephants, gaurs, sambar deer, chitals, sloth bears, leopards and tigers have been reported from the Parambikulam National Park this year. A range of avian species are also spotted here. Valparai, known for its lion tail macaques and great Indian hornbills, didn’t disappoint tourists either. However, concretisation arising from sale of farm lands has posed a threat to the biodiversity in these regions. Lack of a viable minimum support price has forced tea-growers to sell their estates to builders leading to increased conflict with wildlife in recent times. A forest fire raged through the Mudumalai Tiger Reserve in February, destroying about 250 acres of forests.

For more information, write to info@toftigers.org www.toftigers.org
Briar Tea Bungalows

A host of nature-centric activities await guests at Briar Tea Bungalows this year. Off-road riverine rides and bird hide photography tours are some of exciting indulgences guests can opt for. An award-winning naturalist has been recently brought onboard to enhance these experiences. To ensure minimal environmental impact, Briar Tea Bungalows has banned bottled mineral water on the property. Wooden cottages and tents have been set up as alternative options to concretised structures. For bookings or queries, email them at reservations@teil.in

Uttarakhand

Binsar Wildlife Sanctuary

A picturesque sanctuary set in the Kumaon Himalayas, Binsar is known to be a walker’s paradise. It offers unparalleled views of the snow-capped Himalayan peaks – Chaukamba, Trishul, Nanda Devi, Shivling and Panchchuli. Home to more than 200 species of resident and migratory birds; including jays, laughing thrushes, sibias, forktails, pheasants, and tits, this sanctuary is also sought out by birders. Gorals, langurs, jungle cats, leopards and Himalayan black bears have also been sighted among the oak and rhododendron trees.

Mary Budden Estate
(New PUG eco-rated lodge)

A family-run property with a restored heritage home dating back to the 19th century, Mary Budden Estate is one of the few privately-owned lodges set within the Binsar Wildlife Sanctuary. Guests here can choose to go on birdwatching trips, nature walks and culture trails, besides opting to spend the night in one of the nearby villages. Mary Budden also strives to attain sustainable tourism standards by means of rainwater harvesting, harnessing solar energy and also actively engaging in community development initiatives. To know more, write to them at contact@marybuddenestate.in
Corbett Tiger Reserve

Tigers have been burning bright at Corbett Tiger Reserve with above 250 of them estimated to be inhabiting the park’s forests. The Dhikala and Bijrani zones remained popular for animal sightings. Three new eco-tourism zones are likely to come up outside the reserve in Nihal, Pawalgarh, and Sandani, the government has announced. Moreover, the park is now granting access through a new gate near Kotdwar, reducing the commute to the park from Delhi by 80 km. Activists have, however, underlined the need to ensure proper monitoring of the road. After videos surfaced showing several close calls between wild animals and tourists, forest department authorities have started levying heavy fines of Rs. 5,000 each on those who disembark from their vehicles during safaris. While man-animal conflicts have been on the rise, several poachers have also been arrested from around Corbett.

West Bengal
Sundarbans National Park

Credit: Sunderban Tiger Camp / Waxpol Hotels & Resorts
The largest estuarine mangrove forest in the world, Sundarbans National Park is located on the delta formed by the convergence of the mighty Ganges and Brahmaputra rivers. Sustaining a variety of flora and fauna, these sundari tree forests were popular for tiger, deer, wild boar and crocodile spotting this past season. Travel into the interiors of the forests can take place only via boats and ferries through the backwaters. These boats are available on a full-day basis, but a boat permit and a guide are a must. The Sajnekhali Wildlife Sanctuary within the tiger reserve is popular among avid birdwatchers.

**Sunderban Tiger Camp**

An escapade into nature’s lap, Sunderban Tiger Camp is designed to reflect the local flavour and culture of the region. The 21 well-appointed rooms available for accommodation make use of locally-sourced material and incorporates elements of Sunderban’s natural and cultural heritage. For those with an adrenalin rush visiting this season, the lodge will organise tours around the Sunderban region with special activities like wildlife safaris, dingy boat rides and crab-catching trips. Visits to local villages and cultural performances and Bon Bibi Jatra can also be arranged on request. To book your next holiday, write to them at sales@waxpolhotels.com

**M.V. Mahabaahu - The Luxury Cruiseline**

River cruise ship M.V. Mahabaahu recently attained an ‘Outstanding’ PUG eco-rating for the positive impact it has had on the environment, communities, and clients. For information, write to them at cruisedirector@mahabaahucruiseindia.com

For more information, write to info@toftigers.org www.toftigers.org
Nepal

Bardia National Park

Nepal’s western region is a hotspot for herds of elephants migrating from the neighbouring Indian forests. Though herds of elephants were not spotted, single young bulls have been seen foraging the vicinity of the park. Compared to last year, tiger sightings have improved tremendously. Tourists were able to observe the big cats from vantage points across the park during walks, river safaris, elephant-back rides and jeep safaris. Smooth-coated otters were sighted on the bank of Karnali river and other small streams and tributaries inside the park. Though the park’s rhino population is smaller in comparison to others, their sightings have been good this past season.

Credit: Tiger Tops

Chitwan National Park

In Chitwan, the sightings of all animals remain the same as in the past. Sloth bears, rhinos, tigers, elephants, leopards, avian fauna and ungulates, including gaurs, are prominently sighted by visitors.

Tiger Tops Tharu Lodge, Chitwan & Tiger Tops Karnali Lodge, Bardia

Besides offering unforgettable wildlife experiences during safaris, Tiger Tops arranges camps under the night sky in some of the best-preserved buffer zones in Nepal, where a canvas wall will be all that is between campers and the abundance of wildlife. Before and after the jungle camp, guests can stay at Nepal’s cutting-edge elephant welfare centre. Here, jumbo encounters happen on their terms and conditions, while at the same time guests gain an unforgettable and unique experience with the camp’s all-female herd. Huge strides have been taken towards achieving a complete ban on single-use plastics within Tiger Tops properties. Pradyot S. Rana has been recruited as a project/business development manager cum wildlife management and services consultant in order to train house guides and

For more information, write to info@toftigers.org

www.toftigers.org
naturalists. Tiger Tops has also partnered with Himalayan Hermitage, an organisation that combines western and eastern perspectives to offer tailor-made pilgrimage journeys in the Himalayas. Another batch of students have just completed their education at the Tiger Tops Swiss charitable primary school. Tiger Tops and some generous donors have facilitated support for every graduate throughout their primary and secondary education at government-run schools by provision of backpacks, stationary as well as uniforms and medical care for their duration of study. Since the school was established in 1996, over 500 students have graduated high school and gone on to successful careers in a variety of fields. To book your next holiday, write to Tiger Tops at info@tigertops.com
TOFTigers Accommodation Provider Members with PUG Eco-Ratings

INDIA

Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve
- Bandhavgarh Jungle Lodge (Good)
- Bandhav Vilas (Quality)
- Infinity Resorts, Bandhavgarh (Good)
- King’s Lodge (Outstanding)
- Mahua Kothi (Outstanding)
- Skays Camp (Quality)
- Tiger’s Den Resort (Quality)
- Treehouse Hideaway (Outstanding)

Jim’s Jungle Retreat (Outstanding)
Paatlidun Safari Lodge (Quality)

Gir National Park
- The Fern Gir Forest (Quality)
- Woods At Sasan Resort and Spa (Quality)

Kanha Tiger Reserve
- Banjaar Tola (Outstanding)
- Bagh Villas Jungle Camp & Spa (Quality)
- Chitvan Jungle Lodge (Quality)
- Courtyard House (Quality)
- Flame of the Forest Safari Lodge (Quality)
- Infinity Resorts, Kanha (Quality)
- Kanha Earth Lodge (Outstanding)
- Kanha Jungle Lodge (Quality)
- Kipling Camp (Outstanding)
- Singinawa Jungle Lodge (Outstanding)
- Soulacia Hotel and Resort (Quality)
- Tuli Tiger Resort (Quality)

Banadipur Tiger Reserve
- Dhole’s Den (Outstanding)

Binsar Wildlife Sanctuary
- Mary Budden Estate (Quality)

Coorg Valley
- Green Valley Resort, Coorg (Good)
- Orange County, Coorg (Outstanding)

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Kaziranga National Park
- Infinity Resorts, Kaziranga (Quality)
- M.V. Mahabaahu (Outstanding)

Keoladeo National Park (Bharatpur)
- The Birder’s Inn (Good)

Manas National Park
- Musa Jungle Retreat (Quality)

Nagarhole Tiger Reserve
- KAAV Safari Lodge (Quality)
- Waterwoods Lodge & Resorts (Quality)
- Orange County Kabini (Outstanding)
- Red Earth Resort – Kabini (Quality)

Nameri National Park
- Nameri Eco Camp (Quality)

National Chambal Sanctuary
- Mela Kothi – The Chambal Safari Lodge (Outstanding)

Pench Tiger Reserve
- Baghvan – Taj Safaris (Outstanding)
- Mahua Vann (Good)
- Pench Jungle Camp (Quality)
- Pench Tree Lodge (Quality)
- Tathastu Resorts (Quality)
- The Riverwood Forest Retreats (Quality)
- Tuli Tiger Corridor (Good)

Periyar Tiger Reserve, Thekkady
- Spice Village (Outstanding)
- Cardamom County By Xandari (Quality)

Rajaji National Park
- V-Resort (Good)

Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve
- Khem Vilas (Outstanding)
- Nahargarh Fort (Quality)
- The Oberoi Vanyavilas (Outstanding)

Satpura Tiger Reserve
- Denwa Backwater Escape (Quality)
- Forsyth Lodge (Outstanding)
- Reni Pani Jungle Lodge (Outstanding)
- Cheetal Resort (Quality)

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Sundarbans Tiger Reserve
- Sunderban Tiger Camp (Quality)
- Tora Eco Resort & Life Experience Centre (Quality)

Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve
- Limban Resort (Quality)
- Irai Safari Retreat (Quality)
- Svasara Jungle Lodge (Outstanding)

Valparai Forest
- Stanmore Garden Bungalow (Briar Tea Bungalows, Valparai) (Quality)

NEPAL
Bardia National Park
- Tiger Tops Karnali Lodge (Quality)

Chitwan National Park
- Barahi Jungle Lodge (Outstanding)
- Tiger Tops Tharu Lodge (Outstanding)
- Kasara Jungle Lodge (Quality)

TOFTigers Member Lodges Under Process

Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve
- Samode Safari Lodge
- Syna Tiger Resort

Corbett Tiger Reserve
- Le Reserve Corbett
- Corbett Riverside Resort

Dudhwa Tiger Reserve
- Jaagir Lodge

Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve
- Myo Grand Ranthambhore Hotel

Periyar Tiger Reserve
- The Wildernest

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