

Jungle Lore vows to keep tiger tale alive

A group of tiger enthusiasts from Mumbai will visit Ranthambore to create awareness about tiger conservation among the locals there



**YOGESH SADHWANI AND
BAPU DEEDWANIA**

Hours after two tiger cubs were found dead in Ranthambore National Park in Sawai Madhopur district, Rajasthan, a group of Mumbai tiger conservators swung into action. The group, Jungle Lore, has decided to pack their bags and head to the reserve where there are 40 tigers left as per the May 2009 census. They will interact with local villagers and create awareness about tiger conservation.

It can be noted that on Sunday two 15-18 month old tiger cubs were found dead near Paleda area of Ranthambore. While the post-mortem report was yet to arrive, forest officials said that the two cubs had been poisoned. "Carcasses of two male cubs were spotted

along with two carcasses of goats," R N Mehrotra, the state Chief Wildlife Warden told media agencies.

Sources said that the job seems to be the handiwork of local villagers. "There are times when tigers prey on cattle owned by the locals. In retaliation, the locals seem to have poisoned the goats," said a forest official. There are several vil-

lages inside the 400-square-km reserve. The place where the cubs were found dead is known as Chiroli and the mother of cubs is known as Chiroli Wali tigress by the local guides.

As soon as the news spread, Gaurav Athalye and Kaustubh Upadhye, both residents of Dadar and founders of Jungle Lore started making frantic calls. "We will go to the vil-

lages in the area and meet the villagers. We will camp there for seven days or more just to interact with them and make them understand the significance of conserving the tiger. Obviously, there are issues that they have with the animal, but we need to take a close look at them," said Gaurav, an ardent Ranthambore fan, who travels to the reserve at least once a month. Jungle Lore organises wildlife excursions as part of its initiative to create awareness about tiger conservation.

Kaustubh explained, "We have already started working on strategies and a proper plan before we meet the locals. The locals need to be dealt with very carefully."

The group has been working in this field for the last few years and believes awareness is the only way out to conserve the fast depleting big cats. "The government is doing its bit to conserve the forest. But we, as civilians, need to help out in whatever way we can instead of merely sitting on the fence and commenting on how sad the incident is," added Gaurav.

When *Mumbai Mirror* contacted Upendra Mishra, retired range officer and secretary of Vishwamitra Sansthan, he was very touched by the gesture made by Mumbai lads. "We will make sure that this group is taken to the villages and gets to interact with the locals. The young blood with innovative strategies might just do a great job. It is a very touching gesture that somebody sitting in Mumbai wants to do this," he said.



Gaurav Athalye (l) and Kaustubh Upadhye (r) from Jungle Lore