

Maha finds a solution for man-animal conflict

Vijay Pinjarkar | TNV



A tiger marks its territory

the city.

N Rambabu, conservator of forests for Nagpur Division, said around 250 ml urine of three female tigers in the zoo was collected in a plastic bottle and sprinkled in an orange orchard and other spots frequented by the tigress and her cubs.

"The first time we sprinkled the urine was on April 21," Rambabu said. "To our surprise, the tigress and its cubs did not turn up near the village for 10 days."

When the tigress was sighted again near the same

place, more urine was sprinkled. "Around 300 ml was sprinkled at spots frequented by the tigress on May 6. For the past four days, the tigress and her cubs have not been spotted near the village," Rambabu said.

Tigers usually spray urine on trees to mark their territories. Forest officials feel the Ranmangli tigress and her cubs may have realised the presence of another cat when the urine was sprinkled and chosen to stay away.

In the fortnight between the two sightings, "we also

Solution in a bottle

Here's how Maharajbagh Zoo officials collected urine from three tigress cubs kept in the same cage. A pot was placed near the drain to collect urine that flowed through it. Urine on the cage floor too was collected with the help of a syringe. This was then transferred to a plastic bottle and put into deep freezer. Forest officials then travelled with the bottle to Ranmangli and sprinkled urine in different spots like spraying perfume. **TNV**

dig two waterholes over 2 km deep in the forest. It's also possible the tigress and her cubs have found another avenue to quench their thirst", Rambabu said.

The brain behind the experiment was quite surprised. "I kept thinking of various ways on how to use tigers against each other. The idea to sprinkle urine came out of the blue," said Bawaskar.

Conservationist Prafulla Bhamburkar, however, is unsure of the experiment's success. "It's quite possible the tigress returned to the spot after a fortnight during which it may have made a kill in another spot," he said.

TN action plan to give Nilgiri tahr a foothold

Radhika M | TNV

Chennai: Spotting the Nilgiri tahr is a matter of luck. Not only is the large mountain goat extremely shy but urbanisation and habitat fragmentation have also diminished its numbers.

The Tamil Nadu government is now working on a comprehensive action plan to protect the endangered tahr, which is the state animal. The project, part of the Union ministry of environment and forests' Species Recovery Programme, is still in the conceptual stage.

The state government will study the plan and submit a report to the Centre for fund allocation. Two rounds of discussions with conservationists have taken place and "we are awaiting their final report", said chief wildlife warden R Sundarraju. The Asia Biodiversity Conservation Trust from Thrissur will pre-



CLEAR & PRESENT DANGER

pare the conservation plan, while city-based Care Earth is an associate organisation for the project. Protection of habitat and movement corridors will be part of the plan.

Tahr numbers are down to about 2,000 in TN, though no comprehensive study has been conducted simultaneously

across all national parks, say experts. The Nilgiri tahr, listed as endangered on the International Union for Conservation of Nature's Red List and Schedule I of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, is found only in the Western Ghats in Tamil Nadu and Kerala. Its habitat covers an area of 400 km, spread across Eravikulam National Park, Mudumalai Wildlife Sanctuary, Mukurthi National Park, Periyar National Park and the Palani hills.

Experts say the animal faces 'genetic erosion' due to habitat loss and fragmentation. The males move between different herds to mate. If their movement is restricted, or a certain herd gets isolated due to encroachments into their habitat, chances of breeding drop.

Further, the tahr is also killed for its meat, which is believed to have medicinal properties.