THE TIMES OF INDIA

Tadoba tiger traverses 2,000km, crosses four states, reaches Odisha

TNN | Nov 24, 2023, 04.26 AM IST

Nagpur: A male tiger from Tadoba landscape in Bramhapuri travelled around 2,000km to reach Odisha crossing forests in four states in search of a safe territory and a mate.

Generally, the forest departments come to know about such dispersals when tigers are radio-collared but the one from Bramhapuri in Vidarbha was not radio-collared and was identified from its stripes pattern.

This may perhaps be the second-longest tiger dispersal in the country. It must have crossed many hurdles including water bodies, riverine, mines, agricultural fields, roads, and human habitats. Yet, there is no record of the animal attacking humans.

Though Odisha has been reporting the dispersal of tigers from neighbouring Chhattisgarh, this is the first time a big cat has reached the eastern state from Vidarbha. According to the All India Tiger Estimation (AITE) 2022 released in July, the total number of tigers in Odisha's forests was 20.

Odisha forest officials said in June-July the tiger was reported in the state's Rayagada district and it kept traversing between Odisha and Andhra Pradesh. In August, it entered Andhra Pradesh and moved to Srikakulam. In September, it was recorded in the Mahendragiri range in Odisha.

Talking to TOI, Odisha PCCF (wildlife) Susanta Nanda said, "On September 10, 2023, the tiger killed cattle. As there was no record of big cats in the area, we were curious to know the identity of the animal and deployed camera traps only to find it was a tiger. For the past six months, it has been moving along Odisha and Andhra Pradesh borders and is mostly devouring cattle."

Anand S, divisional forest officer (DFO) of Parlekhamundi forest division in Gajapati district, Odisha, got in touch with the Wildlife Institute of India (WII), Dehradun, to establish the identity of the tiger. "The WII's National Tiger Database in October discovered that the tiger was from Bramhapuri in Tadoba landscape and was recorded

there in 2021," said DFO Anand.

Bramhapuri deputy conservator of forest (DyCF) Dipesh Malhotra confirmed the tiger was recorded during a camera trap survey by Wildlife Conservation Trust (WCT) in 2021.

"The tiger must have reached Odisha crossing Chhattisgarh, Telangana, and Andhra Pradesh," Malhotra said.

Anand says, "The road distance between Bramhapuri and Odisha is nearly 650 km, but the tiger must have logged more than 2,000km crossing four states in the last one-and-half year when it left its original landscape."

"We are giving maximum protection to the new entrant. The tiger is moving 25-30 km daily and is dependent on cattle. We are continuously monitoring its movement. As we pay cattle kill compensation in 36 hours, local people cooperate," said Anand.

WII's conservation biologist Bilal Habib says, "Like the majestic stride of a tiger through diverse landscapes, nature's marvel unfolds as a tiger disperses from Bramhapuri to Odisha, epitomizing the untamed beauty of our interconnected ecosystems."

Habib added, "The dispersal itself is an eye-opening tale that tells us how important is the Central Indian tiger population when we talk about tiger connectivity. It also highlights why corridors were important for the long-term survival of big cats."

"As per the tiger connectivity map of the Central Indian Landscape, two major routes connect Bramhapuri to the forest area on the border of Odisha and Andhra Pradesh where the dispersed tiger was camera-trapped. One connectivity is through the Udanti-Sitanadi Tiger Reserve in Chhattisgarh which is further connected to the Karlapat Wildlife Sanctuary in Odisha. The other connectivity is through the Indravati Tiger Reserve which is

connected to the Kangerghati Wildlife Sanctuary in Chhattisgarh which further has connectivity with the forest areas of Odisha and Andhra Pradesh," said wildlife biologist Aditya Joshi