



**Pardhi Nature Guides Training
Programme, Panna Tiger Reserve
April 2019**

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Pardhi Nature Guides (2nd batch) Training Programme, Panna Tiger Reserve, April 2019



Pic 1: The participants with Shri. K.S. Bhadauria, Field Director Panna Tiger Reserve and Shri. Naresh Yadav DFO (North Panna division) Panna Tiger Reserve

Introduction

Last Wilderness Foundation in association with Panna Tiger Reserve and Taj Safaris conducted a 10-day Guide Training programme for Pardhi community members from 16th – 25th April 2019 at Panna, Madhya Pradesh. This was the second batch training programme which was attended by 6 participants. The idea behind the programme was to equip more members from the Pardhi community (a mixed batch of boys and girls) with fine guiding techniques and enhance their already existing knowledge of the biodiversity and the forests in preparation for an alternate livelihood – ‘Walk with the Pardhis’ initiative.

What is walk with the Pardhis?

‘Walk with the Pardhis’ is an initiative for the Pardhi community, not only to promote the excellent tracking skills and knowledge that the Pardhis possess about forest and wildlife, but also to help utilise these skill sets as a means of income, wherein the trained Pardhi will lead a nature trail for tourists or nature enthusiasts on a designated trail/ route in Panna.

Till date, the 1st batch training programme participants have conducted over 20 walks for tourists, which was initiated in October 2018. The response to the ‘Walk with the Pardhis’ has been very good and won favour as a ‘To do’ activity with a tour companies visiting Panna.



Pic 2: Biran Pardhi, a batch 1 participant takes tourists for a walk.



Pic 3: Batch 1 participants Biran & Badda Pardhi on the trail with Shri. Naresh Yadav DFO (North Panna)

The Training Programme



Pic 4: On the field training



Pic 5: Understanding pugmarks

An expert naturalist team from Taj Safaris conducted the training programme, which was divided into classroom and field sessions. The training started with classroom sessions with regard to basics of leading a nature trail which lay emphasis on understanding guests, how to conduct oneself in front of guests and the art of guiding while leading a walk. During this session, the participants were taught how to introduce themselves, how to hold a conversation with the guests and were also taught how to weave information about the different flora and fauna into stories. The participants were also provided with scientific information on the different animals in order to provide them with a certain degree of knowledge/ information, which could prove to be useful during walks with tourists.

The next session was about polishing their guiding techniques wherein the participants were taught how to plan the walk, with regard to communicating with the tourist about the length of the walk, what the walk entails, identifying the different tracks and signs seen along the path, building upon their existent information about different trees and identification of birds.

During the classroom sessions, the participants were also taught about the different mammals commonly found on the trail, which included description of the animal to its diet, the type of habitat it needed and its role in the ecosystem. Animal behavior, food chain, interconnectedness in the forest and water cycle formed an important part of these sessions.

These sessions were also interspersed with tests on whatever had been taught, in the form of a quiz, which proved as a constant revision and practice mechanism and the participants were also shown several wildlife clips to better understand animal ecology, behaviour and their role in the ecosystem.



Pic 5: Solving a test in class

After the initial classroom sessions on the basics of leading a trail, the participants were encouraged to practice, leading the trail with the other participants acting as guests. After each practice trail, participants would rate each other's' walk and discuss on what was the best thing communicated by each of them and what needed improvement. This proved to be a great way on understanding how to take feedback and improving upon their trail leading skills. After the participants were more familiar with the basics, they were encouraged to understand the trail at Ranipur, where they were taught how to use binoculars and learn more about the floral diversity on the trail.



Pic 6: Practicing a nature trail



Pic 7: Understanding termites and the ecosystem in general during a practice trail



Pic 8: The nature trail at Ranipur where the participants will eventually lead the trail



Pic 9: Using binoculars to spot and identify birds

Visitors

In support of this programme and in order to meet the participants, the team was visited by some of the senior officers, which included, Shri. R. Sreenivasa Murthy, APCCF M.P. Biodiversity Board, Shri. K.S. Bhadauria, Field Director, Panna Tiger Reserve, Shri. Jarande Eswar Ramhari, Deputy Director Panna Tiger Reserve and Shri. Naresh Yadav, D.F.O., Panna Territorial Division. The officers were not only extended their full support to the 'Walk with Pardhis' initiative, but also lent a word of encouragement to each participant to take this initiative with due diligence and personal involvement.



Pic 11: Shri. R. Sreenivasa Murthy, APCCF M.P Biodiversity Board and Shri. Jarande Eswar Ramhari Deputy Director Panna Tiger Reserve interact with the participants



Pic 12: Shri. Naresh Yadav, DFO (North Panna) examines the course contents

Conclusion

If given constant encouragement and support, we believe that we will have the first generation of excellent trained Pardhi guides who will not only be more than able to showcase their exceptional tracking skills and knowledge, but this will also encourage other members of the community to join this initiative. This will help reduce their dependency on the forest and forest produce, thereby helping us preserve not only their traditional skill sets, but also contribute to conservation of wildlife and wilderness.



Pic 13: The future of conservation