

# The beauty of the beasts

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 PHOTOGRAPHS: FOREST DEPARTMENT, PAKKE TIGER RESERVE

On Christmas day in 2014, Karo Tayem, the camp-in-charge, brought some meat and vegetables to give his camp staff at Pakke Tiger Reserve. On the same day, while he was returning with his wife, he encountered a wild elephant. His wife Tileswari lit a small fire, burst crackers and ran hard till she could get a phone network and inform the division about the incident. Like all of us, she did not know that this would be fatal to our ‘Tayem babu’, as we fondly called him.

Tana Tapi, the almost legendary park manager, has been the wind-in- Pakke’s sails as well as the anchor through tough times. It was also people like Tayem babu, part of his crew that has kept Pakke going. “Tayem was one of the few staff members in my team who contributed tirelessly, yet he was the one to be taken away”, was a rare sigh that he let out after the very saddening incident. As a mentor, he did his best in allocating swift compensation, giving a job

to Tayem’s wife as contingency staff and building a tombstone in remembrance, but Tayem is still sorely missed by all of us. Today, the single biggest tribute we can offer him is through the competition where he was the first winner- a contest of camera trap images that was started three years ago. Now in its fourth year, this competition has been dedicated to Tayem’s memory. We share here some of the prize winning images of the forest department staff some fascinating captures in the last few years.



This is a camera trap image of Tayem babu a day after Christmas. Sadly Tayem babu was taken away from us two years later on Christmas day.



This is the award winning photograph of Karo Tayem’s tiger. This is the oldest living tiger in Pakke so far. It was first photo-captured in 2006 and in the most recent camera trapping exercise in 2016.



Two leopards visit a stream in Upper Dekorai area – the area that Tayem babu was in charge of.



This is a rare photograph of a melanistic leopard with two cubs – one is spotted and the other completely black. This photograph deserved the first prize in 2016.



However that same year, red-jungle fowl being there, that won the second place.



We don’t only consider tigers and other large carnivores for awards. This is another winning entry of a barking deer and a goral at a natural salt lick.



Pakke is an important strong-hold for many hunted species. The Asiatic black bear is poached extensively for its gall bladder. There is a rehabilitation program in Pakke where orphaned bear cubs from all over Arunachal are homed back into the wild.



Mistakes can be costly. For 8 months there were reports of cattle kills and carnivore presence in the fringe villages. The team finally got two tigers together but their entry was disqualified because the time was mentioned as AM instead of PM.



Pangolins are one of the most traded species globally. This is the first photo-capture of the endangered and elusive Chinese pangolin from Pakke.



The benefits of patrolling and protection are slowly coming to fore. Tuskers once almost poached out are slowly coming back.



Pakke Tiger Reserve has seen new life with the coming of Tana Tapi – this mother and her baby elephant represents just that.



Pakke is also important for widely persecuted species such as wild dogs. A study on wild dogs in Pakke showed that typical pack size is three.



A leopard turns back and poses for the camera trap.



Camera traps give useful biological information on species such as this record of a pregnant wild dog.



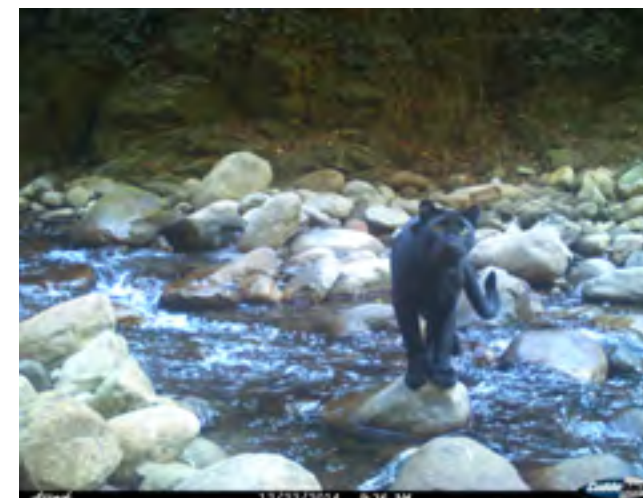
This was the first day picture of a clouded leopard from Pakke. Most clouded leopard photographs from Pakke are at dusk or at night.



A curious leopard cat, which is the smallest cat species found in Pakke, visits a camera trap



Camera traps might give us insights about the mating strategies of elusive species. This marbled cat pair was photo-captured on the 17th of January, 2013. Two years and two days later (19/1/2015) there was another image of marbled cat pair from a different location.



Pakke Tiger Reserve is the northern most extent of the world's tropical rainforests. In this rainforest which has low light, melanism is relatively common, especially in leopards.



This is the first record of a completely melanistic golden cat from Pakke although they are known to have many morphs.