

Field observations

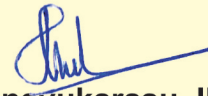
Pratiksha Kale



Foreword

Documenting your experiences and feelings about nature is an art. Not many possess such skills. I find Ms. Pratiksha Kale, State Forest Service (SFS) Officer Trainee of 2020-2022 batch from Maharashtra has such extraordinary skills. Ever since she joined Maharashtra for on the Job training, she used to send small articles on her experiences in the wild and her feeling towards nature to me through social media. I found her illustrations are very interesting and extraordinary. The various experiences and field observations brought by her will be useful to the Foresters and also encourage the readers to attempt similar endeavours. I warmly appreciate her effort and wish her to continue her passion on literary work which will be a true service to the Forestry fraternity.

Best Wishes.



V. Thirunavukarasu, IFS
APCCF & Principal
CASFOS, Coimbatore

My Field Observations and Lessons during On Job Training

Beauty of forests is such that every time you visit you will observe an appreciable difference. There is so much to observe and that is too natural !

For a forester, observation is the best way to learn. Identification of species is possible with observation of its different aspects, supplemented with scientific knowledge. Growth pattern, variation with habitat, phenology and so many parameters can be observed and understood better. It is true for wildlife as well as various forestry activities. For instance, for better forest fire management, detailed understanding from past observations can be a game-changer.

In this background, a forester needs to be a keen observer. Besides this, the locals, other officers and staff who have served in the particular area can be of help for analysing the observations.

During On-Job-Training, I could observe many things. Some were simple but significant. As I shared these observations, I could learn many things. I made a pictographic compilation of some of these observations for self-learning. To continue the chain, I would like to share this. Keep observing...Keep learning and Keep sharing !

- Pratiksha kale

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Moha Flowers



Common name: Moha

Scientific name:
Madhuca longifolia



Peculiarity: It has cream colored and fragrant flowers. They live for only one night and fall on ground. Early in the morning, travellers can enjoy the melghat roads dotted with these flowers. Tribals collect them before dawn. These are rich in vitamin and minerals. They are used for brewing 'siddu' and stored for personal use. Laddus, jam and jelly are also prepared from them.

Palash

Flame of the Forest

Common name: Palash

Scientific name: *Butea monosperma*

Peculiarity: It's beautiful, bright orange flowers create burning flame like appearance in summer. It is rich in medicinal properties. Its 'sharabat' act as a cooling agent.





Sapindus Trifoliatus Fruit

Common name: Reetha

Scientific name: *Sapindus trifoliatus*

Peculiarity: Fruit has unique morphology – it is globose with leathery skin and mostly 3-drupels are found. It is rich in *saponins* and thus used for soap making.



Chloroxylon swietenia bark

Common name: Bhirra

Scientific name: *Chloroxylon swietenia*

Peculiarity: It has characteristic bark. Bark is dark brown with yellow blazes, fissured, rough and slightly corky. Also it has a pungent smell. It is a deciduous tree with no leaves in summer. Thus, bark helps in easy identification. Leaves are natural mosquito repellent used by tribals.



Bauhinia vahlii

Common name: Maloo creeper

Scientific name: *Bauhinia vahlii*

Peculiarity: This is largest woody creeper. Its flowers are white and in the form of round clusters. Its pods are dried and seeds are used for edible purposes. Leaves are used as pan to bake rotis in forest: poachers use this technique. Bark is used for tanning hides. Also stem is used to make artefacts – baskets, mats; ropes etc.



Ficus Virens engulfing **Sterculia urens**



Caryea arborea

Common name: Wild guava

Scientific name: *Caryea arborea*



Peculiarity: Flowers are large, white and fragrant. They are used in yajna. Fruit is large and globose. Owing to its resemblance with water-pot is called as kumbhi. These fruits are available in pinch period when no fodder is available. Indian gaur and Sambhar also feed on them. These fruits are also fed to cattle. It improves fat content of milk. This tree has many herbal properties.



Bombax ceiba Bark

Common name: *Silk cotton tree*

Scientific name: *Bombax ceiba*

Peculiarity: Young tree has characteristic bark with conical spikes. It is pale ashy to silver grey. It acts a protecting cover against browsing. Bark is softwood, used in matchsticks. This bark is used as a float by fishermen as it lasts long even when submerged in water.



Orchids

Common name: *Foxtail orchid*

Scientific name: *Rhynchostylis*

Peculiarity: They are named for the long inflorescence that resembles a fluffy, tapering fox tail. It is known for its dense flowers consisting of tightly-clustered white and pink flowers with spicy aroma that is released in the evening when temperatures are warm. It has unusual range of colors. Women use the flowers to decorate their hair. It is used against rheumatism, menstrual disorder as well as protecting skin.

Seeds



Melia azedarach
(Bakan-neem)



Albizia lebeck
(Siras)



Peltophorum pterocarpum



Holoptelea integrifolia
(Chirohol)



Butea monosperma
(Palas)



Cassia fistula
(Amaltas)



Sapindus trifoliatus
(Ritha)



Pongamia pinnata
(Karanj)



Exudation of Gum - Moyen

Common name: *Moyen*

Scientific name: *Lannea coromendelica*

Peculiarity: Gum is obtained by making shallow, short cuts over the bark. Glassy- white exudate of hardened gum appears on injured surface of bark. It is used as a pain reliever.

View of Dry Deciduous Forest - Summer

Peculiarity: The terrain of Melghat is rugged portion of Gavilgarh hills which is a southward extension of Satpura range. The forest type is Tropical dry deciduous, dominated by teak. Trees shed leaves in summer i.e. dry season.





Bark eating Caterpillar

Peculiarity: Young trees of Amla - *Emblca officinalis* are susceptible for attack of bark eating caterpillar.

Damage symptoms observed: At collar region, deteriorated bark and hole in stem is observed. Growth of these saplings is less as compared to healthy ones.



Nest of Harvester Ants

Peculiarity: It's an example of architectural skills of harvester ants. The alignment of nest is such that the longer diagonal indicates east west direction. Nest has concentric ridges rising above ground. Ridges are elevated on uphill slopes – acts as a barrier against entry of water flowing from uphill into the nest.



Pugmark of Sloth Bear

Common name: Sloth bear

Scientific name: *Melursus ursinus*

Peculiarity: The size of the foot and cracks indicate age of the sloth bear. More the cracks, more the age! Also impression of hind foot resembles human footprint.

Pit dug by Sloth Bear

Common name: Sloth bear

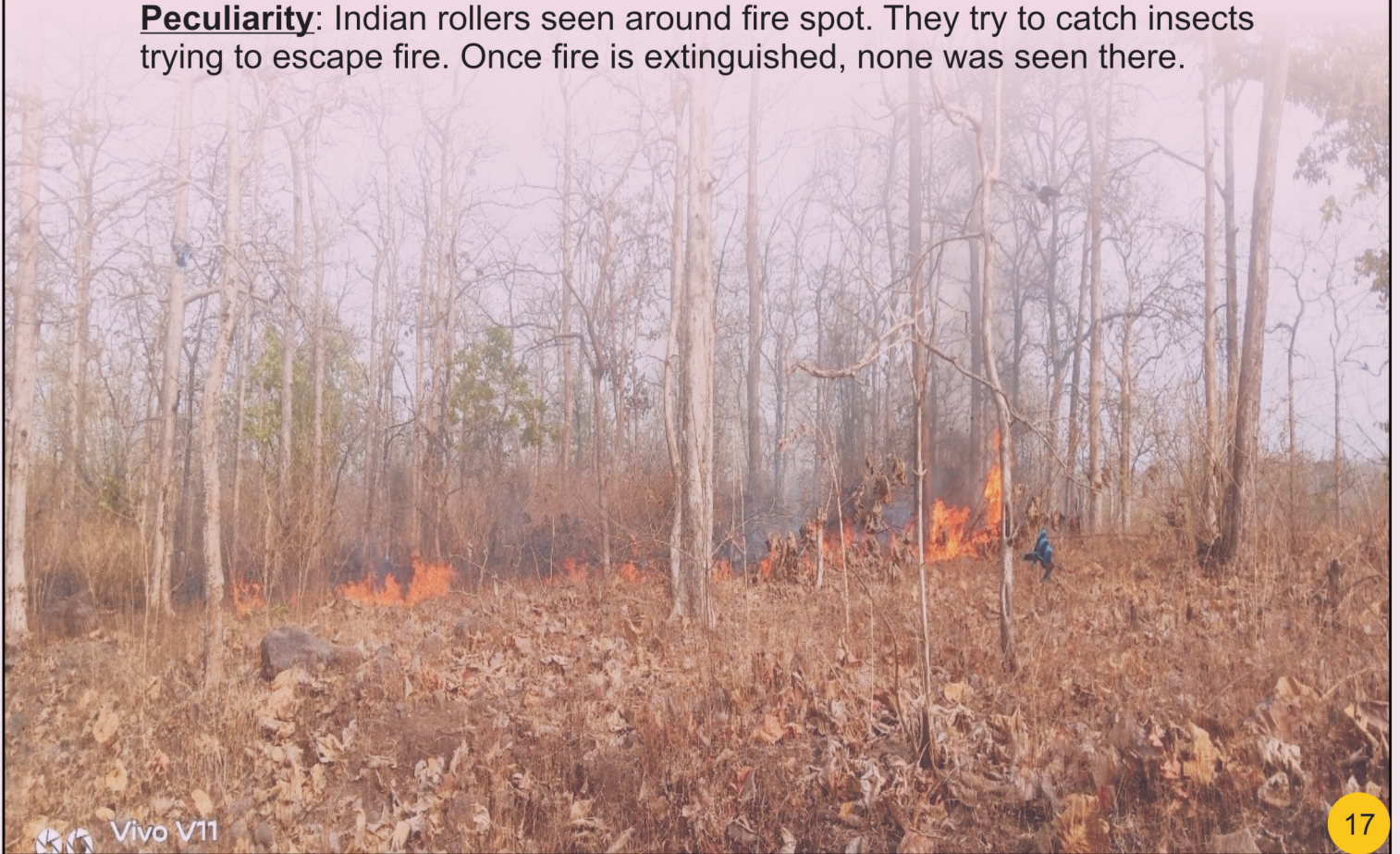
Scientific name: *Melursus ursinus*

Peculiarity: Sloth bear digs pits. These pits are dug in search of food i.e. dung balls made by beetle. They relish the grubs inside these balls and empty balls are left out. Such pits with hollow dung balls around, is one of the important signs of sloth bear presence.



Indian Rollers around Fire spot

Peculiarity: Indian rollers seen around fire spot. They try to catch insects trying to escape fire. Once fire is extinguished, none was seen there.





Forest Fire from Hills



Teak Logs : Grade 1 Ballarshah Depot, FDCM

Peculiarity: Teak from Chandrapur is known for its grain pattern and durability. These two logs are perfect cylinders classified as Grade 1 constituting total 1.883 cum.

Forest Depot at Rahu, Jarida

Peculiarity: After felling the timber, logging is done. These logs are spread all across the coupe. Thus, they are dragged and placed systematically within the coupe. It is called as Forest depot and it is temporary in nature. From here, logs are loaded into trucks and transported to Timber depot.



Smallwood billets

Peculiarity: Small wood is arranged in the form of billets: 1 x 1.20 x 1 running meter. It is purchased for small furniture making and as fuel wood.





Jhadu

Local Fire Fighting Equipment

Peculiarity: Tribals make this broom of bamboo called as jhadu. This is best way for beating up fire. Also, it is used for cleaning waterbodies by using jhadu as a sieve. It is used to take out dirt floating on waterbodies.



Donga

Peculiarity: *Donga* – a boat carved out from single teak stem. It is carved indigenously by the madiya tribals and used as a local transportation medium from one bank of river to other. It is very stable and an excellent example of tribal knowledge.



I, Pratiksha Kale hailing from Latur, Maharashtra completed B.Tech in Mechanical Engineering from College of Engineering, Pune in 2014. Presently undergoing SFS Officer Training from Nov 2020 to Nov 2022.



**Central Academy for State Forest Service,
Coimbatore**