

# NEWSLETTER

(18/12/2021)

PART -4

## Tigress P213-32, Cubs and Tiger P243

(written by- Team of Panna Tiger Reserve)



### ***Journey from Cub to adulthood...***

A little recap of previous three Newsletters: mother Tigress P213-32 died on 15/05/2021 from unknown illness. Her four cubs, then of age around 7 months, were left in the wild. Male Tiger P243, considered father of these cubs, remained in the area helping them in survival. Due to presence of the Tiger P243 in the area, cubs got required protection from other co-predators especially other male tigers. Initially there seemed to be daily interaction between P243 and cubs, which later became less frequent, but even then, no instance of P243 presenting any threat to cubs were observed. P243 sharing kill with cubs was neither observed nor recorded. It mainly became responsibility of Park management to see that they get timely kill. Though cubs started hunting attempts as soon as when they were 10 months old, complete skills of hunting was still a far cry. They remained in the small territory of one square kilometer named as 'Cub's Territory'.

#### **1. Cubs No more Cubs now**

Cubs of Tigress P213-32 are no more cubs now and after their mother demise when they were 6 months old, all four have survived the toughest period of their life. They are now nearly 15 month old and fall in the category of 'Sub-adult'. All four are healthy and grown in size now. Out of four, 3 are male and one is female. Though, not all may be of the same size, average weight may be around 120 kgs each. One male looks bigger and then female looks the smallest, but these minor differences can only be gauged by a trained eye. They are numbered as P213-32(21), (22), (23) and (24). P213-32(24) is the female.



**May 2021**



**December 2021**

Panna Tiger Reserve (PTR) is gathering data of tiger physical characteristics like weight, total length, neck, chest and abdomen girth, shoulder height, and canine size at different ages for last 10 years. This data has been collected during the process of tranquilizations for radio-collaring/ de-collaring and treatment of serious injuries. Starting from 22/09/2011, 60 times tiger tranquilization procedures have been performed on 30 individual tigers in PTR till now. As per this gathered data, we can safely predict physical parameters for these sub-adults. We can safely predict that currently at the age of 15 months, weight will be around 110-120 kgs for male tigers and of female, around 90 kgs. Their canine length should be just above 1 inch which will become more than 2 inch by the time they reach 20 months. Total length (from Nose tip to Tail tip), currently, should be around 270-280 cm for male sub-adults and 220-230 cm for female. Shoulder height should be around 95-105 cm for male and 90-95 cm for female sub-adult tiger.

## **2. Surviving the Wild**

Surviving the wild without mother Tigress is no mean feat. But surprises do happen. And these become experiences, practices and lessons for future. The lesson learnt is 'Best thing one can do when tiger cubs are growing is to let them grow. Let us permit nature to have her way. She understands her business better than we do.'

There were worrying times initially when they went missing for few days from their territory. It happened few times. But it is the process of growth. They explore the new world as they become more confident. Now this happens more frequently and they are spending more time outside 'Cub's Territory' than inside. All four are still together and should remain together for at least next 5-6 months when they would start charting their own individual territories. Initial threat of Leopard or Sloth Bear killing cubs was over when they became 9-10 month old. But, the threat of other tiger killing them still exist.

Their hunting skill are now all fine-tuned and they are now able to kill small prey like a small sized Chital, wild Pig or calf of Sambhar or Nilgai and also small sized cattle. Park Authorities did provide necessary assistance for food whenever need was felt. But to survive in wild require quick learning on their part. And they have done so very fast. One thing which require special mention is that once they started hunting, excitement of hunting has overtaken them. It seems now they don't like any assistance for food. They don't response to it. A great message from the king of forest: once we can do it ourselves, we will always do it

ourselves. For us at PTR, a great learning of tiger behaviour, which also emphasizes that a tiger in wild need no assistance in its matters.



June 2021



July 2021



August 2021



October 2021



December 2021

### 3. Role of Father P243

Male tiger P243 played important role in initial months in providing security after the death of cub's mother. It remained vigilant of any foreign tiger entry in Cub's Territory'. This also helped cubs from other threats like of leopard or Bear. As P243 movements are monitored by satellite collar it is donning, it was observed that P243 reduced it's visit in Cub's Territory since September but did not stop visiting completely. Visit became less frequent.

Earlier it was once in 10-15 days and currently, nearly once in 15-20 days. We will always wonder what role P243 played in the upbringing of the cubs, but one thing is certain that it did not harm cubs.

P243 is now seen with 2 females, namely P142 and P652. In the last Newsletter dated 29/07/2021, it was observed that P243 was seen with tigresses P652 and P653, relationship with P653 did not develop further. It is as per recorded behavior of male tigers that they look for mate regularly, fight for them with other rival tigers, if any, and finally winner takes all. Though there is tough competition and many rival males in the area visited by P243, like P431, P241, P621 or P271, it seems he is the strong one and winning battles. The apprehension raised in last Newsletter regarding what will happen if a new tigress moves in Cub's Territory along with P243, did not come true. Instead, P243 has fought and occupied new territory. It has now shifted its territory more towards Northern side, mainly towards Hinota and now seen in tourism zone. Pictures of P243 have been captured regularly by tourists in last two months in Hinota Tourism Zone. As P243 is shifting its territory, there is lots of re-adjustment happening in other males' territory in adjacent areas also. And as P243 visits to Cub's Territory have become less frequent, other male tigers have been observed crossing Cub's Territory. Movement of male tigers P431 and P241 have been recorded in Cub's Territory. There are no reports of any conflict or fight with cubs of these male tigers and cubs are safe and sound and braving the wild.

#### 4. What Lies Ahead



**December 2021**

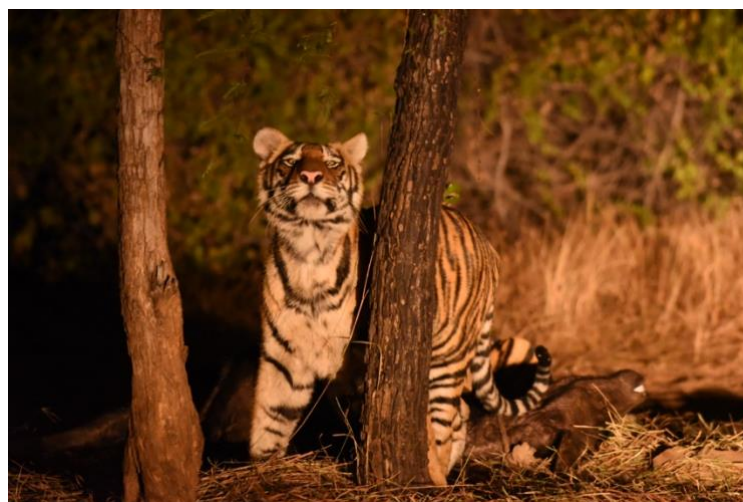
We as Park managers at PTR, never had any experience of such situation where we had to handle four 6 months old cubs without mother. At the start, lots of suggestions poured in when people heard about it. Only few were for leaving cubs in the wild. Most of the suggestions were to capture them and keep them in big enclosure till they grow to adulthood and later re-wild them. Capturing them and putting them in cage was not very difficult. It would have reduced our burden of future challenges of ensuring their survival till they are able to manage themselves. But as a collective unit, from top to lowest functionary, we decided on difficult option of making efforts for their survival in wild. Risky option but worth trying. Even a single tiger in wilderness of PTR is much better than 4 tigers in captivity. Finally,

we can say with lots of satisfaction that our efforts paid rich dividend not only for PTR but in enriching our experience in managing tiger cubs.

Now, we have reached a stage where their requirement of food assistance is no more. They can hunt with ease. By remaining in the wild without their mother, perhaps they are more skilled in surviving the wild. But finally, it is wild Nature and it has its own Rules and if we surrender to Nature's intelligence, we could rise up rooted, like trees. The fundamental Rule of Nature is 'Survival of Fittest'. As managers, we cannot ensure survival of all the tigers, all the time. It's not possible and it cannot be this way. Only fit and strong will survive. Unfit and Weak will perish. The four cubs, now sub-adults, will have to chart their own way, their own niche for survival. It is a fact to be noted that even the mother Tigress P213-32 in its last litter could not ensure survival of all four cubs. Only two survived then. Nature is rude and tigers know this.

For now, all four cubs or, more appropriately, all four Sub-adults, are staying together. But it will not be for long. As per the experience of PTR, tigers start exploring on their own at the age of around 20 months. As three of them are male, they will face tough competition from already powerful male present in the area namely, P431, P222-21, P241 and also from their own father P243. For female, future journey might not be as challenging as it will be for her brothers, as the area surrounding Cub's Territory is having no female tiger at present. It may take up its mother territory. But one never knows what is in store and that's why it is thrilling. Armchair Experts will keep on suggesting. For them, when right, bask in the glory and when wrong? question doesn't arise. We may keep on discussing but Nature acts and then, we will not have any say in it. In Nature, we don't need to put things in order. The Nature is in order. It is for us to put ourselves in unison with this order.

We, the team of Panna Tiger Reserve, can only wish these four sub-adults tigers 'Good Luck'!



\*\*\*\*\*