

#FOOD-TALK

Squisito Brunch @ Leela

Good to remember like the Italians- with wine there is no worry!



So if you're the kind who works hard and brunches harder on a weekend, then Leela Palace should be your go-to destination on a lazy Sunday morning. One caveat to remember while brunching at the Preet Mahal the recently launched Italian restaurant is that calories don't count on a weekend!

First the brunch. How without cheese can anyone have an Italian brunch? The wide variety of cheese laid out at the Cheese Bar would have made any Gujarati gleefully lap it all. For the uninitiated Gujaratis amongst the Indians consume the most amount of cheese.



So from smoky provolone to bars of Barra di Formaggio, fontal, blue Danish to parmesan cheese they were all there. If you see bread and can't keep calm then the Bread bar too was "dough much" Rosemary focaccia, garlic parmesan roll, the usual ciabatta the mixed mushroom tart and crosstine needs special mention as does the vegetable tart. And many more kinds of bread. The accompanying dips like olive tapenade and the artichoke mint - one could not have enough of them. Add to his marinara and then for those who have a lust of cold cuts it was indeed party time.



Why is story telling so important to save our forests? Almost all wildlifers in our state have been great story tellers like Kailash Sankhla, Fateh Singh Rathore, Jai Singh and the legendary Colonel Kesari Singhji of Kanota. Storytelling to wild life is like what fizz is to soda. In good old British days there used to be rhythmic quotes written and hidden incosy corners of the forest like 'wood is good but tree is better' and 'there is music in the silence of the woods'. Romanticized story telling is interwoven in jungle management from 'angrezi' times.



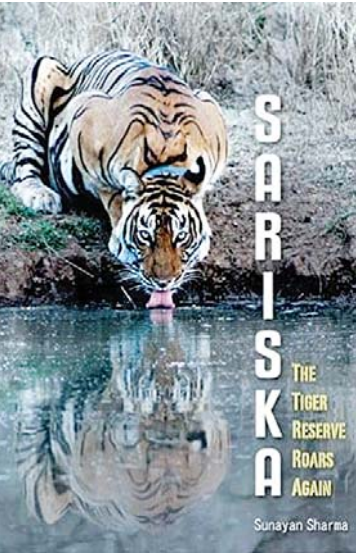
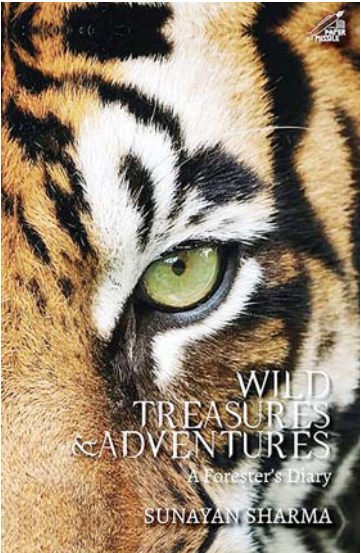
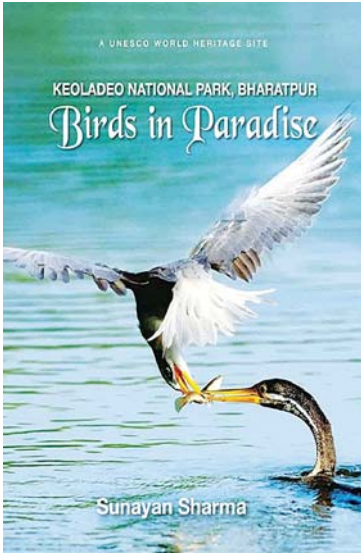
In the earlier days, the very mention of the word 'jungle' used to conjure up images of the grand shikar escapades of the rich and famous. For those from the elite and the ruling class, jungle often meant shooting and posing with tigers and other animals. Sunayan Sharma says, 'It is the hunting which got people interested in the jungle. Every state had a special department for the shikar called Mehekma-e-Shikar which was bound by rules and regulations. For example, you could not hunt a female, particularly a pregnant female. Maharaj Jai Singh of Alwar actually ordered his nephew to go into exile for six months because he happened to kill a female deer.'

**Luring the British**  
He adds, Interestingly, the British were never animal shooters, they were bird shooters and that is what led to the development of the Bharatpur bird sanctuary. Earlier, Bharatpur was one of the largest



Exploring Manali Forests with daughter Bhavna.

Wildlifer or a Storyteller? (...2)



grasslands in India. There were a lot of animals. When a prince named Harman Singh from Gujrat was made the regent of Bharatpur, Harman wanted to impress the British, especially those stationed in Agra which was close by. So, he made a dam, from where a canal was drawn and got the birds here. Then he invited Lord Curzon for shooting and hunting and Bharatpur became a huge hit! After that, the rulers invited them to shoot animals like tigers, deer. As a result with time we had hunters who not only hunted but also gave the public a bird's eye view of jungles are like which made these jungles popular.

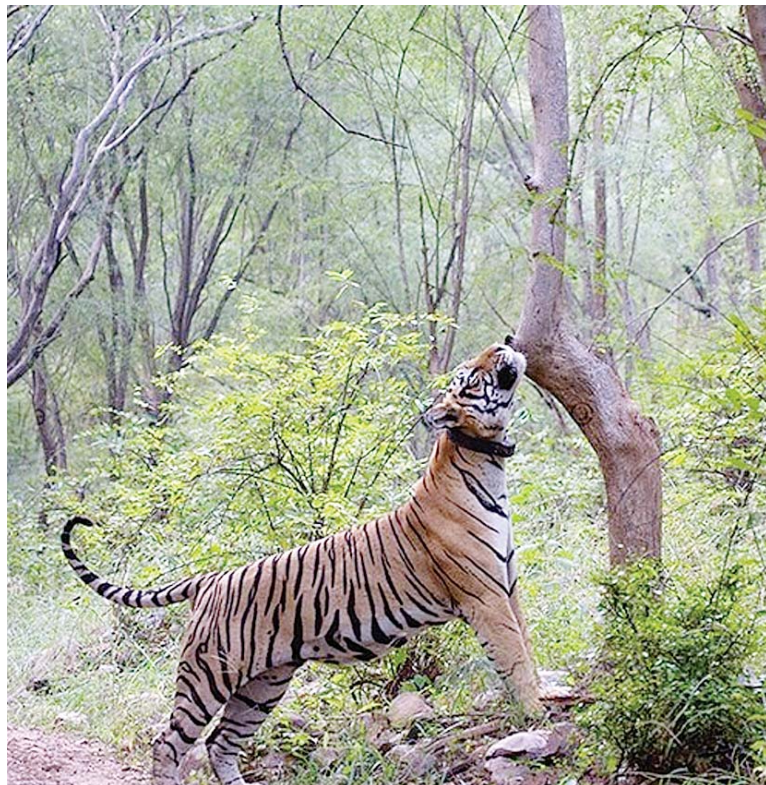
**Strange Requests**  
After the ban on shooting, most people don't go to the jungles or go for the usual touristy capers. There are no longer books being written on wildlife or about these animals because there seem no stories to tell. Hunters had their stories of how they hunted an animal but now there are no narrative to keep the reader captivated. The cameras have become better but there seems to be no context

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about the jungle stories today. There are no longer books written on the jungle. Earlier hunters like Jim Corbett would write about their jungle adventures. Now there seems to be no one who can tell people what a jungle is like. There are so many people who have no idea about the jungle and its creatures. I was often approached by some of them with weird requests. He recounts, 'One person repeatedly requested me to get him a tiger's claw. I got so flabbergasted with his requests, that one day I told him to accompany

#AFORESTER'SDIARY

aspiring prime minister of India was treating a national park which supported lakhs of people and wild life animals and birds like a mere tiger show circus. I told him that I am not going to show him the tiger but the habitat of the tiger. I told him that this park was more than the tiger itself. It had mountains, lakes, jungles and valleys. I told him that the tiger was in the bedroom for now. As luck would have it, we chanced upon the tiger (Kamal) as he was crossing the road. Advani wanted to get out of the jeep to have a closer look. I asked him what if the tiger attacks him? He simply replied that he would become the tiger's breakfast. I told him that I couldn't afford such a thing and requested him to remain seated. The intelligence personnel who were with him came running because he could make out that Advani and me were having some sort of an argument because Advani was saying that he wanted to get a closer look at the tiger and I wouldn't allow him. The intelligence guy on hearing the argument ran back to his jeep because he knew that he could not say anything because either way he would land into trouble with one of us! Advani



**Tiger and Politics**  
'Once in 1992, L K Advani along with former RSS ideologue K N Govindacharya had come for a national executive meet at the Sariska Wild Life Sanctuary. When Govindacharya met me and realized that I was Dr. Vinayan's younger brother, he grabbed my hand and stayed with me for one hour. He was a staunch RSS supporter and my Dr. Vinayan's best friend who was a Marxist to the core. K. Govindacharya told me how he and my brother had shared the jail cell during the emergency. At the time I was amazed at how two people with entirely different ideologies can be such great friends.'

'So, I was told by L.K. Advani to show him the tiger. I really felt bad when he said that. When he said that, I really felt angry because I felt that he, who was the

International Corgi Day

Corgis are popular for all sorts of reasons. They are quiet, reserved dogs - ideal for urban areas. They love to play, are very approachable, and always know how to cheer you up if you're in a bad mood. They won't stop pestering you until they see a nice big smile break across your face. International Corgi Day is a celebration of how these beautiful creatures enhance our lives and make them more enjoyable. It is a chance for owners all over the world to give something back to their furry, four-legged friends.



asked me if I would show him the tiger or not. I told him that in order to get a closer look at the tiger, he will have to take an off beat track behind the mountain which had a lot of thorns and prickly bushes. To give him his due, Advani was very sporting and agreed. He saw a pair of tigers at leisure and clicked their photographs too. The intelligence guy too hurried to get his photograph clicked with Advani and the tiger.'

To me, these areas and sanctuaries are sanctums. Lakhs of people pay to help maintain these areas. They have a higher purpose. It is not only for tiger tourism. They have been promoted in a very bad way which has diminished their stature. When a person arrives in Sariska, the first thing he does is take a deep breath of that abundant fresh air. I have seen so many people - general people, VIPs change the moment they arrive in Sariska.

When I was posted in Sariska,



With Dr Karan Singh during the book launch at India International Centre, Delhi.

mining had become a menace in the sanctuary. A PIL was filed and the government and the advocate on record Aruneshwar Gupta were expecting me to side with them during the court case whereas I was dead against the mining. The pressure was a lot. These mines belonged to influential people like Rajesh Khanna, Lata Mangeshkar, Subhash Ghai and many such influential and politically well-known people. Even their people threatened me but I held on to my ground. I told them that I was with the sanctuary and not with the people who want to mine this land.

I remember this incident when the Aruneshwar Gupta, requested me to show the jungle. I was of course upset but then he had his children and wife with him so I relented. On our way to the sanctuary, he was talking about how mining would benefit the population. I asked his children (8 and 9 years old) if they would prefer the mines or jungle? They unanimously said 'jungle'. I looked at him and smiled because he was outvoted by his own children.'

The most striking aspect about Sunayan's philosophy is that

though he understands the importance of conserving the wild life, he does not discount the importance of maintaining a balance between humans and nature. His approach to reviving the Keoladeo National Park is a testimony to this fact. He says, 'I was first posted in the park as the assistant conservator of forests (ACF) and research officer in 1989. At the time, the park was in full bloom. Birds of varied hues and colours used to come from different parts of the world. But then when I came back to the park in 2006 as its director, the scenario had completely changed. There was no water, the park had dried up and the birds had stopped coming. Prosopis juliflora (Vilayati Babool), a tree with a very prolific growth had spread all over the park and nothing could grow in its vicinity. It was a heart-breaking scenario for a person like me who had seen the park in all its glory. But then I could not give up! I couldn't take water from the Ajan Dam because now it was being used for farming and other activities by the farmers. So, my only option was to tap the

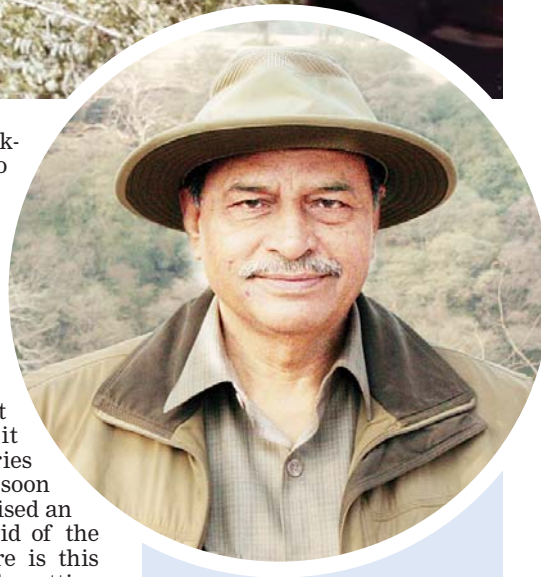
Govardhan canal by making a drain which also met with a lot of resistance. Because it was called a drain and not a canal it was relatively easy to get clearances from the environmentalists and other authorities. The principle is that whether you call it a donkey or a beast of burden, how does it matter as long as it carries the goods?' His efforts soon paid off and he also devised an innovative way to get rid of the Prosopis juliflora. There is this constant threat of people cutting trees in the park. However, this time I invited the villagers to cut and take the wood of the Prosopis juliflora for free. Before long, families from villages far and wide came and cleared up all the trees of Prosopis juliflora. In fact, quite a few villagers became millionaires. They got 2.4 lakh quintal of firewood and we got our park and birds back'

For more than a decade after his retirement he worked as the president of the Sariska Tiger Foundation, a well-known NGO. I was involved in solving problems for the stakeholders and the department and easing the disputes between them. One of the most important aspects we dealt with was the decimation of the tigers in 2004. These tigers were decimated because the villagers teamed up with the poachers to kill them since they feared for their flocks and cattle lives. Now the local poachers from the Bavaria community who are known as hunter-gatherers and knew nothing except killing animals. So, even during my time as the director of Sariska and subsequently as the president of this NGO, we helped the members of this community to get into the

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main stream and gainful employment. Would you believe that they didn't even have voter cards or ration cards in beginning?' So, what's his next plan? Now my only focus is to write books about my experiences because I want more and more people to know and love the jungle. I believe that whoever comes polluted from the cities is purified by the very vibrations of the jungle.'

**Concluded**  
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#SPACE

Potentially Habitable Planets



New research reveals that one-third of planets orbiting M dwarf stars, the most common type of star in the Milky Way, could potentially host liquid water and life as we know it.

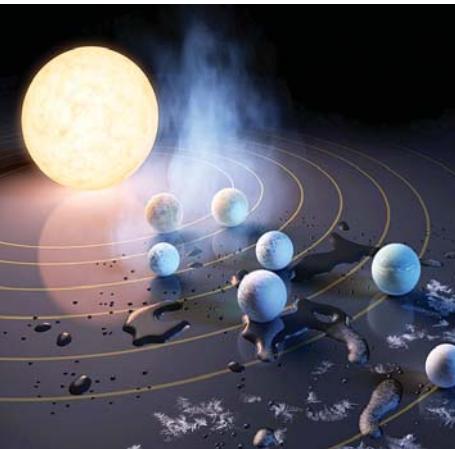
**O**ur sun, while familiar to us, is quite a rarity in the Milky Way where it dwells. The most common stars in the galaxy have less than half the mass of the Sun at most and are a lot smaller and cooler. Since these 'M dwarf' stars are much smaller, much dimmer and much colder, the planets orbiting them would have to huddle pretty close to capture enough warmth to be habitable. This would mean that they are more susceptible to extreme tidal forces.

In a new analysis, astronomers discovered that two-thirds of the planets around these small stars could get 'roasted' by tidal extremes, essentially sterilising them.

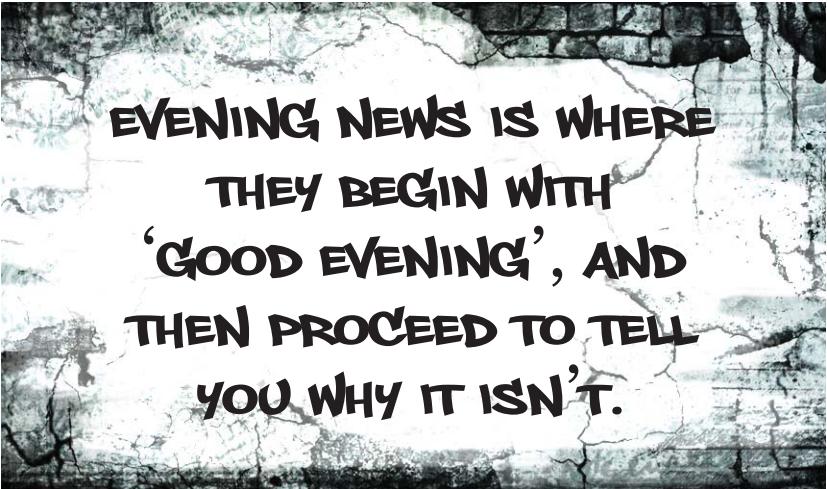
But this means that one-third of the planets could be close enough to the stars and gentle enough to harbour liquid water, which is essential for life as we know it. The astronomers measured the 'eccentricity' of the orbits of a sample that contained more than 150 planets orbiting M dwarf stars. The more oval-shaped the orbit of a planet, the more eccentric it is. If a planet orbits close enough to the Sun and it has a very eccentric orbit, it can go through a process called tidal heating. The planet will be stretched and deformed by the changing gravitational forces on its irregular orbit and friction will heat it up. In a way, this would bake the planet and remove all chance for liquid water.

The researchers discovered that stars with multiple planets were the most likely to have the kind of circular orbit that would allow them to retain liquid water. Also, the planets that were the only ones orbiting the star were most likely to have tidal extremes that would sterilise the surface.

The researchers believe that the Milky Way likely has hundreds of millions of planets that could be promising targets to search for signs of life outside our solar system.



THE WALL



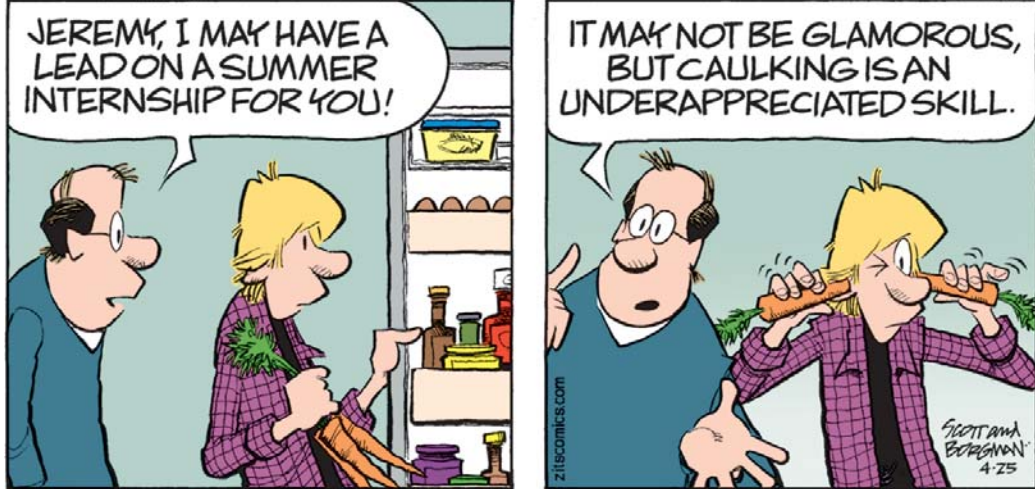
BABY BLUES



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott



ZITS



By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman

