

Feeding activity of a lion pride in the Coastal forest of Gir Protected Area Dharaiya, Nishith and Soni, V.C.*

The free ranging population of Asiatic lion (*Panthera leo persica*) is found only in a small pocket of the Gir National Park and Wildlife Sanctuary in the Saurashtra region of Gujarat. The number of lions had declined greatly during the early '80s, but now constantly increasing since 1990 (Singh and Kamboj, 1995). According to the last census of May 2001 there were 327 lions, recorded not only from Gir PA but a small population was also recorded from the Girnar forest as well as from the coastal forest (Nishith, 2002). The state forest department is organizing a wildlife census every five years as a part of wildlife management and monitoring. First author participated the lion census of 2001 during which following interesting feeding behaviour of a lion pride has been observed and recorded in the field. Place: Muldwarka (The coastal border of the Gir PA) Date: May 15, 2001 Time: 22:00 hr

One lioness and two cubs were located on the kill of buffalo calf. The feeding and other behavioural observations were observed for two hours and the location was visited again next morning.

On the next early morning, the pride left the kill after finishing about 80% of the carcass. The pugmarks of the lioness and cubs were also observed around the location. Moreover pugmarks of one male lion were also observed at the same place, which was not observed on previous day. The male lion might have joined in the feeding or it may have kleptoparasitized the kill at late night.

The above observation shows that the two cubs ate the majority of the prey where as the lioness was less active in feeding; but mostly it was sitting near the prey probably to guard the kill and cubs. Such a social behaviour was also recorded in African Lions (*P. leo leo*) by Schaller (1972). Cub 2 participated more actively in feeding and it was also licked by lioness for 12 seconds. The same cub also played with the mother for 93 seconds.

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Activity	Number Occurrence during two hrs.		
	Lioness	Cub 1	Cub 2
Feeding	Twice	13 times	18 times
Drinking water	Once	Once	Twice
Sitting near the prey	30 Minutes	Once	Twice
Licking	Cub 2 for 12 Sec.	-	-
Resting	44 Minutes	13 Minutes	13 Minutes

Change in fur colour around teats of a lactating tigress

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In compliance of Supreme Court's order, various circuses have surrendered their lions, tigers etc. to the officials of Department of Forests which are now being kept in rescue centres, which are spread all over the country.

A rescue centre has been established in the state of Rajasthan also, which is situated at Nahargarh Biological Park, Jaipur premise, where many tigers (*Panthera tigris*), Lions (*Panthera leo*) and one tigon* have been rescued. A tigress, Chanda, one of the rescued inmates, gave birth to four cubs during the month of August 2004. All the cubs are healthy and growing well.

A remarkable difference in fur colour of ventral side was noticed in lactating Chanda and other non-lactating tigresses. All the non-lactating tigresses have whitish fur colour on the whole ventral side, specially in chest and belly zone, but Chanda has conspicuous coffee-coloured fur

around her four teats. When she sleeps on her side or feeds to her cubs, the coffee-coloured patches around teats can be seen, very clearly from a distance. All the four patches are not in physical contact i.e. not touching one another. They remain visible even when she wanders into the cage or enclosure. By seeing this colour change in ventral side, one can differentiate lactating and non-lactating females.

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* A hybrid of tiger and lioness.

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