

RESEARCH NOTE

INTRA-SPECIFIC FIGHTS IN TIGERS IN RANTHAMBHORE TIGER RESERVE

Tiger is a important species of Indian jungles. It is spread over a large area in different Biotypes from East to West and North to South. It is common knowledge that in nature, intra-species conflicts do takes place and Tiger is no exception. The main reason behind conflicts are courting tigress in heat; mother protecting cubs; territorial fights; right of ownership over kill, etc.

Fatal fights between Tigers have been reported in the past by P. Sanderson, William Rice, and D. Brandow. Hanley mentions a triangular fight i.e. among three Tigers. In recent years, fights between Tigers resulting in death have been reported by P.C. Kotwal from Kanha National Park (Feb. 1975, Jan. 1982, Jan. 1984). In two cases the death was due to crushed head. Fights between a Tiger and Tigress while they are courting are also reported, mostly arising during the final act of courting. There are instances when male Tigers have been killed by female while approaching very near the cubs. There are also records of two tigresses fighting over a kill.

There are two specific incidence of infighting which took place in Ranthambhore National Park. First incidence took place on 2nd Dec. 1994, and another took place on 6th April 1996. It was interesting to note that the two male Tigers died on the spot. Post mortem was conducted by a board of three Veterinarians. Detailed

post mortem report in both the Tigers shows that death occurred due to injuries caused by head crushing resulting in a deep hole on the nasal area, crushed bones and punctured jugular vein resulting in death. Multiple wounds in forelimbs, claw marks show that these are clear cut cases of infighting among Tigers.

A similar case has been reported by Assistant Field Director, Ranthambhore National Park on 10th January 1987, in which three Tiger cubs were found dead in Parana Kho area of Ranthambhore National Park, killed by another Tiger.

The detailed post mortem report showed that all the three Tiger cubs died due to multiple fracture on the first cervical vertebra of the vertebral column, puncture wound on neck, ruptured spinal cord, failure of central nervous system etc.

Here it is worth while to mention that during fighting, Tigers stand on their hind legs and slap each other. When fighting is more vigorous, Tigers fight with eyes closed and mouth wide open. The injuries which have been noticed during the post mortem of two Tigers confirm the above statement about fights between Tigers.

Here it is gain important to mention that both the Tigers died on the spot and their intact dead bodies were recovered within six to eight hours after the confrontation.

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