

Weekly Register-Call

COLORADO'S OLDEST NEWSPAPER

PUBLISHED SINCE 1862 IN GILPIN COUNTY

NEWSPAPER OF RECORD FOR GILPIN COUNTY, BLACK HAWK, AND CENTRAL CITY • THURSDAY, APRIL 30, 2015 • \$1.00

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- Gilpin baseball team wins one, loses one; Track team stats. **SPORTS p8**
- Spring wildfire preparedness and a challenge with prizes. **HOME p8**
- A tailing tale of Mae West - "come up and see me sometime." **HISTORY p9**
- Black Hawk moving forward with Gregory Street parking structure. **CITY p10**
- Aurora Theater shooting trial begins as the world watches. **LEGAL p11**
- Still working on our masterpiece - Base Camp at Golden Gate. **BUSINESS p24**



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Bengal tigers - lords of the jungle... a rare glimpse into the life of wild tigers in India's wildlife refuge parks. **p12-13**

Bengal tigers – lords of the jungle

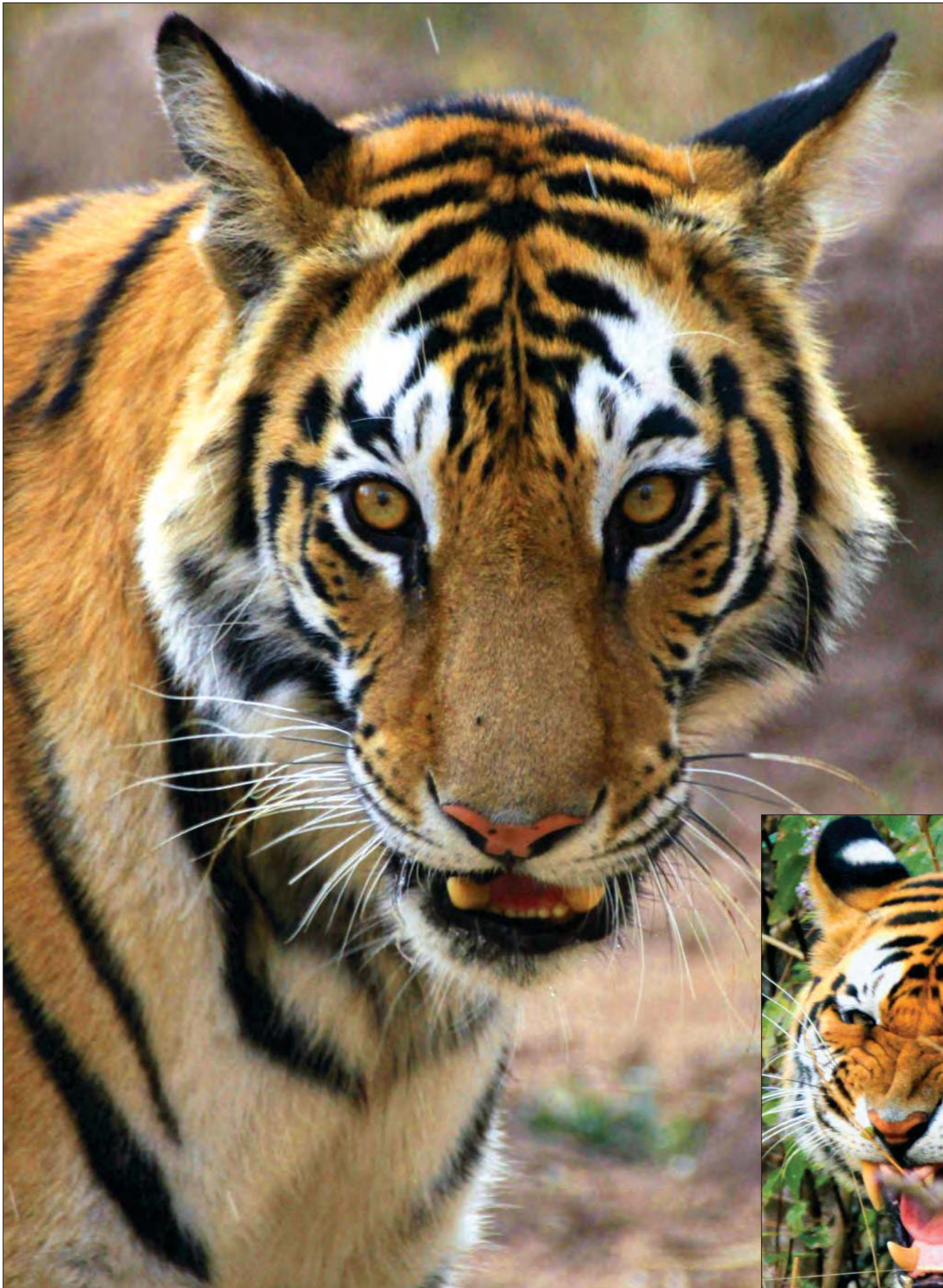
India Safari Finale

by Dave Gibson

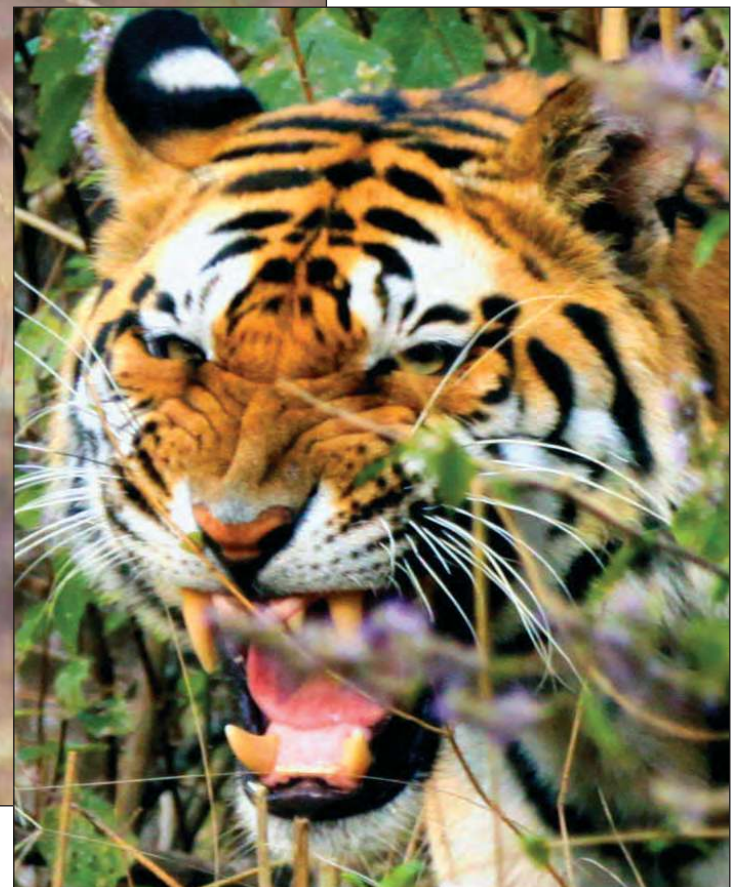
Poking his head out from the dense jungle, to let his mood be known and demand that proper respect be paid, it snarled before taking a few more steps towards the dirt road. Magnificent in stature, ebony stripes flowed down its burnt-orange flanks. With safari vehicles on either side, the tiger gracefully sauntered across with supreme confidence that comes with being the fiercest of beasts, before settling in the brush with its piercing yellow eyes peering at us through the tall grass.

After three days and five game drives, such was my first encounter with a wild tiger in Kahna National Park, India. We would see one more during my stay that treated us to bone-chilling roars both before and after crossing the road, then disappearing and mating with a female. The two Bengal tigers spotted were among only 1,400 that are left and 3,000, including the seven surviving tiger species, in the world. At the beginning of the 20th century, there were believed to be 100,000.

Perhaps the best chance of seeing a tiger in the wild is at Bandhavgarh National Park, a five hour drive from Kahna, also in the state of Madhya Pradesh. One of the smallest National Parks in India at 105 square kilometers,



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it is home to the highest concentration of tigers with about fifty. The zones that you visit are paid for in advance and 4WD Marutis arrive at the entry gates in the morning and afternoon to be assigned their order of entry. The impressive 2,000 year-old Bandhavgarh Fort rests atop 2,600 foot high cliffs in the scenic and highly touted Tala Zone. Odds of coming across tigers are good and you might even espy a golden jackal, sloth bear, or leopard. Gray langurs abound as do spotted deer, sambar, wild boars, and various birds. Although beautiful with abundant game, with four drives under my belt in the Tala Zone, I'd yet to view a tiger. Rumor had it that sightings were better at that moment in the Magdhi Zone and I was able to arrange most of my remaining game drives for there.

The Magdhi Zone consists predominantly of sal tree forest interspersed with a few waterholes. The only water-loving cat

besides the jaguar, tigers relish cooling off in them and having a drink at somewhat predictable times of the day. In the distance, a large tiger had parked his rump in one of the waterholes. He is called Bamera (named after a nearby lake) and is well known to the guides. Once the lord of Tala Zone, he is old now and has been recently ousted by a younger, stronger, male tiger. His scarred cleft nose bears testament to the many battles he's endured. Turning and walking up the hill in our direction, we are perfectly positioned for a close encounter. Not nearly as rambunctious and surly as the tigers I saw in Kahna, we could see that his leg was injured or lame. Bamera limped laboriously with nary a glance. Accustomed to the presence of visitors, he went about his business before exiting the area and spraying a bamboo thicket marking his new territory.



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