

Essay

Gujarat Natural Life Story Vol.1: Animals

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1. Introduction

It has been three years since I was transferred to KYB Conmat Pvt. Ltd (hereafter referred to as KCPL) in May 2013, the first KYB Group branch in India launched. Out of the first four Japanese representative members including me, three returned to Japan in 2015. Two new members arrived and the total number of members is currently three. The outline of KCPL is introduced in the Technical Review No. 49, and the development of mixer, the production item in the branch, is explained in No. 47.

No. 52 will introduce natural life in Vadodara City, Gujarat in west India, where KCPL is located, in two editions: Animals and Birds.

2. Animals

Let's take a look at animals which can be seen in Vadodara City.

2.1 Cows and Water Buffaloes

The first animal you can think of in India is cow. There are 1.26 billion population, 200 million cows and 100 million water buffaloes in India.

Cow is a sacred creature ridden by Lord Shiva, a deity of the Hinduism, which is a belief of about 80% of population.

Cows in India have humps and large floppy ears.

Skin under the neck and on the stomach is loose and looks like pleated curtains.

It is outrageous to eat the sacred cows, but milking the cow is acceptable.



Photo 1 Humped cattle (zebu)

Milk is an important source of animal protein and fat supply as the majority of Indians are vegetarian.

Cows can also be used as draft cattle.

Two oxen with magnificent horns pulling a cart side by side look brave and handsome. Oxen plowing a field can often be seen.

Most of these oxen are spayed.



Photo 2 Oxen drawing a cart

Many cows in town scavenge for food. Some cows are begging for food in front of a private house until they are fed.

Some are literally "ox-walking" and others are lying on a road. They don't seem to care about traffic jam and they (look like they) live as they like.

They exist as if to say, "I am a God's envoy, and my body says No Problem" - as in Indian cliché. They stroll calmly even when cars and motorbikes pass close by at great speed. Even if cars nearly hit their foot or tail, they stay calm. I'm not sure whether it is because they have guts, poor eyesight, or just a dull sense. When I travel on a car, I not only stumble across cows in my way but also see cars staying still on a passing lane like a cow and women who are driving a scooter parallel to each other getting caught up in chatting loudly. People here probably became like cows as they have lived with them for thousands of years. Although cars in the way are annoying, I was surprised to hear a rain of horns and flashing.

There are as many water buffaloes as cows in India. They have black body and smaller head compared to cows. The cross-section surface of their horns looks slightly flat.

They are also used for working and milking.

Buffalo's milk contains more fat than cow's milk and yields are higher. Water buffaloes are more useful to people than cows which are said to be God's envoy. Amul, the largest dairy product company (dairy cooperative) in India has one of their factories in Vadodara. A picture of water buffalo is on their delivery track. Buffalo's milk here is called "Gold Milk" and it is slightly expensive.

As for thinking of food safety, these milking cows is doubtful because their food is mainly from garbage. This makes me uneasy but there is no choice but accept to maintain milk.



Photo 3 Bathing buffaloes

Cows often go ahead of water buffaloes when they walk in line in town and along the street.

They may have a caste system as human society.

Wire barriers are placed around trees on the side of the line to prevent damages.

While trees that count are in poor growth, weeds and more healthy.

In dry Gujarat, however, many street-side wild shrubs grow long thorns so that they are not eaten by cows and other animals.

Poor water buffaloes ! They are treated unequally although it is the same species as cows. Unlike cows which are worshiped, water buffaloes are considered to be the embodiment of evil and be used as a ride by dead kings. They eventually become edible meat. India exports the largest amount of beef in the world, but this is buffalo's meat. The taste is marginal at best. The meat is tough, stringy and tasteless. This is natural because most buffaloes are not bred for meat, and those which can no longer be used for milk or working are slaughtered for meat.

Cow and buffalo dung are collected, flattened and sun dried to make traditional fuels.

They are often dried along central reservations.

This is a recycling society.

2.2 Dogs

Dogs can be seen in every street corner and around town in Vadodara City. Since India is a hot country, many dogs are short-haired and fit like hunting dogs. Most of them have a curled tail. They are lying down on concrete

or sand and having a nap. Of course, they are all stray dogs. They live in groups of a few dogs and 6 or 7 dogs are settled in the district where my apartment is. Large iron trash containers are placed in the dumping site in the corner of town, where cows and dogs scavenge for food and make a mess all around. They are wild but are fed regularly. An accompanying tenant is one of those who are feeding the dogs. When he walks in front of the apartment, his favorite dog comes to him. However, it is strange that the dog doesn't try to play begging for food. We need to be careful as they might reserve rabies in India.



Photo 4 A Dog in front of my apartment and auto-rickshaw

Hygiene of dumping site is somewhat concerned, as caustic lime is often spread as disinfectant.

Pesticide is sprayed like a smoke curtain using a blower attached on the rear deck of a truck in order to kill mosquitoes.

Although it doesn't smell so bad, it might affect the health of children who are chasing the smoke.

2.3 Squirrels

Squirrel in India is called Indian palm squirrel (*Funambulus palmarum*) and it is also an animal related to God. They are everywhere from residences to parks as they do not get harmed. Indian squirrels make chattering noise as they wag their tail, which I couldn't recognize at first. Squirrel eating food with both hands are adorable.



Photo 5 Indian palm squirrel in Sayaji Baug park

2.4 Goats and Sheep

KCPL is surrounded by fields and shepherds sometimes take goats and sheep to the field to feed grass. Most of them are goats, and some are sheep. Most sheep are covered in dust. Goats are bred for milk and sheep for wool. After sheep are sheared, they are used as mutton. The majority of meat in India is poultry, followed by mutton. Both goat and sheep meat are called "mutton."



Photo 6 Sheep and goats walking along the channel next to KCPL

2.5 Donkeys

Donkeys look sorrow. They are often stand still on the road side or central reservations hanging their heads. They often stand still on the roadside or central reservations without reason. Although they are in the traffic way like cows, they don't have such presence or dignity as cows. Compared to the smart appearance of horses, they have small body, large head, long nose and big ears. They look as if they are suffering from a sense of inferiority and in despair. Moreover, some of them had their mane colored in pink. Nevertheless, they have an owner and various symbols are marked on the bottom. What are they bred for? I have only seen donkeys on duty of carrying sorted baggages on their back three times. In human society, there are some kinds of person who can be easily bullied. I think donkeys look like such the exist. I hope not.



Photo 7 Donkeys on top of Pavagadh Hill, Champaner, a world heritage site in Gujarat

2.6 Camels

I can't count how many times I see camels before I came to India. I remembered seeing them a few times in the zoos, and the last time I saw them was on the Tottori Sand Dunes. There is no such thing as "camel and wagon." but camels draw big wagon here. When you pass by a camel, you will be surprised to see how tall it is. If you see the nose closely, you will find that their lower part of the nose is long and round. It reminded me of Lucky Dragon in the old film entitled "Never Ending Story." Camels might have been the model of Lucky Dragon.



Photo 8 Camels being sent to graze

2.7 Horses

Although you can see various animals in Vadodara city, chance to see horses are few. Most horses you can see are white horses drawing wedding carriages. Weddings in India are so gaudy that even people from Nagoya (who are believed to be gaudy) would be surprised. Horses and carriages are painted in white and silver, full-dressed and shiny. These carriages are accompanied by a caravan and marching band that hold lightings and decorations in front and back.



Photo 9 Horse carriage for wedding

2.8 Elephants

I have seen two elephants in a wedding caravan once. Many elephants are carved on sculptures in the old sites throughout India, including the front gate of Laxmi Vilas



Photo 10 Elephants for wedding caravan

palace in Vadodara. Battle scenes of elephants with King on the back are depicted in old paintings. I imagine there were many elephants in the past.

2.9 Crocodiles

When I commute to work, I cross a few bridges. In the evening, I often see many people in line along the bridge rail looking down the surface of the river. In Gifu, I saw people watching sweetfish in the river in summer. What are they watching here?

I asked the driver. He said in a smattering of English, "they are looking at baby crocodiles." Really? Crocodiles can't be in a river which runs through the middle of town. I think they are large lizards. I lived in Jakarta 10 years ago. There, I saw water monitor (*varanus salvator*) in the river next to my apartment in the suburb. The driver believed only what he wants to, so I thought that the driver made a wrong assumption or didn't know the right word.

There is a large park called "Sayaji Baug" in the center of the city. Across a road lies a magnificent university with a domed ceiling built by the King 100 years ago. This park was probably also built by the King. There are a large-scale museum that exhibit the King's collections and a zoo in the park. A river runs through the park tortuously. There is a beautiful bridge. The gap between the bridge and the water surface is about 10 m.

As many wild birds can be seen in the park, I often go for a walk on Sunday morning to see them. One day, as I came near the bridge, I bumped into people who are making noise pointing out the river surface. When I looked down, I saw a crocodile sticking up his eyes and nose from muddy water under the tree by the bank. Wow! It's a real crocodile! It was huge. It's length was well over 4 m. Has it escaped from the zoo near here?

Later, I found out that this was a mugger crocodile. This species has a length of 5 meters and a weight of 200 to 500 kg. They inhabit throughout India.

On that day, I saw two mugger crocodiles swimming under the bridge and the area 20 meters downstream. I pass the downstream bridge on my way home from work.

The driver was right. I should not have preconceived ideas.

When I go to the park every Sunday morning, I found myself seeing crocodiles at a rate of 70 - 80%. This is



Photo 11 Mugger crocodiles in Vishwamitri River

their habitat. I also see tortoises with a 60 - 70 cm shell. Children catch fish without a rod by the river bank. They don't seem to care about crocodiles under the cliff across the river. A newspaper article said that some crocodiles were found, rescued and taken back to the river in the city center when the river flooded from torrential rain during the monsoon season. About 200 to 300 crocodiles live in the river in the city. A local person I met in the park said that he has lived in Baroda (former name of Vadodara City) but they only saw two serious incidents caused by crocodiles. I know he meant that crocodiles hardly pose a threat to people, but it is difficult to judge.



Photo 12 Mugger crocodiles in river bank, Vadodara city center

Generally Japanese people get in panic when they run into wild big animals like monkeys, wild bores or bears in town. On the other hand, Indian people take it for granted that they live together with them. This is because these animals are sacred in their religion even though they may harm people, and people dislike taking a life.

2.10 Snakes

I only saw snakes a few times. Just before finishing work, my driver knocked the window from outside and told me, "come and see, snakes are dancing." In the field right next to the factory, snakes were squiggly, twisting themselves around, raising their upper part and moving their head up and down, side by side. They looked like they were under trance.

This probably continued for around 30 minutes (I kept company with them). Actually, they were mating. It was also a rare scene for local people, so several people asked me for the picture.



Photo 13 Snakes mating in the field next to KCPL

2.11 Monkeys

There are many monkeys in India. They are called hanuman langurs, a group of Old World monkeys. Their arms and legs are long and thin. They have black face, arms and legs, gray body hair, and long tail. These monkeys are considered the messenger of hanuman, God of monkey in Hinduism.

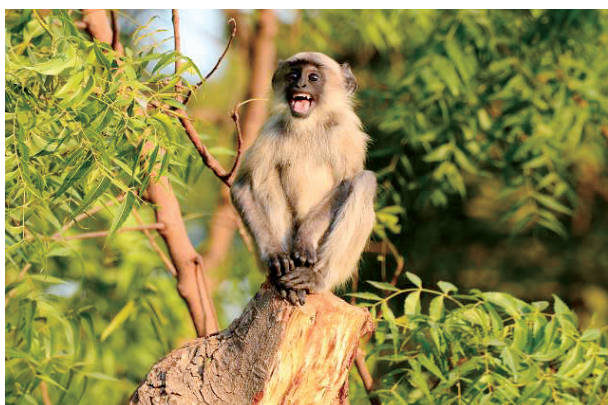


Photo 14 Young hanuman langurs

Some people feed them as they are an sacred animal. They are not scared of people. Monkeys grooming each other and baby monkeys holding onto their mother tightly are very adorable.

At dawn, I hear a short howling noise. It sounds like it is coming from a spooky jungle. This was from the monkeys. The boss monkey ramps with an electric noise that doesn't seem like it is of an animal to other groups or enemies.

They turn up around the apartment where Japanese expatriates live every 1 or 2 weeks. They move roof to roof in a group in the neighborhood. Individuals that are apart from the group can sometimes be seen. If they turn up on the street in front of my apartment, wild dogs keep watch on them at the corner. After all, they are cats and

dogs (monkeys and dogs in Japanese). On the contrary, adult monkeys protect little monkeys. They won't let little monkeys go to dogs by holding their tail. Children in the human world are controlled by adults. Everyone protects their territory.

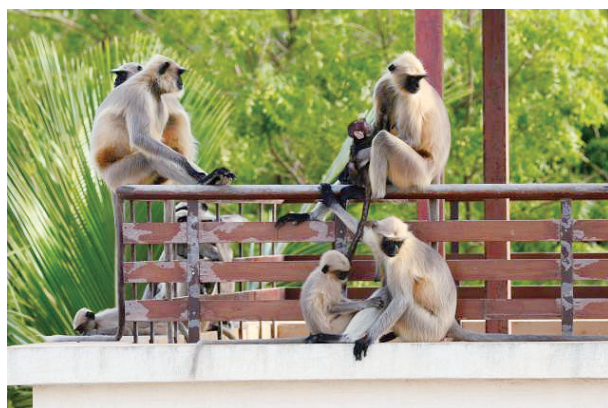


Photo 15 A group of hanuman langurs relaxing on top of the roof of a house next to the expatriates' apartment

2.12 Mongooses

When I saw this animal, I thought it was a kind of weasel.

After research, I found out that it was mongoose. Thick and long tail stretches from the base.

They can always be found in Sayaji Baug.

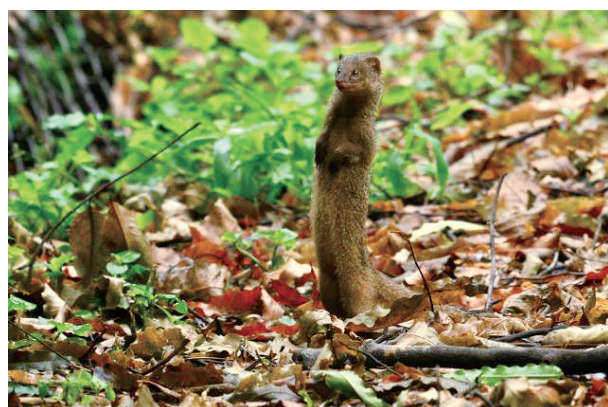


Photo 16 Mongoose standing to keep watch on surroundings

When you hear about mongoose, you may think of a Habu pit viper vs mongoose fighting show. Although Mongooses were brought to Okinawa and Amami Oshima Island in order to eliminate pit vipers, they didn't eat the snakes. Instead, they grew by domestic chickens, wild birds and small animals. They now show a strong image of troublemakers who are to be expelled as an animal that destroy ecosystems. Are they maintaining biodiversity with other living creatures here in the origin of mongoose?

2.13 Cats

You can see various animals in Vadodara City, but not so many cats. I only saw less than 10 cats in 3 years. Skinny cats were in the factory before, but not recently.



Photo 17 Cat studying its prey in square in front of the mosque

2.14 Lizards and geckos

Lizards are crawling in lawn or shrubbery. They look like chameleons and their eyes move round to separate directions. Their color is dry grass and plain. In fact, I don't really know the difference between lizards and chameleons. Geckos are similar in that they stick to walls. I personally like them as they look adorable.



Photo 18 Lizard climbed on a copperpod tree



Photo 19 Geckos on the ceiling of expatriates' apartment

2.15 Pigs

I sometimes see pigs around town. They might be better called wild pigs. Small ones are boars. I see them playing in mud in a group.



Photo 20 Boars playing in mud

The number of sheets for this article has reached the limit. In the next issue, I will cover one of my hobbies - "bird watching." I would like to introduce over 80 species of birds that were found here, familiar types of birds and impressive birds.

Author



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