**WILDLIFE SNIFTER DOG THAT TRACKS LEOPARD AND TIGER POACHERS OF MADHYA PRADESH**

Nirman, a wildlife sniffer dog trained under the fifth batch of TRAFFIC’s wildlife sniffer dog programme in India has an exceptional track record of busting wildlife crime cases related to Tigers *Panthera tigris* and Leopards *Panthera pardus* in his State of deployment. His skills and credibility are so well known that when a tiger was electrocuted at Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve, Nirman was called in from Satna Wildlife Division, four hours’ drive away, to help the forest officials solve the case.

The story dates to a chilly day in December 2018, when the forest officials of Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve recovered a body of an electrocuted tiger near Panpatha range. It was unclear whether the electric wire trap was laid out specifically for the tiger or for any other wild animal.

Immediately, the forest officials called Nirman and his handlers from Satna to the crime scene at Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve. After sniffing the crime scene and the dead tiger, the super sniffer led the investigating team to a hideout of poachers about 1.5 km away near a village. After search and interrogation, two accused were arrested while two managed to escape.

In a similar case a few days later, wildlife sniffer dog Nirman and his handler helped the forest officials of Satna bust a leopard poaching case. The dog was given the scent of an electrocuted leopard that was found in Nagaud range. Nirman led the search team to a location that was 1 km away from the crime scene where the four accused were hiding.

Since Nirman’s deployment two years ago, he has been involved in at least 25 wildlife cases including five cases of tiger poaching, six of leopard poaching, four of bear poaching and 10 involving poaching of other wildlife. Through the efforts of Nirman and his handlers atleast 80 suspected poachers and wildlife smugglers have been arrested.

TRAFFIC congratulates the wildlife sniffer dog squad at Satna Wildlife Division who in such a short period of time have contributed extensively towards protection of wildlife. A special mention must be made of the deploying forest department for effectively using the wildlife sniffer dog who is now proving to be a huge deterrent against wildlife crime in his region. Nirman sets high standards for TRAFFIC’s wildlife sniffer dog programme and it is hopeful that others will follow suit.

**Dog Trivia!**

Companion dogs may become distracted during walks in a forest or park, but scent-tracking dogs remain focused to find the source of the scent, zeroing in on specific targets and ignoring other distractions.

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**Photo credit:** Saket Badola (Masthead);
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**Map** by IGCMC, WWF-India

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