

GREEN FESTIVAL REMEMBERS RANTHAMBORE'S TIGER QUEEN MACHLI | 5



Green fest remembers 'Tiger Queen'

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Pune: Wildlife cinematographer S Nallamuthu believes it was his karmic connection with the tigress Machli that took him back to Rajasthan's Ranthambore National Park in August last year, just in time to capture the dying moments of the once-ferocious big cat he had followed with his camera for nearly a decade.

It was a rainy afternoon in mid August when he received a phone call from the park's forest officials about the tigress' failing health. Nallamuthu was occupied with work assignments in Coimbatore but chose to travel to the sanctuary which has become his second



home. As if on cue, Machli, known to be a camera-friendly tigress, woke up from her unconscious state to walk across to the forest lake to drink water once last time before she went back to the same spot to lie down again.

Nallamuthu captured the entire event on tape. He was only a few feet away when Machli passed away at 6.30am on August 18 just as sunlight

was beginning to peep through the jungle.

For Nallamuthu, known for his dramatic cinematography and keen eye for detail, Machli's death proved to be a milestone in a decade of documenting not just the intriguing story in Ranthambore's tiger clan, but also the endearing tale of affection between the mother and her cubs. He also captured several previously unrecorded trends of the tiger family, including male tigers fending for orphaned cubs, mothers keeping children apart to protect their personalities and feeding them in hiding.

Nalla was in the city on Wednesday to screen his film

Tiger Queen. He was also awarded the Vasundhara Honour at the ongoing Kirloskar Vasundhara International Film Festival.

Nallamuthu believes that such stories need to be told to help save the endangered species. "We need to go beyond talking heads to actually show the drama, human-like emotions and behaviour among the cats. I have seen the tigers fighting, separating, loving, feeding, crying and living out their wild stories. I am trying to humanise them, as they too have their own characters," he shared.

There is a need to change the conservation tune, Nalla said.

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