



Fearless fox in Vagadipolo, a degraded land of North Gujarat

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There are several un-protected areas which need to explore for their biological wealth and presence of some rare and endangered species there in. Unawareness or ignorance of these areas may be a reason that why such areas getting degraded due to immense biotic pressure and encroachment.



Figure 1: Pups of Indian fox

Vagadipolo is such un-classed and unexplored forest area located near the village, Vithoda of Kheralu Taluka of Mehsana, Gujarat, India (N23.9377, E72.5150 & N23.9353, E 72.5337) is studied by me in dissertation work. The area is surrounded by agriculture land owned by the villagers who used to exploit this land for cattle grazing and trespassing. Though highly degraded the

area harbors good faunal diversity including reptiles, terrestrial birds and mammals. Indian fox (*Vulpes bengalensis*), one of the unappreciated and least studied small sized carnivore of the area. Den sites, breeding sites and their feeding habit were studied in this area and tried to understand how they live in such a degraded and human dominated landscape. Fifteen dens were covered within the area of approx 1.5 km², out of which around five were the active dens. Dens have minimum two and maximum 30 openings.

In February, fox pups coming out and pop-up their head, this is season when fox pups are coming out. I came across such situations many times and found myself lucky to witness the successful breeding of fox in this area. But this area is not more secure for Indian fox, during my search in Vagadipolo, found a dead male fox, with a bite marks on its body. The fox was looking so healthy but this may be a case of dog bites during the territory fight. Interrogation with locals gave information about poaching and poisoning of other animals that are considered



as agricultural pests. Additionally, other anthropogenic activities and encroachment in are being lethal for such small and isolated population of wild mammals. I found a great sense of



conservation among the locals for the biodiversity due to mythological and ethical understanding along with the social responsibility to protect the land for grazing. Many such degraded lands demanding study and conservation act to conserve small and

Figure 2: Indian Fox (*Vulpes bengalensis*)

neglected populations of wild animals.

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