

A SMALL MODEL OF RESOURCE SHARING IN PERIYAR TIGER RESERVE

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With the coming up of Eco-development schemes around the sanctuaries and national Parks which strongly emphasize on people's participation and sharing of produce, the real question which has bothered the managers is what to share and how to share in these protected areas when the management is oriented towards no extractions and no removals. This has become still a more challenging task in states like Kerala where there are hardly any community lands around the parks which may be used freely for sharing of the produce.

In Periyar Tiger Reserve the inputs of Ecodevelopment started in 1991-92. In areas around Thekkady there is heavy pressure on fire wood particularly during tourist peak season (because of the dhabas and hotels) which also coincides with fire season. In spite of all the efforts by staff, people enter the forest to illicitly collect fire wood and thatch grass and to set fire to the forests.

During 1992-93, we tried one idea. One fine morning staff was asked to stop all the fire wood collection around Thekkady. We had a much better communication with the tribal and locals, probably due to one year of Ecodevelopment work. Therefore, as expected, all the fire wood collectors gathered in the office. After having a dialogue with them it was agreed that they will be allowed to cut the grass and not the fire wood. Incidentally grass also fetches equally good price for these people in the market. Under strict supervision the local people were allowed to cut grass from grassland areas where early cutting was required. As a result without any expenditure we were able to do early cutting of grass required in the grassland areas, protect this area from fire and create a good will with the locals. Thus this small model of produce sharing which evolved a portion of Periyar Tiger Reserve can be founded at least in some protected areas. The model is being tested now on a large area and if successful can be replicated in other protected areas in the state.

I consider the tiger is a being, a created being. If you kill all tigers still the tigersoul continuous....But the point is I do not want the tiger superseded. Oh, may each she-tigress have seventy-seven whelps. And may they all grow in strength and shine in stripes like day and night, and may each one eat at least seventy miserable featherless human birds, and lick red chops of gusto after it.

— D.H. Lawrence

GO LIGHT IN THE JUNGLE

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In wildlife studies one often needs to quantify cover and to monitor habitat conditions. A 2m long density board or a graduated pole are among the equipments used respectively for such purposes. To index visibility in my study on chital habitat use, I wanted to use one of them. Index would involve counting the blocks visible on them. I was warned in advance about the difficulties of carrying them in the field. I had to think of some lighter equipment as a substitute. On one side was the idea of the said equipments ; on the other side was that of letters that used to be rolled out and read in the king's courts in ancient times. From these ideas evolved that of the cloth stretch that I used.

It consisted of 15x12 cm pieces of cloth. Red and white pieces stiched alternatively along the 12cm edges. Choosing red and white color was with the idea that these colors stand out in the colors of the jungle and it is easy to count the blocks. The stretch when stretched was 1.5m long. A hold was stiched at each end of the stretch. Two wooden sticks each passed through the respective holds would help stretch and hold out or role the structure (Fig. 1).

What is described is just one form of it. Dimensions and colors can be modified depending on the purpose of study and color and nature of the environs. Numbers if required can be painted on it. Terrycot is preferable since; cotton cloth is heavier and may shrink on first drying.

Board or pole is heavy and cumbersome to carry in the jungle. Cloth is light ; can be stretched and held out at will. When not in use, roll it and put it in a bag. Now go light in the jungle.

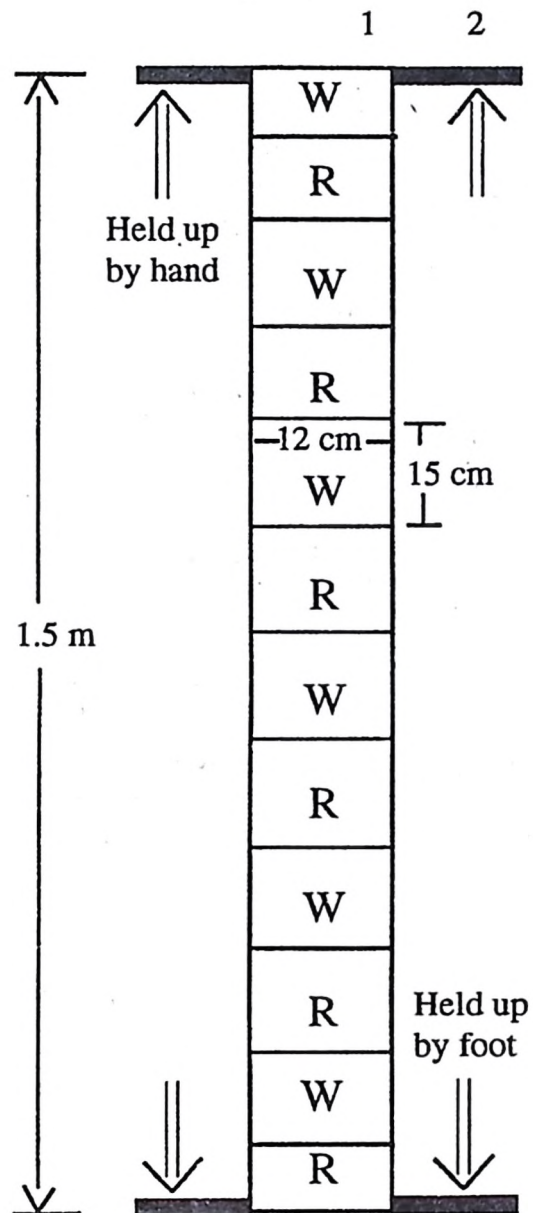


Fig. 1. Visibility Stretch Stretched (Figure not to scale)

W	=	White
R	=	Red
1	=	A Hold
2	=	Wooden Stick

