

# Radio collars interfere with tiger lovemaking?

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these collars weigh over a kilo and consists of a transmitter with a powerful battery that keeps a track of the movements of the tigress.

"Since one tigress was in estrus, it is presumed that while mating, the male tiger grabbed her neck thereby simply knocking off the collar," said Subrata Mukherjee, director of the Sunderbans Tiger Reserve.

When the collar was retrieved, the field staff

## Sunderbans

found pug marks not only off the tigress but also of a male tiger. Considering that one tigress was released in Netidhopani village on February 24, she lost the collar just two weeks later.

The forest staff became suspicious because signals were emitting from a stationary point leading to the suspicion that something

was amiss. Mr Mukherjee said, "We suspect the tigers took off the collars."

This is not an isolated case. Radio collars have been removed seventeen times in the past. There are instances of tigress' ears being bitten off by their mates so there is nothing unprecedented in a tiger taking off the collar.

Belinda Wright, executive director of Wildlife Protection Society of India, cited the example of a photograph

she had received recently from Ranthambore wild life sanctuary where a male tiger while mating with a female tiger had grabbed her collar. "What do we do with the collar?" was the question a wildlife expert had posed to her. But she, along with other tiger experts, believe in most cases, collars are firmly attached and do not come off easily. "But there are always exceptions to the rule," she believes. Radio

collars have their share of experts with some experts not being in their favour as they feel this would adversely affect their mating. Wright steers clear of this controversy saying, "Radio collars help monitor the movements of these animals and help provide amazing details of their behaviour," she said. The three tigers released in the Sariska wild life sanctuary still have their radio collars intact.