

# FLUID



MAY 2016

## INDY TIME

Go inside PIRTEK Team Murray for the latest





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PIRTEK Hydraulic Oil is recommended for use in industrial and mobile applications where either mild or severe operating conditions exist.

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# WELCOME



I write having just returned from our Annual Franchise Owners conference and Awards ceremony. The direction we're heading I believe is very exciting and I think our customers and partners should be excited as well. The passion shown by our franchise group was truly inspiring.

We enjoyed a successful conference, highlighted by a sports themed event on Friday night, a poignant keynote delivered by author and military and first responder family advocate, Taya Kyle, on Saturday and our annual Awards dinner on Saturday night.

I have to congratulate David Entwistle and the team from PIRTEK Rockville on being named the National Franchise of the Year and our Regional Franchises of the year: PIRTEK Space Coast (Southeast Region); PIRTEK Jersey Village (Southwest Region); PIRTEK Rockville (Northeast Region); PIRTEK McKinley Park (Mid-West Region) and PIRTEK Long Beach (West Coast Region). Congratulations to our Top Sales Franchise, PIRTEK O'Hare.

We're an organization that is growing on a daily basis and it is great to welcome PIRTEK San Leandro to the family - being headed up by Daniel Currid and also welcome to Viresh Sitapara who has taken control of PIRTEK Gastonia.

The next month is a very exciting period for us all with the countdown on to the 100th Indianapolis 500 with PIRTEK Team Murray. The event is going to be the biggest in the 100 years it has run. The track is predicting a lockout crowd and it will be a special experience on May 29 to be there.

The owner of Team Murray, Brett Murray travelled to the conference with Matt Brabham. Matt has been a wonderful ambassador for PIRTEK and will us all proud during the Month of May.

That same weekend the team strengthened its association with the Chris Kyle Frog Foundation by announcing the CK Crew for the annual Pit Stop Competition at Indy. Many within the PIRTEK Group have close ties to military and first responders. The crew on the PIRTEK car will comprise seven members of the military and first responder community. The guys are well fired up and looking forward to the challenge against the best crews in IndyCar.

We wish the team all the best and if you can't be there, I'm sure you'll be tuned in on NBC Sports Network/ABC Sports.

The next 12 months promises to be huge for our business - we have some exciting new products coming online, further expansion around the country and higher brand recognition, which will mean a better service for our customers and for our franchisees, greater opportunities to expand their businesses.

It is great to have you along for the ride!

All the best,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Glenn".

Glenn Duncan



# 18th Annual Franchise Owner Conference Award's



*David Entwistle - PIRTEK Rockville - National Franchise of the Year*

have a wealth of highly motivated and talented business owners successfully leading their franchises.”

New products were displayed at Friday's Vendor Expo before a Sports Theme family night with Matt Brabham and the PIRTEK Team Murray IndyCar. Saturday began with the Franchisees and their families enjoying an inspirational keynote address from acclaimed wife of the American Sniper, Taya Kyle. The Conference was concluded with the Annual Awards Presentation Evening.

Congratulations to all of the award recipients!

The Annual Franchise Owner Conference brought together nearly 60 owners from across the United States to network, enhance their business development opportunities, and discuss and share strategies. Family members also attend, as the event features fun and lively entertainment options. This year's conference was at the Renaissance Orlando at Sea World in Orlando, Fla.

“It's an exciting time for all of us at PIRTEK as we continue this wave of expansion across the United States,” said Glenn Duncan, Executive Director of PIRTEK International. “All the new Service & Supply Centers, the enhanced product lines and the release of new PIRTEK-branded products — we're experiencing significant growth. Best of all, we



*PIRTEK O'Hare Owner, Ken Adair (Left) presented with the Top Sales Award by Paul Bowes, Sales Manager, PIRTEK USA*

### **National Franchise of the Year**

PIRTEK Rockville located in Rockville, MD earned top honors as the PIRTEK USA's National Franchise of the Year. This franchise showed exceptional commitment, operational excellence and enthusiasm for the brand.

"To be chosen for this award out of all the great PIRTEK franchises around the country says a lot," said Rockville Franchisee, David Entwistle. "Our team has worked so hard to make our location function at peak efficiency and quality. This is a nice recognition of all that effort, and we appreciate it."

### **Regional Franchise of the Year**

These franchises were recognized for their outstanding performance in 2015. Each franchise met specific criteria that demonstrated their Center and Team Members with exceptional commitment to the PIRTEK System.

Southeast Region – PIRTEK Space Coast. Received by General Manager, Jennifer Prendergast

Southwest Region – PIRTEK Jersey Village. Received by Owners Jim and Laurie Phillips

Northeast Region – PIRTEK Rockville. Received by Owner David Entwistle

Mid-West Region – PIRTEK McKinley Park. Received by Owner Ken Adair

West Coast Region – PIRTEK Long Beach. Received by Paul Martin

### **2015 Top Sales Award**

This Center was recognized for their outstanding accomplishment of the highest sales in 2015. In a PIRTEK System this achievement is earned with dedication and hard work by its entire team.

PIRTEK O'Hare, Chicago, IL. Received by Owner Ken Adair



*Jim & Laure Phillips, PIRTEK Jersey Village are presented with the Southwest Region Franchise of the Year Award by Sale Representative, Tim Hastings (R).*



*Glenn Duncan and Team Murray owner, Brett Murray present Taya Kyle with the #1 Limited Edition PIRTEK USA Indy 500 Commemorative Coin*

# SPACE & AERONAUTICS EXPERT TAKES HOLD OF GASTONIA, NC



North Carolina entrepreneur Viresh Sitapara, a business owner and engineer from the Charlotte area, is the new owner of the PIRTEK Service & Supply Center in Gastonia, North Carolina. Located at 1101 W. Franklin Boulevard, the center features four 24/7 Mobile Service Vehicles and is staffed by a team of five.

There are three PIRTEK Service & Supply Centers in North Carolina - Gastonia, Greensboro and Charlotte.

Sitapara's background is in engineering and his career has spanned such fields as the space industry and medical technology. His interest in entrepreneurial endeavors is ongoing. He owns a successful health & beauty-related franchise in Pennsylvania, but he stays alert to new opportunities, which is how he found his way to PIRTEK.

Sitapara said he did an intensive study of various franchising opportunities and was impressed with PIRTEK on several levels. "PIRTEK is a young franchise in the United States," he said. "The business also has a technical aspect which, as an engineer, really piqued my interest. There is a lot of room for expansion. I like the business model and I was familiar with what they do."

Sitapara, who is originally from India, came to the United States in 1991. Having already earned his bachelor's degree, Sitapara began working toward advanced degrees upon his arrival.

"I came here with only 20 dollars in my pocket," Sitapara said. "I worked two full-time jobs, including a job at a gas station - 80 hours - while I was getting my master's degree. I don't sleep much so it helps."

After getting his master's degree in space and aeronautics controls, Sitapara went on to earn a Ph.D. in engineering from Kennedy Western University.

Sitapara said that purchasing an existing location has obvious advantages over a complete startup. "The business is already operating and has customers," he said. "That allows me to concentrate on other aspects of the business, instead of focusing on getting things off the ground."

One edge Sitapara has at PIRTEK is his familiarity with the kinds of industrial hoses the company replaces for its customer. During his many years working with a welding company, he was responsible for the manufacture of about 2 million hoses. "I know hoses very well," he said.

# PIRTEK SOARS IN THE TOP 500



PIRTEK USA has moved into the top half of Entrepreneur magazine's top 500 franchises, rocketing up 185 spots in 12 months to occupy the 237th position in the 2016 list.

In its 37th year, the Franchise 500 recognizes and celebrates top franchises based on financial strength and stability, growth rate,

and size of the franchise system.

"It's always an honor to be recognized within the industry by such prestigious and high-profile business advocates as Entrepreneur," said Glenn Duncan, Executive Director, PIRTEK International. "As we expand throughout the United States, we're continuing to enhance the services, products and support we provide to our business owners. It's a successful strategy that has propelled our rank within the Franchise 500."

PIRTEK is a unique model - the only company of its type to provide hydraulic hose solutions with a 24/7 onsite repair service through specially equipped Mobile Service Units, backed up by a series of 'bricks and mortar' Service & Supply Centers.

Globally, PIRTEK now boasts more than 400 Service & Supply Centers in 23 countries around the world and now has a network sitting at

60 Service & Supply Centers (and growing) in the United States.

PIRTEK is a B2B franchise opportunity, however, business owners are not necessarily technicians with industrial equipment backgrounds, explained Duncan. "Our most successful business owners are men, women and spousal teams that have experience in building relationships, marketing and sales, and understand the value of networking within their communities," he said.

Coinciding with the company's growth is the release of new PIRTEK-branded products, including spiral wrap hose protection lines, pressure gauges, and hydraulic oil and lubrication products. PIRTEK USA is also introducing newly designed Service & Supply Centers and Mobile Service Vehicles to increase brand visibility and enhance the customer experience.

## PIRTEK Reading Road's Team gets Crane Back in Action

Since 2005, PIRTEK Reading Road has been serving the Cincinnati, Ohio area along with the northern tip of Kentucky. A long-time crane rental customer uses the Reading Road franchise to maintain all of its hoses and found themselves in quite a dilemma with a very limited turnaround time before its next lease.

The issue was with a 35-foot crane that needed to have a major hose replacement. Three PIRTEK Service Technicians were swung into action to ensure the job was done quickly and safely. Once the technicians arrived they inspected the crane to find the damaged hoses that needed to be replaced. In order for the technicians to replace the damaged hoses and install new ones, they were required to work up on the crane's main body where

the hydraulics are located. It wasn't an insignificant job, with nearly 30 hoses in a variety of sizes having to be removed. The three technicians were required to measure, cut, clean, crimp and install the new high pressure hoses.

The quick and efficient teamwork enabled the customers to get the crane back to work and ready to hoist its next job a day early. The customer's Service Manager stated, "We really appreciate PIRTEK's service and ability to respond 24/7. They are always available to keep us operating. A good example is this job where PIRTEK sent three vans to get us up and running as quickly as possible."

Proving once again that PIRTEK is number one in reducing downtime for its customers.



# EARTHMOVING SPECIALIST EXPANDS CALI FOOTPRINT



PIRTEK has opened a new Service & Supply Center in San Leandro, Calif., a community south of Oakland with about 400,000 residents. The new facility at 1997 Burroughs Avenue has been opened by Daniel Currid, who comes to the PIRTEK franchise group after 18 years at a local Caterpillar dealer.

The 4,200 square-foot facility in San Leandro has a staff of seven, with three 24/7 Mobile Service Vehicles ready to be dispatched for on-

location work.

San Leandro lies in the East Bay area of California. Franchise owner Daniel Currid said this should prove an excellent spot for a PIRTEK Service & Supply Center. "There's plenty of industrial activity going on in this area," said Currid, who is operating the business with his wife, Kathryn. "There's a port and an airport. The region is heavy with companies that do construction, manufacturing, marine work – all kinds of industries. It's an excellent market."

After 18 years with Caterpillar, Currid was looking for a change - and to be his own boss.

"It was a great experience," he said. "But I wanted to be my own boss, so I started looking into some franchise opportunities."

After doing online research,

Currid discovered PIRTEK, and it appeared to be the right fit. Initially, the company's main draw was its connection to the field he had worked for so long.

"I have a lot of industry contacts and relationships from my previous work, which provides me with an edge," said Currid, who has lived in the East Bay area most of his life. "Plus, I enjoy sales, turning over rocks to find new customers and new opportunities. It's about building relationships, building confidence, putting in the time and effort."

One of the things that deeply impressed Currid about PIRTEK was the high level of support the franchises get from the corporate office in Rockledge, Fla. "I found the team at corporate very knowledgeable, very supportive," he said. "That made the difference for me."

# PIRTEK SUPPORTS CANDELIGHTERS OF BREVARDS



The PIRTEK USA Corporate office in Rockledge, FL has raised and donated funds to Candlelighters of Brevard, Inc., which provides mental, physical and emotional support for children with cancer and their families.

The fundraiser among the executive team in the corporate office raised \$1,100, which was presented to the Candlelighters by PIRTEK USA Marketing Manager, Georganne DeSeve. The charity is close to the Executive teams heart.

"The PIRTEK staff felt strongly about helping the Candlelighters because one of our sales representatives has a daughter that was diagnosed with cancer at a young age," said PIRTEK USA Marketing Manager Georganne DeSeve. "Candlelighters supported his family during their most difficult times. We were pleased to give back."

The Candlelighters of Brevard is a non-profit organization dedicated to children with cancer and their families by offering emotional support and financial assistance. They offer family programs and services such as Home Away from Home, Utility Assistance and the Prescription Drug Program. They also have a Volunteer Guild. The Candlelighters are committed to ensuring no one has to face the diagnosis of childhood cancer alone.

To learn more about Candlelighters of Brevard, Inc. or to donate, visit <http://www.candlelightersofbrevard.org/>





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John Abercrombie, Owner  
PIRTEK Gulfgate - Houston, TX

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## MEET THE FRANCHISEE

Pictured: L to R, Dennis Bailey, General Manager, Josh Mendoza, Operations Manager & Ian Harley, Franchise Owner

### IAN HARLEY Perry, Indianapolis, USA

**Name:** Ian Harley

**Location:** PIRTEK Perry, Indianapolis, IN USA

**Years in PIRTEK:** 3 Years, although I started a center in the U.K. in 1996 still owned by my family.

**FLUID: How did you first become aware of PIRTEK and its franchise system?**

Ian Harley: I read a newspaper article in the U.K. about PIRTEK.

**FLUID: What attracted you to becoming a PIRTEK franchisee over other businesses that you investigated?**

IH: PIRTEK is unique in being a B2B franchise with a high average transaction value and the potential for significant growth in market served. The range of applications and industry sectors is also very encouraging.

**FLUID: PIRTEK is often described as a family - as a franchisee - can you elaborate on some of the elements that makes PIRTEK feel like a family?**

IH: Every franchise aims for a consistent customer experience and service level, excellent service and best in class technical ability. There is strong communication and collaboration across the network with a common goal of building the industry standard mobile hose service company. There are tremendous opportunities for career and personal development.

**FLUID: What are some of the major positives to being a PIRTEK franchisee?**

IH: It is a highly successful and profitable business with a clear, well delivered strategy.

**FLUID: Before getting into the PIRTEK way of life, what industry(s) were you involved in?**

IH: Precision Agriculture

**FLUID: How easy was it to become familiar with the PIRTEK system and become a business owner in a new industry?**

IH: I remain non-technical and have built a successful business by assembling a great team of happy people who like the job they do and enjoy coming to work each day.

**FLUID: What are some of the major benefits - whether financial or lifestyle - that you've found from being a PIRTEK franchisee?**

IH: We all want financial success and security and PIRTEK can provide that to everyone in the network. More importantly, our customers love the service we provide giving satisfaction every day.

**FLUID: If anyone reading was thinking about buying a PIRTEK franchise, what would you say to them?**

IH: You need appropriate capital resource and commitment to a business which is over a 3-5 year timeframe. You have to organize your personal and financial lifestyle to accommodate this.

**FLUID: Can you identify some of the best things about owning a business**

**under the PIRTEK banner?**

IH: We represent the leading brand in the industry and take pride in the quality solution we offer.

**FLUID: What are some of the biggest things you've learned about either yourself or your business since becoming a PIRTEK franchisee?**

IH: Customers, people, cash and inventory need regular attention and are the key assets of any PIRTEK Franchise.

**FLUID: PIRTEK - through being on-call 24/7 - is known for how dynamic and adaptable its product range is - surely you've got some stories about unique uses product or sticky situations you or your staff have found themselves in?**

IH: The critical success factor is the attitude which always says yes; we will endeavor with all the resource and ability we have to solve any fluid transfer challenge for any customer anytime, anywhere. We constantly expand the range of technical solutions we provide covering hydraulic hose solutions, solid tube, brake, power steering, air, and others.

There are too many stories to mention; it is a fascinating business. We have re-plumbed die-cast machines to allow manufacture of specialist aluminum parts for a leading electric car manufacturer. Repaired train maintenance equipment at night to keep the railroads open. Fixed brake lines on the Lucas Oil Boat Trailer. The list goes on; no two days are the same.

## MILITARY & FIRST RESPONDERS PIRTEK'S INDY 500 PITCREW ENTRY

PIRTEK Team Murray's entry into the annual Tag Heuer Pit Stop Challenge at the Indy 500 will be crewed by a rookie team of military members and first responders.

The "CK Crew" has been brought together by the Chris Kyle Frog Foundation with backing from Warner Bros. Home Entertainment, who are using the association to leverage the American Sniper Chris Kyle Commemorative Edition Blu-Ray.

The crew Members are being drawn from various key markets around the US and bring with them diverse backgrounds - from Navy SEALs who trained and served with Chris Kyle, to Police Officers, Fire Fighters and multi-disciplined first responder veterans.

At the time of writing - two CK Crew Members have been announced - David Rutherford from Boca Raton, FL is a former Navy SEAL who trained Chris Kyle. He was announced in St Petersburg Florida at the first round of the Verizon IndyCar Series, while Sonny Saghera - the Fire Captain from Heartland Fire & Rescue just outside San Diego has also joined the crew.

The next one is due to be announced in New York City the first week in May with a CK Crew Member from Texas, Chicago and Indianapolis itself set to join the crew.

They will spend a 10 day "IndyCar Boot Camp" in Indianapolis, where they will be trained in what it takes to accept the PIRTEK Team Murray Chevrolet at 60mph, change tires and get it away faster than the opposition.

The Verizon IndyCar Series has welcomed PIRTEK Team Murray and the CK Crew, with President of Competition and Operations, Jay Frye commenting:

"All of us at the Verizon IndyCar Series are proud to support the CK Crew program, which will be a great addition to the TAG Heuer Pit Stop Challenge this May," said Frye.

"Honoring members of the military is one of many traditions at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway and we're thankful to PIRTEK Team Murray, Warner Brothers and Taya Kyle for their efforts in putting this



From left: Matt Brabham, David Rutherford and Taya Kyle at the CK Crew announcement

program together."

The CK Crew Members are ready for action and believe they can adjust to the high pressure given their base training.

"The Indy 500 is an event that many people dream of attending," said Sonny Saghera. "But to (extend that and) come together in a new type of team, a new environment, learning new skills - but drawing on the training that we've all had at varying levels throughout our careers - is incredibly exciting."

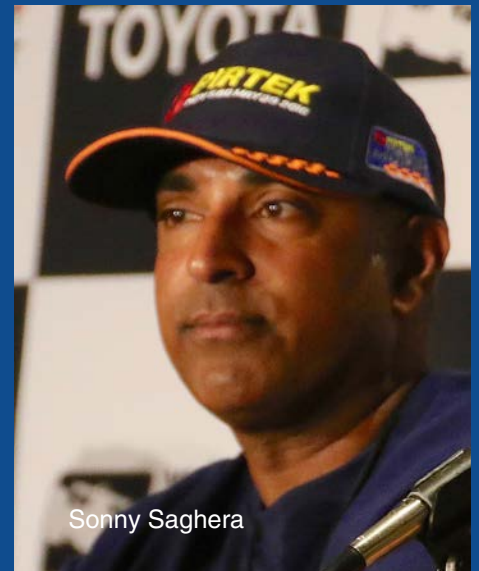
David Rutherford - who is now a motivational speaker, author and podcaster is jumping out of his skin about the Challenge.

"We'll be using plenty of SEAL Team thinking come the TAG Heuer Pit Stop Competition on May 27 and I think that with the team we are putting together with Warner Bros. Home Entertainment and the support of the military community on that Memorial Day Weekend - we can be unstoppable!"

Taya Kyle - who personally selected all of the CK Crew Members is looking forward to the good times to be had with friends at the Indy 500 - as well as hosting the 500 members

of the military and first responder community the team and Chris Kyle Frog Foundation will accept through the Month of May.

"The guys that we're bringing together for the CK Crew have been great friends and have helped Chris and particularly my family and I over the last few years. I know they will do an awesome job and we'll all be able to have a great celebration at the completion of the Pit Stop Competition with them all."



Sonny Saghera

# PIRTEK Snocross and Indy Sponsorships Collide!



Groomer and Matt Picture: Matt Brabham

PIRTEK Team Murray driver, Matt Brabham made a pit stop in Lake Geneva, WI to join PIRTEK in the wrap up of the final snocross event of the year.

Matt joined PIRTEK sponsored Hentges Racing Team riders, Kody Kamm and Petter Narsa for a weekend of action packed racing. Matt was featured in a live streamed interview promoting his support

of Hentges Racing Team and the upcoming Indy 500. On Saturday evening, Kamm and Brabham were interviewed discussing their experiences this weekend hanging out together and the differences of Snocross and IndyCar racing.

"It was a great experience to be up in Lake Geneva and get a first hand look at a different type of racing," said 22-year-old Brabham - who will make his Indy 500 debut in May. "The guys were awesome and I got a really good feel for the sport.

"Taking a ride in the PIRTEK Groomer was interesting, Lake Geneva is a pretty gnarly track and here we were basically facing a downhill vertical, on snow, in this heavy groomer! I wasn't sure we were going to make it down, but the way in which the groomer driver handled it was fascinating to watch.



Hentges Racing Team Owner, Nate Hentges, Matt Brabham, Petter Narsa and Kody Kamm

"It was a great weekend with the Hentges guys and to see them win was even better - I hope that we can translate some of those winning feelings into the month of May."

Congratulations to Petter Narsa for securing his first, 1st place podium of the year on the Friday after 2nd and 3rd place finishes throughout the season.

## A NOTE FROM MATT BRABHAM...

Hi Everyone,

Just wanted to drop everyone on the PIRTEK Team a note to say thanks for your support of me and PIRTEK Team Murray.

It was great to come to Orlando with the car on the Friday night of the Conference and meet the franchise group. Everyone has been so supportive and I really appreciate the kind words I received at the event and the messages I get on social media.

Well, the big month isn't far away now and I cannot wait. It has been such a whirlwind since we made the announcement in December last year, that literally feels like yesterday.

By the time you read this, I will have had my first test at Sebring in Florida. It will be a private test. I will have the chance to lay down some laps on a road course, which will be good for the Angie's List Grand Prix on the weekend of May 12-14.

We've announced our engineer, who has a great deal of history in IndyCar racing. Andy Brown was part of the team that won the race

with Al Unser Jr. in 1992 - the closest finish ever - then went on to win two IRL Championships with Sam Hornish Jr. He works currently with a Touring Car team in England that are - ironically - sponsored by PIRTEK! So that in itself is a nice link.

At the Phoenix and Long Beach IndyCar rounds, we've had some of the local franchisees drop by the races and get a feel for what IndyCar is all about and it has been awesome that we can give them a look into the inner sanctum of how the race team works.

I've been racing a Stadium Super Truck too. I got a podium at St Pete and then at the Toyota Grand Prix of Long Beach ended both races on the podium and was second for the round. That was really cool.

Also at Long Beach we announced our second CK Crew Member in Sonny. I'm really excited by this program and what it will mean on Memorial Day Weekend to have a crew of military and first responders alongside us. I have been talking to Dave Rutherford a lot and

he has been assisting me with mental preparation for the month, which I really appreciate.

IndyCar invited Taya Kyle to ride in the two-seater IndyCar with Mario Andretti. You can't get much better than that! It has been awesome to spend time with such a strong advocate for military and first responder families who is looked up to by so many.

It's been an amazing ride so far, I can't thank Glenn and every single person at PIRTEK for what they have done to allow Crusher to make this a reality.

We're so excited that we'll be hosting plenty of you in Indianapolis and can't wait to roll the PIRTEK #61 out for the first time. There is going to be something like 400,000 people there on the day and over 7 million people watching on TV in the US alone. I'm so glad that you will be part of it and along the ride.

I look forward to seeing you there,

Matt Brabham



## **FISHING CHALLENGE ATTRACTS BIG NUMBERS**

The annual PIRTEK Fishing Challenge right around Australia attracted over 7,300 entries at the end of March.

Billed as the largest single day fishing extravaganza in Australia, the Challenge offers over \$175,000 in cash and prizes, including a \$25,000 Stacer Boat and Evinrude Outboard package, including trailer.

The event raises money for two organizations - Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia and the Peter Duncan Neurosciences Research Unit at St Vincent's Hospital, Sydney - the research unit named after PIRTEK founder, Peter



Duncan that conducts research to develop treatments for chronic neurodegenerative disorders such as Multiple Sclerosis, HIV-associated

Neurocognitive Disorders, Alzheimer's disease; Parkinson Disease and Stroke.

Australia is divided into several regions dependent on State or waterway system and prizes are issued for Junior and Adult competitors - as well as a chosen 'Mystery Length'. It is a catch and release system where photographs of the fish are uploaded laid out on a measurement mat. New for 2016 was an App where anglers could send entries direct from their phones.

Since its inception, the PIRTEK Fishing Challenge has raised nearly \$1 million for charity.



# PIRTEK'S V8 COMEBACK



PIRTEK successfully returned as the major brand on the side of a V8 Supercar in Australia for the first time in over 10 years in mid-April.

The one-off forms part of the PIRTEK sponsorship package with the DJR Team Penske Fords in the Australian/New Zealand Series. DJRTP rotates its major sponsorships event to event.

The experience was successful with drivers - Fabian Coulthard and Scott Pye both recording top three finishes throughout the course of the weekend.

Ordinarily, the PIRTEK logo sits on the headlights of the two Falcons.

The 2016 season has started well for Coulthard and Pye with both

recording pole positions at the first round of the Championship in hot conditions in Adelaide.

PIRTEK holds a business-to-business relationship with the Penske Transportation Group's growing portfolio in Australia.





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**On Site Hose Service**

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# Tracking India's Feisty Feline

Our travel writer and photographer recently encountered tigers in a central Indian jungle, and found their fate – thanks to poachers and increasing human populations – no different from the African lion.

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHS RAMDAS IYER

**T**he tiger has always played a part in our collective consciousness, often interpreted as a symbol of power, strength and beauty. In Hindu culture, the tiger is revered as the sacred vehicle of Durga, the warrior goddess.

And I had the opportunity to come face-to-face with this mighty animal on a recent trip through the forests of central India where a majority of them still roam.

I arrived at the Bandhavgarh National Park (BNP), in the Indian state of Madhya Pradesh, by plane from New Delhi, landing in Jabalpur and then by car to the park; a journey of 600 miles to visit the home of an animal that has existed for two million years.

Known to have evolved from the saber-toothed cat that lived 32 million years ago, tigers have spread from their original home in China and evolved into many subspecies including the Royal Bengal Tiger of India. The BNP was the hunting preserve of the rulers of the state in the 1800s and has hosted many hunters from the British Raj; it has documented killings of over 350 cats by one particular hunter during his five-year posting in India. At the close of the 19th century, when Rudyard Kipling penned *The Jungle Book*, some 50,000 to 100,000 tigers were thought to roam the Indian subcontinent.

The tiger once ranged widely across Asia, from Anatolian Turkey in the west to Kamchatka, in the

eastern coast of Russia; over the past 100 years tigers have disappeared from southwest and central Asia. According to the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), tigers inhabit less than 6% of their historic range with a 42% decline since 2006. Breeding populations of tigers are currently found in eight range states: Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nepal, Russia, and Thailand.

Since 1900, the number of tigers in the wild has shrunk from an estimated 100,000 to as few as 3,200. WWF is working toward a bold but achievable goal to double the number of tigers in the wild by 2022, the next Year of the Tiger. A 2015 news report reveals healthy population increases in all ranges in south and central India.

Strictly-managed and controlled jeep safaris are the only way one can encounter these magnificent animals in their natural habitat. My first encounter on my trip was with a mother and her three grown cubs that paced majestically through the sal tree forest, disappearing often into the high grass that grows after the monsoons.

This was the beginning of a four-day, 32-hour photographic 'hunt' for these animals. Sighting and photographing seven of them was not easy since they are primarily active in the wee hours, returning after a hunt, or during dusk before a hunt. Being solitary animals and effectively camouflaged, tracking them is one of the great joys and challenges of wildlife photography.



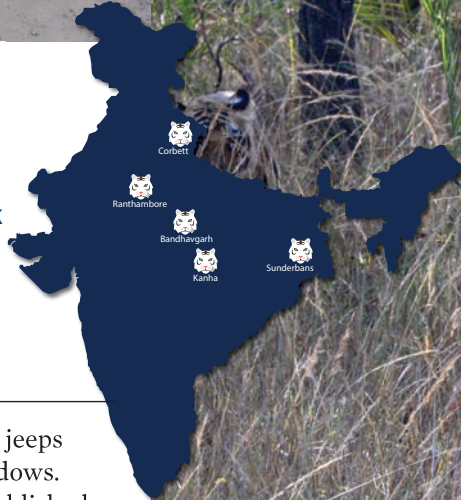




Iyer on the safari

## Top 5 Tiger Reserves In India

- Ranthambore National Park
- Kanha Tiger Reserve
- Bandhavgarh National Park
- Corbett National Park
- Sunderbans National Park



BNP allows a maximum of 32 jeeps per day in two four-hour windows. This capacity control was established by Project Tiger, an Indian initiative to protect the tigers. The park has a huge variety of mammals such as black bears, antelopes, deer, reptiles including crocodiles and snakes, and over 350 species of birds.

At 6AM on a cold morning, I was filled with excitement when I spotted a young male tiger, looking tired and hungry after an unsuccessful night of hunting. He approached my jeep from 600 feet away, oblivious to my presence and walked within a few feet marking his territory along the way.

Tigers need to kill 60-75 large prey animals per year. They are opportunistic predators, however, their diet includes birds, fish, rodents, insects, amphibians and reptiles in addition to other mammals such as primates and porcupines. Tigers can also take ungulate prey much larger than themselves, including the water buffalo, Indian bison, small elephants and on occasion even rhinos. Bandhavgarh boasts all of the above animals except the rhino and elephant which are distributed further north in Chitwan Park near the border with Nepal, another known tiger range. On my last evening, after patiently waiting near a waterhole for two hours, I was rewarded with a large male tiger emerging from the bamboo thicket



to drink water barely 15 feet away. His majesty made for some amazing pictures. I left Bandhavgarh and my lovely lodge with a heavy heart knowing that this tiger could be the victim of poachers any time.

*National Geographic* reports that it is rarely poor locals who are poaching the tigers – it’s organized gangs.

“Tigers are part of a massive wildlife trade that’s run by sophisticated international crime syndicates, the same trade that’s wiping out elephants, rhinos and so many other species. It’s a \$19-billion-a-year business,” quotes the magazine.

These majestic cats are being slaughtered across India and the entire Southeast Asian range, mostly for their bones and magnificent pelts. Smuggled into China for use in expensive traditional tonics, tiger bones are thought to impart the animal’s great energy and strength. In addition, across their entire distribution, tigers face unrelenting pressure from retaliatory killings by farmers and habitat loss. They are forced to compete for space with an ever-growing human population.

Alas, in the end, it would seem their fate is no different from their fierce, feline and equally-famous cousin – the African lion. **FW**

# PIRTEK TRIVIA QUIZ #36

Answer the question below correctly by June 30, 2016 and you will be entered in a drawing to win a \$200 Visa Gift Card.

To enter visit:

[www.pirtekusa.com/triviaquiz](http://www.pirtekusa.com/triviaquiz)

*Hint: The answer can be found in this newsletter.*

**In what city did Matthew Brabham meet Kody Kamm and Petter Narsa for the last Snocross event of the year?**

- a. Cincinnati, OH
- b. Lake Geneva, WI
- c. Orlando, FL
- d. San Leandro, CA

*Disclaimer: We will choose at random one winner who answered the question correctly.*

ONLY ONE ENTRY PER PERSON. The contest is not open to PIRTEK employees or family members.





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