

South China Tiger



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The South China tiger population was estimated to number 4,000 individuals in the early 1950s. In the next few decades, thousands were killed as the subspecies was hunted as a pest. The Chinese government banned hunting in 1979. By 1996 the population was estimated to be just 30-80 individuals.

Today the South China tiger is considered by scientists to be “functionally extinct,” as it has not been sighted in the wild for more than 25 years. For the first time in 100 years, tiger numbers are growing.

After a century of constant decline, the number of wild tigers is on the rise! According to the most recent data, at least 3,890 tigers now exist in the wild—up from an estimated 3,200 in 2010.

WHY THEY MATTER



South China tigers are a reminder that the threat against the world’s tiger is an urgent one. Today, South China tigers are found in zoos and in South Africa where there are plans to reintroduce captive-bred tigers back into the wild.

HUNTED AS PESTS

Although China outlawed tiger hunting in 1979 and declared the South China tiger's survival a conservation priority in 1995, it is thought that even if a few individuals remain, no existing protected areas or habitat are sufficiently large, healthy or undisturbed enough to sustain viable tiger populations.

HABITAT IN PIECES

If any South China tigers remain in the wild, these few individuals would be found in montane sub-tropical evergreen forest of southeast China, close to provincial borders. The habitat is highly fragmented, with most blocks smaller than 200 square miles and not large enough to sustain a tiger population.

