

Bengal Tigers



The Bengal tiger is found primarily in India with smaller populations in Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, China and Myanmar. It is the most numerous of all tiger subspecies with more than 2,500 left in the wild. The creation of India's tiger reserves in the 1970s helped to stabilize numbers, but poaching to meet a growing demand from Asia in recent years has once again put the Bengal tiger at risk. The mangroves of the Sundarbans—shared between Bangladesh and India—are the only mangrove forests where tigers are found. The Sundarbans are increasingly threatened by sea level rise as a result of climate change.

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



This tiger subspecies is at the top of the food chain in the wild. But tigers are also a vital link in maintaining the rich diversity of nature. When tigers are protected, we save so much more. For example, with just one tiger, we protect around 25,000 acres of forest. These ecosystems supply both nature and people with fresh water, food, and health.



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Tigers suffer from a severe loss of natural prey like deer and antelopes.

HABITAT LOSS

Less than a hundred years ago, tigers prowled all across the Indian subcontinent. Exploding human populations, particularly since the 1940s, have resulted in major loss of tiger habitat. Habitats are further fragmented because of agriculture and the clearing of forests for developments like road networks. This forces tigers into small and scattered habitat patches.

ILLEGAL WILDLIFE TRADE

Before the international ban on tiger trade in 1993, tiger populations were being decimated by poaching and trade. Despite the ban in the past few decades, the illegal demand for tigers as status symbols, decorative items, and folk cures has increased dramatically, leading to a new poaching crisis. Poaching driven by the international illegal wildlife trade is the largest immediate threat to the remaining tiger population.

PREY LOSS

Tigers suffer from a severe loss of natural prey like deer and antelopes. Prey numbers decline because of direct poaching for meat and trade, competition with livestock over food and habitat degradation because of excessive wood removal for fires.

CONFLICT WITH HUMANS

As tigers continue to lose their habitat and prey species, they are increasingly coming into conflict with humans as they attack domestic animals—and sometimes people. In retaliation, tigers are often killed by angry villagers.

WHAT WWF IS DOING



WWF is committed to doubling the number of wild tigers by securing funds to halt poaching in the 12 most important tiger landscapes, protecting tiger habitat at an unprecedented scale, and clamping down hard on illegal tiger trade. To carry out these actions we foster cooperation and support from the countries where tigers live.

CONSERVING LANDSCAPES

WWF works to secure the large areas of habitat that tigers need to survive in the long-term. In 2000, we initiated the Terai Arc Landscape by working with the governments of India and Nepal to reconnect 11 protected areas through wildlife corridors. Today, our efforts are already yielding results. Successful reforestation has led to the return of species like tigers, elephants and rhinos to corridors like Khata, a narrow strip of forests linking Nepal's Bardia National Park with the Katarniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary of India. We are now replicating this approach in all of our efforts.

STRENGTHENING ANTIPOACHING EFFORTS

WWF works with local partners to strengthen antipoaching efforts and reduce threats to the natural habitat in India, Nepal and Bhutan. This includes supporting local networks that gather information on wildlife crimes, community-based antipoaching operations and strengthening local law enforcement. Today, there are over 400 community-led antipoaching operations in Nepal's Terai Arc.

EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES

WWF supports innovative solutions like biogas technology in order to save tiger forests, improve community health and mitigate climate change impacts. Biogas is a relatively simple, reliable, accessible and risk-free technology that turns manure and human waste into methane gas, which is channelled into a gas stove in the kitchen. It burns more effectively than wood, increasing the efficiency of cooking and reducing the reliance of local communities on forests for fuelwood.

STOPPING ILLEGAL WILDLIFE TRADE

WWF and TRAFFIC, the wildlife trade monitoring network, work to stop trafficking of tigers by funding antipoaching patrols, and supporting intelligence networks in strategic locations to stop tiger parts and products from being channelled into black markets in Asia. We support the South Asia Wildlife Enforcement Network

(SAWEN) so that regional governments are able to combine information and resources. This includes early warning systems, investing in effective legislation, and improving enforcement of policies and laws.

In 2010, we supported a Nepal-India resolution to conserve biodiversity including tigers, which will include joint monitoring and intelligence sharing. A similar formal understanding was signed by Nepal with China on biodiversity conservation, especially curbing the trade of illegal wildlife parts, including tigers.

