

Sumatran Tiger



Sumatran tigers are the smallest surviving tiger subspecies and are distinguished by heavy black stripes on their orange coats. The last of Indonesia's tigers—as few as 400 today—are holding on for survival in the remaining patches of forests on the island of Sumatra. Accelerating deforestation and rampant poaching mean this noble creature could end up like its extinct Javan and Balinese relatives.

In Indonesia, anyone caught hunting tigers could face jail time and steep fines. But despite increased efforts in tiger conservation—including strengthening law enforcement and antipoaching capacity—a substantial market remains in Sumatra and the rest of Asia for tiger parts and products. Sumatran tigers are losing their habitat and prey fast, and poaching shows no sign of decline.

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



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The island of Sumatra is the only place where tigers, rhinos, orangutans and elephants live together. The presence of the Sumatran tiger is an important indicator of a forest's biodiversity. Protecting tigers and their habitat means many other species benefit—including humans.

HABITAT LOSS

Habitat for the Sumatran tiger has been drastically reduced by clearing for agriculture, plantations and settlement. On many parts of the island, illegal timber harvesting and forest conversion are out of control. About 16.6 million acres of forest—larger than the state of West Virginia—were lost in Sumatra between 1985 and 1997. Even protected areas face problems. In addition, forest conversion has isolated national parks from one another.

ILLEGAL WILDLIFE TRADE

Most tigers in Sumatra are killed deliberately for commercial gain. According to a survey from TRAFFIC, the global wildlife trade monitoring network, poaching for trade is responsible for over 78% of estimated Sumatran tiger deaths—amounting to at least 40 animals per year.

Despite intensified conservation and protection measures in Sumatra and the apparent global success in curtailing markets for tiger bone, there is no evidence that tiger poaching has declined significantly on the island since the early 1990s.

HUMAN-WILDLIFE CONFLICT

Habitat destruction forces tigers into settled areas in search of food and where they are more likely to come into conflict with people. Human-tiger conflict is a serious problem in Sumatra. People have been killed or wounded, and livestock fall prey to tigers. Retaliatory action by villagers can result in the killing of tigers.

“With so much deforestation and poaching in Sumatra, wild tigers face a very difficult future, but we have the tools available to reverse their decline if the clearance of their forest can be halted.”

Dr. Barney Long Asian Species Expert



WHAT WWF IS DOING

ANTIPOACHING AND CONFLICT MITIGATION EFFORTS

WWF works to decrease Sumatran tiger poaching incidents and helps law enforcement officers increase surveillance. WWF Tiger Protection Units patrol vulnerable areas, gather intelligence against wildlife crime, and help keep forests safe by removing poachers' traps and snares.

The units have eliminated or drastically reduced poaching where they operate. In addition to educating communities about how to live with tigers, the units also respond to reports of human-tiger conflict and captured tigers.

INFLUENCING LAND-USE PLANNING

WWF helps design land-use plans that incorporate critical wildlife habitat. Sumatra's district and provincial governments are integrating this information into their plans, including zoning decisions and concessions for economic activities. Along with WWF's efforts to mitigate the palm, pulp and paper, and timber industries' impact on the island's biodiversity, this work helps Sumatra balance environmental realities with people's social and economic needs.

PROTECTING TIGER HABITAT

WWF successfully lobbied corporate partners and the Indonesian state government to declare the Tesso Nilo tiger landscape a protected area in 2004. It is most likely the last remaining block of lowland tropical rainforest for tigers in Sumatra. Using the momentum of the Year of the Tiger in 2010, WWF pushed for six priority landscapes for tigers to be included in the National Tiger Recovery Program, which was adopted as a global program by 13 tiger range countries.

MONITORING TIGERS

WWF is undertaking groundbreaking research on tigers in central Sumatra. Using camera traps to estimate population size and distribution as well as habitat use, we identify wildlife corridors that require protection across the central Sumatran tiger landscape.

