

New study shows over a third of protected areas surveyed are severely at risk of losing tigers

Governments must ensure long-term investment or risk losing tiger populations

02 March 2018 – A new survey of over a hundred tiger conservation areas, where an estimated 70% of the world’s wild tigers live, found that only 13% of them are able to meet global standards. The survey, driven by 11 leading conservation organisations and tiger range governments that are part of the CAITS Partnership, is the first and largest rapid assessment of site-based tiger conservation across Asia.

At least one-third of surveyed areas are at severely risk of losing their tigers. Alarmingly, most of these are in Southeast Asia, where tigers have suffered the most dramatic decline in the past decade.

In Cambodia, the last image of a wild tiger was captured on camera trap in 2007. Today, without evidence of a breeding population, the species is considered functionally extinct in the country.

“Ineffective management of tiger conservation areas leads to tiger extinction. To halt and reverse the decline of wild tigers, effective management is thus the single most important action. To achieve this, long-term investment in tiger conservation areas is absolutely essential, and this is a responsibility that must be led by tiger range governments,” said **S.P Yadav, Assistant Secretary General, Global Tiger Forum.**

Last year, the Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen publicly endorsed national tiger reintroduction plans, supporting the country’s commitment to TX2 – the global goal to double tiger populations in the wild by 2022. The detailed plans - now being finalised by the government – will include important steps that need to be taken before wild tigers can return to the Eastern Plains Landscape, an area which makes up the largest remaining dry forests in mainland Southeast Asia.

“The government of Cambodia has taken a bold and important decision to recover wild tigers in the country. The next steps now are to ensure that the areas where tigers would soon roam again, are well-managed and truly protected,” said Seng Teak, Country Director of WWF-Cambodia.

Despite poaching being one of the greatest threats faced by big cats, 85 per cent of the areas surveyed do not have staff capacity to patrol sites effectively, and 61 per cent of the areas in Southeast Asia have very limited anti-poaching enforcement, leaving wild tigers vulnerable to poaching.

“To achieve tiger reintroduction in Cambodia, we have to redouble our efforts to ensure effective management of protected areas. Most notably, this must include strict law enforcement to stop snaring and illegal logging, a significant increase in properly trained and equipped rangers, and close engagement of local communities as stakeholders,” added Teak.

Low investment from governments in Southeast Asia was stated as one reason for the lack of management of these supposedly 'protected areas'. While 86 per cent of areas in South Asia, Russia and China stated that finances are, or are on the way to being sustainable, in comparison only 35 per cent of areas in Southeast Asia are in a similar position.

"Many protected areas are woefully understaffed. The average apartment block in an Asian city will probably have more guards than many protected areas have rangers. Funding is needed urgently, especially in Southeast Asia, to ensure that tigers are able to recover in these areas," said Michael Baltzer, Leader of WWF Tigers Alive.

Addressing the lack of investment remains one of the most urgent tasks needed to ensure the future of the species and the far-reaching benefits that thriving tiger populations bring to people and nature.

Released ahead of World Wildlife Day on 3 March, which this year calls for the protection of big cats, the report acts as a timely reminder of the need to secure the homes of wild tigers and engage local communities, in order to ensure the protection and recovery of this majestic species.

NOTES TO EDITOR

About the Report

Jointly released by the CAITS Partnership, *Safe Havens for Wild Tigers: A Rapid Assessment of Management Effectiveness against Conservation Assured Tiger Standards*, is the first overview of the management effectiveness of tiger conservation areas across Asia. Based on criteria set by CAITS this is the largest survey of site-based tiger management to date, covering over 200,000 km² in 112 tiger conservation areas that are estimated to hold 70% of the world's wild tigers.

Data from this survey forms a baseline that aims to help governments and site managers understand how they are faring against CAITS (Conservation Assured Tiger Standards), an accreditation system designed to measure and improve the management of tiger conservation areas

About CAITS and the CAITS Partnership

Conservation Assured | Tiger Standards (CAITS) is an accreditation system designed to measure and improve the management of tiger conservation areas. CAITS was created to support the TX2 goal to double the number of tigers in the wild, adopted at the St Petersburg 'Tiger Summit' in 2010. It was established with the aim of ensuring that where tigers live in the wild, they are receiving effective protection and management.

It is driven by the CAITS Partnership, which comprises of tiger range governments, intergovernmental agencies, conservation organisations and other institutions, including: Equilibrium Research, Freeland Foundation, Global Wildlife Conservation, Global Tiger Forum, IUCN, Panthera, Smithsonian Institution, United Nations Development Program



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(UNDP), World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA), WildTeam, and WWF. The secretariat for CAITS is hosted by WWF.

For more information on CAITS please visit: www.conservationassured.org

About WWF- Cambodia (World Wide Fund for Nature)

WWF was established in Cambodia in 1998 as a part of the WWF Greater Mekong Programme. WWF's mission in Cambodia is to ensure that there will be strong participation and support from all people to conserve the country's rich biological diversity. Through the encouragement of sustainable use of natural resources, WWF-Cambodia promotes new opportunities for the benefit of all people, enhancing local livelihoods and contributing to poverty reduction in the Kingdom of Cambodia. Go to cambodia.panda.org for more information.

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