

# Tiger Conservation

## Tiger Distribution in the World

Wild Tiger, the largest and most magnificent cat in the world is found only in Asia. They inhabit a range extending across Asia and Far East Russia. Today, only five Tiger sub-species survive- South-China, Indo-China, Sumatran, Siberian (Amur) and Royal Bengal Tiger. Once thriving in several thousands, today, there are perhaps only 3,500 tigers living in the wild, 53 percent of which are Royal Bengal Tigers. This number continues to decline rapidly due to poaching, habitat loss and human-tiger conflicts.

## Tigers in Bhutan

Bhutan has about 72 percent of its land area under forest cover and 51.44 percent of the country's geographical area under protected area status. For centuries, a strong religious and cultural ethos based on Buddhism have provided a safe refuge for this globally endangered animal. Despite Bhutan possessing one of the best opportunities for the long-term survival of Tigers, conserving them is not an easy task.

In Bhutan, one of the biggest pressures for Tiger survival is space and food. Tigers require a large home range area and this becomes a problem as human concentration in and around forest areas is relatively high.

Bhutan's rugged terrain makes Tiger monitoring extremely difficult but new technology such as camera trapping is now being used, which is less cumbersome than the traditional sign survey methods. Tigers in Bhutan range from 100 meters above sea level to as high as over 4,200 meters. Tigers' presence has been recorded from almost all parts of the country. Study estimates 100-150 Royal Bengal Tigers roam the jungles of Bhutan (Mc Dougal & Tshering, 1998).

## Protection Status

Tiger is included in schedule I of the Forest and Nature Conservation Act of Bhutan, 1995 which is equivalent to Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). The Act prohibits injuring, killing, capturing, trading and use of tiger parts & products. A penalty of up to five years imprisonment or fine of Nu 50,000 to 2,50,000 (\$1000-\$5000) or both will be imposed.

## Threats to Tigers in Bhutan

### 1. Habitat loss

Development activities and other human disturbances destroy Tiger habitat through fragmentation of forest land. This loss of habitat continuity restricts Tiger movements.

### 2. Retaliatory killing

Cattle in and around forests areas compete with Tiger prey species for food and space. When prey species reduce, the hungry tiger having no other option target settlements. Such situation gives rise to human-tiger conflict resulting into retaliatory killings.



13<sup>th</sup> May, 2010  
Jigme Dorji National Park  
Elevation - 2300 meters



30<sup>th</sup> January, 2011, Elevation - 2700 meters, Gasa, Jigme Dorji National Park

Only presence of a viable Tiger population shall ensure continued integrity, sustainability, and good health of any larger ecosystems.

Tigers sit at the top of the ecological pyramid. Such landscapes besides supporting Tigers and their prey also support a vast amount of other biodiversity services essential for life sustenance. They contribute towards human wellbeing both locally and globally through ecosystem services, such as water harvesting, carbon sequestration, plant genetic materials, food security and opportunities for community-based tourism. Most of these benefits are not currently monetised, so Tiger landscapes are being significantly undervalued in national and global agendas. As a result degradation, fragmentation, loss of natural habitat, depletion of prey animals, and poaching to feed the global illegal market of their body parts have pushed them and their landscapes to brink of extinction.

## Why do we need to save the Tiger and conserve its landscape?

Poaching cases reported.

Although poaching is still minimum in Bhutan; in areas adjoining Indian states of Assam and West Bengal there have been

### 4. Poaching

and fields.

Prey species like Sambar, muntjac, wild pigs, etc. are out numbered by livestock reared by settlements in and around forest areas. Hence to survive, Tigers are moving closer to settlements

### 3. Low prey biomass and density

The presence of a tiger means a healthy functioning natural environment in that location.



Ugyen Tenzin, Civil Servant

All animals are like our parents. If you hunt or kill a living being it is like killing your own parents. It is important to protect and save all animals.



Kilkhor - Lopen Namgay Wangchuk

Tigers are a crucial link - an important environmental health indicator. Their wellbeing represents our future.



Sangay Khandu  
Member of Parliament

Tiger is a big animal that lives in the deep forest. There are very few Tigers in the world today.

Tandin Wangmo, Student



Tigers are important biologically to maintain the overall health of our ecosystem.

- Choki Sonam, Teacher



In our Bhutanese myth, it says that Guru Rinpoche came to *Taktshang* (Tiger's nest) riding on the back of a Tigress. Hence, Tiger is considered sacred in our culture.

Meme Apai Daza



Picture courtesy RMNP, UWICE

Camera trap footage from Royal Manas National Park, 2010.

*“If we don't act now and put measures in place, tigers may live only in pictures”.*

*“Tiger protection is the key to conservation because when you have tigers, it indicates that the forest is in good condition”.*

Agriculture & Forests Minister, Lyonpo (Dr) Pema Gyamtsho



Five-member delegation led by Minister for Agriculture and Forests attended the Global Tiger Summit in Russia. Like other Tiger range countries, Bhutan presented their National Tiger Recovery Program and commitments. Two youth delegates from Bhutan also attended the Youth Tiger Summit in Vladivostok, Russia

## Timeline

13th February, 2010  
Year of the Tiger  
Campaign launched

Tiger poster  
display at the Paro  
International airport.

Tiger camera  
trapping surveys and  
estimation ongoing in  
Royal Manas  
National Park

Survey/study to be  
taken up in Jigme Dorji  
National Park & Jigme  
Singye Wangchuck  
National Park

2010

2011

2022

Establish Tiger  
baseline  
information

Tiger survey  
exercises to be taken  
up in Bumdeling  
Wildlife Sanctuary  
and Thrumshingla  
National park

Monitoring of Tiger habitat







SAVE THE  
TIGER