

# PROJECT TIGER



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# Introduction

- **Tiger (*Panthera tigris*)** has been the integral part to the life and legend of mankind. The tiger has been feared and revered, hunted and worshiped; it has found its way into folklore and lullabies, books of worship, popular fiction and innumerable stories of heroism, bravery and adventure.
- At present the tiger is an **endangered species** and has found its way in the **Red Data Book**. The tiger population has been reduced from **40,000 to 1,827 by 1972**, mainly due to hunting, habitat loss due to deforestation and taming the rivers for human needs.
- Considering the fast decline of the tiger population, a special task force was set up in 1970 by the Indian Board for Wildlife to prepare an action plan to conserve the population of tiger in the country. As a result, in **1st April, 1973, Project Tiger** was launched by the Government of India during Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's tenure.
- During the tiger census of 2006, a new methodology was used extrapolating site-specific densities of tigers, their co-predators and prey derived from camera trap and sign surveys using GIS. Based on the result of these surveys, the total tiger population was estimated at 1,411 individuals ranging from 1,165 to 1,657 adult and sub-adult tigers of more than 1.5 years of age. Owing to the project, the number of tigers increased to 2,603–3,346 individuals by 2018.

# Objectives of Project Tiger:

- ❑ To ensure maintenance of a viable population of tigers in India for scientific, economic, aesthetic, cultural and ecological values.
- ❑ To preserve, for all times, areas of biological importance as a national heritage for the benefit, education and enjoyment of the people.

## **Tiger Reserves was based on the following principles:**

1. Elimination of all forms of human exploitation and disturbance from the core and rationalisation of such activities in the buffer.
2. Limitation of habitat management to repair damage done by man with the aim of restoring the ecosystem as close to its natural functioning as possible.
3. Researching facts about habitat and wild animals and carefully monitoring changes in flora and fauna.

**Based on the data by Wildlife Institute of India, there are 51 Tiger Reserves in India (as of May 2021).**



**The geographical location of Tiger Reserves in India**

# Threats to Tiger Population

The Tigers are seen largely in the tropical forests of Asia. According to the IUCN Red list, the tiger is listed as an endangered animal. The tigers are killed for skins, bones, and meat and the major threat faced by this species are:

## **1. Man- animal conflict**

Due to anthropogenic activities, the tiger population has lost its habitat. The loss of habitat resulted in the reduction of their prey species. They started coming out of the forest and come to the village in search of prey. Tiger those who came in search of its prey they attacked domestic animals, and human beings. In vengeance, tigers are often killed by angry human beings.

## **2. Hunting, illegal trade and poaching**

Hunting of tigers is a huge issue faced by the tiger population from ancient times. Hunting stands as a symbol of status. The people used the bones, teeth of the tiger for commercial purposes which can also be named as illegal trade. The body parts are used for medicinal purposes also. This has caused the utmost decline in tiger populations since 1930. Poaching is the next threat to the leftover tiger population.

## **3. Anthropogenic Activities**

The anthropogenic destructive activities that have caused the devastation of habitat and prey species are the main long-term threats to the continuation of the declining tiger population in the country. Man and animals compete for finding their habitat. Tigers need large territories. Along with the habitat, tigers have also experienced a severe loss of prey species populations such as antelopes and deer. The man has acquired the forest land for human settlements and industrial activities. This has ultimately resulted in complete destruction of animal habitats.

# The Tiger Task Force

- On the basis of the recommendations of the National Board for Wildlife chaired by the Prime Minister on 17th March, 2005, a Task Force was setup to look into the problems of tiger conservation in the country and to suggest measures for improvement. The recommendations requiring immediate attention have been accepted for implementation, which interalia include strengthening of Project Tiger by giving it statutory as well as administrative powers. Further, it has also been recommended that the report relating to Project Tiger should annually be sent to Parliament so that the commitment to the Project Tiger is reviewed from time to time.
- Tiger is our national animal which is widely present across the forest and non-forest natural habitats in 17 States throughout the country. Owing to its ecological position as a flagship species, the conservation status of tiger in our natural ecosystem signifies the status of their health. Good health of these ecosystems in turn signifies that the quality of ecological services rendered by them including ensuring water security, critical to our survival, and sustainable development, is optimum.
- This, unfortunately, is not the case; degradation and fragmentation of forests and non forest natural areas across the length and breadth of our country reflect the decline in ecological services seen in the form of poor water regime and loss of our unique biodiversity. Such decline has also undermined the productivity of farm and livestock of our people inhabiting the forested regions aggravating their impoverishment. The need for conservation of tiger must therefore be seen in the light of these imperatives for the care of our forests and other ecosystems, which call for an integrated holistic approach for managing land uses and mainstream development initiatives in the forested regions. Since the inception of Project Tiger in the early seventies, the Government of India has invested considerably in the protection and conservation of tiger.

# Tiger Conservation Strategies

**Some of the conservation strategies are:**

- (a) Anti-poaching activities:** (antipoaching squad/Tiger Protection Force deployment)
- (b) Strengthening of infrastructure within Tiger Reserves.**
- (c) Habitat improvement and water development.**
- (d) Addressing man-animal conflict** (ensuring uniform, timely compensation for human deaths due to wild animals, livestock depredation by carnivores, crop depredation by wild ungulates)
- (e) Rehabilitation of traditional hunting tribes** living around tiger reserves.
- (f)** The tiger reserves are required to carry out the day to day monitoring of wild animals using the refined process in the **GIS** domain, which would enable “forecasting” vis-à vis wildlife protection.
- (g) Fostering Eco-Tourism** in Tiger Reserves.



## Benefits of Project Tiger

The Project Tiger has put the tiger on a certain course of **revival** from the edge of destruction. The population of tigers in the country has been increased considerably after the establishment of the project. It has contributed to numerous indescribable **environmental profits** to society. The project has opened a wide door of **tourism** and thereby **employment opportunities**. This initiative has brought the participation of local people and their participation has made the habitat to revive.