

# Threats to wild tigers growing

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The wild tiger now occupies a mere 7 percent of its historic range, and the area known to be inhabited by tigers has declined by 41 percent over the past decade, according to an article published in the June 2007 issue of BioScience. Growing trade in folk medicines made from tiger parts and tiger skins, along with habitat loss and fragmentation, is believed to be the chief reason for the losses. The assessment, by Eric Dinerstein of the World Wildlife Fund and 15 coauthors, describes the wild tiger's population trajectory as "catastrophic" and urges international cooperation to ensure the animal's continued existence in the wild.

Despite the discouraging numbers—there are believed to be only about 5,000 wild tigers left—some conservation programs have been successful. Dinerstein and his coauthors highlight a program in the Terai-Arc Landscape of northwestern India and southern Nepal as a notable victory. The scheme features wildlife corridors that connect 12 reserves. Tiger conservation efforts have also been successful in the Russian Far East. Many tiger reserves in the India, in contrast, have been mismanaged and have failed to protect the animals, according to the article.

Plans to make use of tiger parts harvested from farmed tigers in China represent an emerging threat, the authors argue. Any trade in tiger parts encourages poaching, because products made from animals farmed at great expense cannot be distinguished from products made from wild tigers.

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conservation of the species will need planning that involves religious and civic leaders as well as national and local governments. International cooperation among nations that harbor the animal will also be essential. Dinerstein and his coauthors conclude by recommending that these countries appoint "tiger ambassadors" to advocate for the species, step up efforts to prosecute poachers, and provide economic incentives to encourage conservation.

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Source: American Institute of Biological Sciences

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