

121 breeding tigers estimated to be found in Nepal

July 27 2009



This Bengal tiger (*Panthera tigris tigris*) was caught on a camera trap in Nepal's Terai Arc Landscape as part of an estimate of tiger populations. Credit: Government of Nepal

The first ever overall nation-wide estimate of the tiger population brought a positive ray of hope among conservationists. The figures announced by the Nepal Government's Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC) shows the presence of 121 (100 - 194) breeding tigers in the wild within the four protected areas of Nepal. The 2008 tiger population estimate was jointly implemented by the DNPWC, Department of Forests (DOF), WWF, National Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC) with support from Save The Tiger Fund (STF), WWF-US, WWF-UK, WWF International and US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).

The 2008 nation-wide tiger population was initiated on 15 November 2009 in the Terai Arc Landscape (TAL) of Nepal both inside and outside the protected areas of Nepal. [TAL encompasses the Terai region of Nepal and into tiger range states across the border into India.]

"To obtain reliable population estimates of wide ranging species like the tiger, it is important to undertake the survey simultaneously in all potential habitats," says Dr. Rinjan Shrestha, Conservation Biologist with WWF Nepal. Previous studies had been undertaken in different time periods and at different spatial scales.

"To derive information on both abundance and distribution of tigers, the current survey employed two methods - Camera Trapping method inside the protected areas and Habitat Occupancy survey both inside and outside the protected areas."



This Bengal Tiger (*Panthera tigris tigris*) was caught on a camera trap in Nepal's Terai Arc Landscape as part of an estimate of tiger populations. Credit: Government of Nepal

According to WWF Global Tiger Network Initiative, the wild tiger

population is at a tipping point. Tigers are experiencing a range collapse, occupying 40 per cent less habitat than was estimated just one decade ago. The estimated number of tigers in important range countries is frighteningly low, with a recent government census suggesting there may be as few as 1,300 tigers left in India, the species' stronghold. And tigers are facing an epidemic of poaching and habitat loss across their range.

The main reason for the decline of tiger populations has been attributed to poaching and illegal trade. This is linked to the illegal international trade in tiger parts and derivatives (skin, bones, meat in some cases although not reported in Nepal) and use in traditional Chinese Medicines (TCM). Apart from these, sporadic cases of retaliatory killing from irate communities have been reported. Other important reasons of tiger population decline are habitat shrinkage and fragmentation due to human intervention, loss/decline of prey species.

"The [tiger](#) numbers have increased in Chitwan but decreased in Bardia and Shuklaphanta," said Mr. Anil Manandhar, Country Representative, WWF Nepal.

"In spite of the decade long insurgency, encroachment, poaching and illegal trade, the present numbers is a positive sign, but we can't remain unworried. The declining numbers in western Nepal has posed more challenges, needing a concerted effort to save this charismatic endangered species focusing on anti-poaching and illegal wildlife trade."

The Government of Nepal has approved and launched the 'Tiger [conservation](#) Action Plan 2008- 2012'. A comprehensive management plan has been devised in which the target is to increase the population of tigers by 10 per cent within the first 5 year period of the plan implementation.

"Tigers can not be saved by the effort of a single individual or a single

organization," said Mr. Gopal Prasad Upadhyay, Director General, DNPWC. "The transboundary relation with India needs to be strengthened further and all organizations should work together to conserve tigers."

Source: World Wildlife Fund

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