

Tigers in serious trouble around the world, including here in the US

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As many Asian countries prepare to celebrate Year of the Tiger beginning February 14, World Wildlife Fund (WWF) reports that tigers are in crisis around the world, including here in the United States, where more tigers are kept in captivity than are alive in the wild throughout Asia. As few as 3,200 tigers exist in the wild in Asia where they are threatened by poaching, habitat loss, illegal trafficking and the conversion of forests for infrastructure and plantations.

WWF is releasing a new interactive map of the world's top 10 tiger trouble spots and the main threats against tigers. WWF is also launching a campaign: Tx2: Double or Nothing to support tiger range states in their goal of doubling wild tiger numbers by the next Year of the Tiger in 2022.

The issues highlighted in the trouble spots map (<http://www.worldwildlife.org/troublespots>) include:

- Pulp, paper, [palm oil](#) and rubber companies are devastating the forests of Indonesia and Malaysia, home to two endangered tiger sub-species;
- Hundreds of new or proposed dams and roads in the Mekong region will fragment tiger habitat;
- Illegal trafficking in tiger bones, skins and meat feeds a

continued demand in East and Southeast Asia;

- More tigers are kept in captivity in the U.S. than are left in the wild -- and there are few regulations to keep these tigers from ending up on the black market. The largest numbers of captive tigers are in Texas (an estimated 3,000+), but they are also kept in other states;
- Poaching of tigers and their prey, along with a major increase in logging is taking a heavy toll on Amur, or Siberian, tigers;
- Tigers and humans are increasingly coming into conflict in India as tiger habitats shrink;
- Climate change could reduce tiger habitat in Bangladesh's Sundarbans mangroves by 96 percent.

Three tiger sub-species have gone extinct since the 1940s and a fourth one, the South China tiger, has not been seen in the wild in 25 years. Tigers occupy just seven percent of their historic range. But they can thrive if they have strong protection from poaching and [habitat loss](#) and enough prey to eat.

"Tigers are being persecuted across their range - poisoned, trapped, snared, shot and squeezed out of their homes," said Mike Baltzer, Leader of WWF's Tiger Initiative. "But there is hope for them in this Year of the Tiger. There has never been such a committed, ambitious, high-level commitment from governments to double wild tiger numbers. They have set the bar high and we hope for the sake of tigers and people that they reach it."

In the U.S., the government does not track how many tigers are in captivity within its borders, where they are, who owns them, or what happens to their body parts when they die. In many states, there are no

controls on individuals keeping tigers as pets. Current estimates indicate that there are more than 5,000 tigers in captivity in the United States, more than exist in the wild. A registration scheme for all captive tigers and a means to monitor disposal of dead tigers is urgently needed to ensure they aren't exploited for the illegal trade.

In the lead up to the Vladivostok Summit, all 13 tiger range countries recently committed to the goal of doubling tiger numbers by 2022 at a ministerial meeting in Hua Hin, Thailand. They will be helped in this goal by WWF and other members of the Global Tiger Initiative. The Summit will be co-hosted by Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin and World Bank President Robert Zoellick.

"We may not get another opportunity like this with so much political will from the tiger range countries and attention from so many institutions and people around the world," said Sybille Klenzendorf, Director of the WWF-US Species Program. "The situation for tigers is a sobering one, but if we seize this moment and maintain it for the long term, the next Year of the [Tiger](#) may give us real reason to celebrate."

Provided by World Wildlife Fund

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