

# World leaders seek to save the tiger from extinction

November 21 2010, by Olga Nedbayeva

---



A tiger is pictured in his enclosure at the Moscow Zoo. In a meeting billed as the final political chance to secure the future of the tiger, Russia hosts an unprecedented summit of the last 13 states with populations of the fabled beast.

The tiger's losing struggle against extinction received a boost Sunday from an unprecedented 13-state summit that aims to double the big cat's population by the next Year of the Tiger in 2022.

Russian prime minister and self-proclaimed animal lover Vladimir Putin opened his native city to the world's first gathering of leaders from nations where the tiger's free rein has been squeezed ever-tighter by poachers.

"This is an unprecedented gathering of world leaders (that aims) to

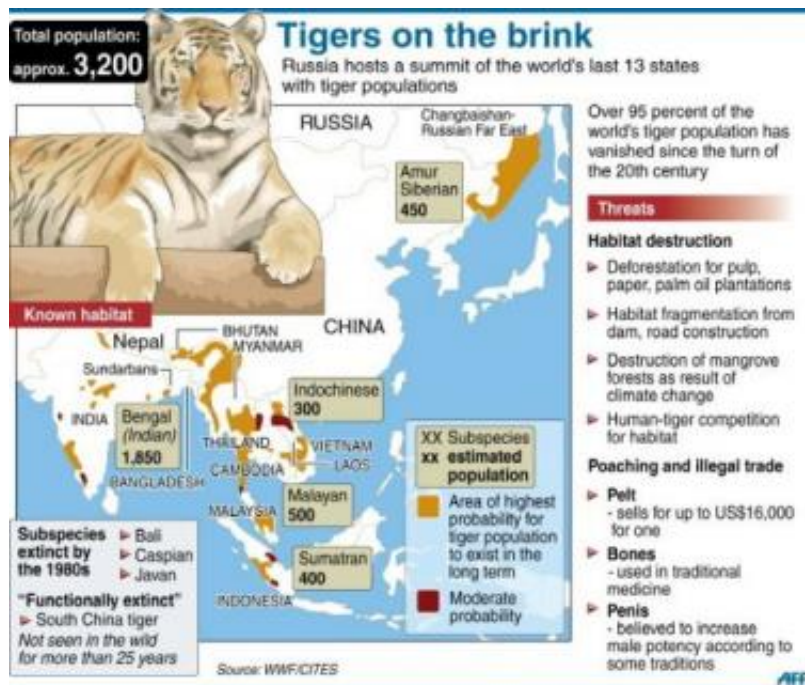
double the number of tigers," Jim Adams, Vice President for the East Asia and Pacific Region at the World Bank, said at the opening ceremony of the four-day event.

"The global [tiger](#) initiative is an example of balanced economic development with nature preservation."

Decades of tiger part trafficking and [habitat destruction](#) have slashed the roaming tiger's number from 100,000 a century ago to just 3,200 today, according to the World Wildlife Fund (WWF).

The wildlife charity warns that the tiger could become extinct within the next 12 years unless urgent action is taken.

"It's essential to eliminate poaching," said Adams. "Solutions must begin at the local level. Trans-boundary cooperation must be reinforced."



Graphic on the world's wild tiger populations. Russia hosts a summit of the last

13 states that hold tiger populations.

The summit's Russian hosts said that a global initiative on tigers could provide lessons for other joint environmental pursuits.

The tiger summit will provide an example "for other challenges such as global warming," Russian Natural Resources Minister Yury Trutnev told the gathering.

The high-profile summit is due to be attended by Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao and delegations from India and Bangladesh -- the three nations with the largest volume of tiger skin and other organ trafficking.

Russia is the only country to have seen its [tiger population](#) rise in recent years. It had just 80 to 100 in the 1960s but now has around 500, with experts praising Putin for taking an active role in the cause.

Putin has personally championed the protection of the Amur Tiger in the country's Far East and was hailed by the Russian media for firing a tranquillizer dart at one of the fabled beasts in 2008.

The conference is expected to tackle the burden of funding a 12-year plan that reaches across the 13 nations. It is also believed to be the world's first gathering of leaders to address the fate of a single species.

But consensus on the need to save the tiger has been hampered by a lack of coordination on the ground to stop the trafficking of tiger parts such as paws and bones -- all prized in traditional Asian medicine.

"Countries cannot fight the tiger trade individually because of the very

nature of the trade," said Sabri Zain of the TRAFFIC wildlife trade monitoring network.

"Tiger parts come from one country, are processed in another and consumed in a third," Zain told AFP.

Apart from Russia, 12 other countries host fragile tiger populations -- Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Thailand and Vietnam.

But experts stress that India and China are by far the biggest players in saving the beast.

India is home to half of the world population while the Chinese remain the world's biggest consumers of tiger products despite global bans.

"In China, things are going from bad to worse," said Alexei Vaisman of the WWF. "But it is hard for the Chinese authorities, who are fighting against a millennium-old tradition."

(c) 2010 AFP

Citation: World leaders seek to save the tiger from extinction (2010, November 21) retrieved 24 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2010-11-world-leaders-tiger-extinction.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.