

# Nepal tigers 'take night shift' to avoid humans

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Scientist Neil Carter of Michigan State University sets a motion-activated camera with a colleague in Nepal's Chitwan National Park. Tigers in southern Nepal appear to be changing their habits so they can operate under cover of darkness and avoid coming into contact with humans, scientists said.

Tigers in southern Nepal appear to be changing their habits so they can operate under cover of darkness and avoid coming into contact with humans, scientists said on Friday.

A study of the [big cats](#) in Chitwan National Park found that forest paths used by locals during the day were taken over by Bengal tigers at night.

Two years of research, led by an international team and published in the [Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences](#) journal, concluded

that "tigers can adapt and thrive in a human-dominated landscape".

"It opens up new questions about the capacity for tigers to adapt to people", said Neil Carter of Michigan State University.

"Their shift to more nocturnal activity suggests tigers can co-exist with human presence... under certain conditions, like high prey abundance and low poaching."

Chitwan, a popular tourist destination that is home to around 125 adult tigers, is surrounded by a forested buffer zone inhabited by 560,000 people, most of whom are farmers.

Occasionally the tigers kill local livestock, and between 1998 and 2006, 65 people lost their lives due to tiger attacks.

Carter and his team set up motion-activated cameras in nearly 80 locations around the park and in the forest, including footpaths and roads, to learn which habitats humans and tiger were sharing.

In places where tigers live but humans are scarcer, the animals tended to prowl throughout the day and night. But Chitwan's tigers were a sixth less active during daytime when compared with tigers in Indonesia and Malaysia.

The study suggested this might be because locals in Chitwan frequently wander into the forest to chop wood.

"Nearly 80 percent of the tigers' current range occurs outside protected areas in human-dominated, multiple-use forests. These forests beyond reserves are vital to long-term [tiger conservation](#) and providing [ecosystem services](#) and goods for local [human communities](#)."

"Our findings suggest that tigers may be able to co-exist with human presence in these multiple-use forests if policies protecting tigers and their prey are effectively implemented."

The World Wildlife Fund says [tigers](#) worldwide are in serious danger of becoming extinct in the wild. During the past 100 years their numbers have collapsed by 95 percent, from 100,000 in 1900 to around 3,200 today.

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