

# Tigers roar back: Good news for big cats in three key landscapes

December 27 2012

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This is a Camera Trap Image of tigers and cubs from Huai Kha Khaeng Wildlife Sanctuary, Thailand. WCS reports record numbers of tigers here and good news for these iconic big cats in India and Russia. Credit: WCS

The Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) announced today significant progress for tigers in three key landscapes across the big cat's range due to better law enforcement, protection of additional habitat, and strong

government partnerships.

The successes are much-needed good news as tiger numbers worldwide continue to hover at all-time lows due to the combined threat of poaching, loss of prey, and habitat destruction. WCS estimates that only 3,200 [tigers](#) exist in the wild.

The news begins in southwestern India where WCS research and conservation efforts that began 25 years ago now show a major rebound of tigers in the Western Ghats region of Karnataka State. Over 600 individuals have been identified to date from camera trap photos during the last decade in this [mountainous landscape](#). In Nagarahole and Bandipur National Parks, tigers have actually reached saturation levels, with surplus young tigers spilling out into forest-reserves and dispersing using secured forest corridors through a landscape that holds over a million human beings. The combination of strict government-led anti-poaching patrols, voluntary relocation of villages away from tiger habitats, and the vigilant local presence of WCS conservation partners watching over tigers has led to the rebound of big-cat populations and their prey. In newer [tiger reserves](#) including Bhadra and Kudremukh, numbers have increased by as much as 50 percent after years of neglect and chronic poaching were tackled.

In Thailand, WCS conservationists report a tiger comeback in Huai Kha Khaeng (HKK) Wildlife Sanctuary – a 2,700 square kilometer (1,042 square mile) protected area in the vast Western Forest Complex. WCS has worked closely with Thai authorities to beef up enforcement and anti-poaching patrols in the region. Last year, a notorious poaching ring was busted, and this year the gang leaders were given prison sentences of up to five years – the most severe punishments for wildlife poaching in Thailand's history. Since their capture, there have been no known tiger or elephant poaching incidents in the park. Tiger numbers have been rising steadily in the park since 2007, with a record 50-plus tigers

counted last year.

Meanwhile in Russia, government officials are drafting a new law that will make transport, sales, and possession of endangered animals a criminal offense rather than just a civil crime. This will close a loophole that currently allows poachers to claim they found endangered species like tigers already dead and thus avoid stiffer criminal penalties for poaching.

Russia is making progress in creating additional protected areas for tigers, too, declaring a new corridor called Central Ussuri Wildlife Refuge on October 18. The new refuge acts as a linkage between the Sikhote-Alin tiger population in Russia, which is the main population of Amur tigers, and some of the best tiger habitat in China's Heilongjiang Province in the Wandashan Mountains. The creation of the new refuge ensures that tigers have the capacity to move across the international border between Russian and China in this region. WCS first identified this key corridor in 1999 after conducting joint wildlife surveys with Chinese and Russian scientists there.

WCS President and CEO Cristián Samper said: "Tigers are clearly fighting for their very existence, but it's important to know that there is hope. Victories like these give us the resolve to continue to battle for these magnificent big cats. While the news about tigers has been bleak, these recent developments clearly show how smart strategies and strong partnerships are ensuring tigers are saved for centuries to come."

John Robinson, WCS Executive Vice President of Conservation and Science said: "Saving tigers is clearly a team effort. Today's victories show that through collaboration with governments, law enforcement, fellow conservationists, and local people, we can save these big cats across their range."

WCS scientist Ullas Karanth who has led these tiger recovery efforts, said: "I am confident that our conservation model of combining solid science with passionate local advocacy and effective government collaboration demonstrates practically how tigers can be brought back in emergent Asia."

WCS is looking to replicate these successes in other parts of the tiger's range. WCS has over 300 people working on the ground to conserve tigers in the most important tiger sites in seven of the ten remaining countries with tigers. We collaborate with local governments and partners to implement a suite of proven tiger conservation interventions, including improved law enforcement and enlarging and consolidating tiger habitat, that are tailored to each specific country and site.

Provided by Wildlife Conservation Society

Citation: Tigers roar back: Good news for big cats in three key landscapes (2012, December 27) retrieved 6 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2012-12-tigers-roar-good-news-big.html>

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