

# Nepal on target to meet aim of doubling tiger population by 2022

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Credit: INASP

The wild tiger population in the world has declined by more than 98% in the past 200 years; the present tiger population of 3,643 is only 5% of the population a century ago. Concerned by this sharp decline of an

iconic animal of the Asian tropical forests, the heads of government of 13 tiger range countries conferred at the International Tiger Forum in St Petersburg, Russia in 2010. In the meeting they expressed a written commitment to double the wild tiger population by 2022 in an attempt to protect this endangered species from extinction.

A research article published in Nepal's forestry journal *Banko Janakari*, available on the NepJOL platform supported by INASP, shows that Nepal is on track to achieve the target of doubling its tiger population by 2022. Nepal had only 121 tigers when it signed the 'St. Petersburg Declaration on Tiger Conservation' in 2010, according to Nepal's Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation. The 2013 Tiger Census, released in 2014, estimated that the tiger population was 198 in 2013.

"We carried out our research in Bardia National Park (BNP), Nepal's second largest [tiger habitat](#). It is interesting and good news that the tiger population in this national park increased from 18 in 2009 to 50 in 2013. While the growth of the tiger population in Bardia was one of the highest in the country, the tiger population has also increased significantly in other tiger habitats of the country," says Dr Jhamak Bahadur Karki, lead author of the research article and Associate Professor of Kathmandu Forestry College (KAFCOL), Kathmandu.

"Habitat management such as maintenance of wetlands and grasslands, which in turn help in maintaining a viable prey population, along with security to control poaching of wild animals are the key aspects of [tiger conservation](#)," says Dr Karki.

The research article titled "Estimating tiger and its prey abundance in Bardia National Park, Nepal" describes the camera trapping method used to estimate tiger population, and the distance sampling method with line transects used to estimate prey population, in Bardia National Park in

2008 and 2009, and analyses relation between prey abundance and tiger population.

"This was the first time that camera trap survey was used on a nationwide scale in Nepal to estimate tiger numbers. Camera trap survey is considered as the most accurate among the technologies available in Nepal for tiger counting," says Dr Karki. "The survey, carried out [in 2008] by placing camera traps in 197 locations for a period of 15 days over an area of 1456 square kilometres, found the tiger density to be 0.94 per 100 square kilometres," he adds.

The tiger density increased significantly to 3.38 per 100 square kilometres in the 2013 tiger census. Average prey density was found to be 56.3 per 100 square kilometres with varying distribution in various parts of the national [park](#). Chital, sambar, swamp deer, wild pig, hog deer and barking deer are the major prey species available in the Bardia National Park. Considering the average consumption of 50 ungulates (prey animals) per year per tiger, the study suggests that Bardia National Park has ample prey species to support a larger population of up to 100 tigers.

As the distribution of prey species was not uniform, the author recommends the introduction of some large prey animals like wild water buffalo and swamp deer in Babai valley, where the prey density was found to be significantly lower (19.2 animals per square kilometres) than the average density of prey species in Bardia National Park.

"Tiger conservation is very important both from an ecological and a national economic point of view," says Dr Karki. "The tiger is the chief attraction for tourists in Bardia National Park. Tourist numbers can be increased and national economy supported if the tiger [population](#) is increased."

The [research article](#) was co-authored by Y. V. Jhala, B. Pandav, S. R. Jnawali, R. Shrestha, K. Thapa, G. Thapa, N. M. B. Pradhan, B. R. Lamichane and S. M. Barber-Meyer based on the national tiger survey carried out by the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation of the Government of Nepal in 2008 and 2009.

It is believed that [tiger population](#) has significantly grown since 2013. The government counted the number of tigers in Bardia National Park during the tiger census 2016. Although, the census ended in December 2016, the government has not released the results yet and it is unclear when it will do so.

The article titled "Estimating [tiger](#) and its [prey](#) abundance in Bardia National Park, Nepal" was published on pages 66-69 in Vol 26, No 1 (2016) of the journal Banko Janakari and is available online on the NepJOL platform supported by INASP and maintained by TUCL.

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**More information:** The article titled "Estimating tiger and its prey abundance in Bardia National Park, Nepal" was published on pages 66-69 in Vol 26, No 1 (2016) of the journal Banko Janakari and is available online on the NepJOL platform supported by INASP and maintained by TUCL.

Provided by INASP

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