

Cubs of Indian tiger shot in controversial hunt spotted alive

November 15 2018



The cubs' mother was shot dead in early November, accused of killing more than a dozen villagers

The orphaned cubs of a man-eating tiger killed in a state-sanctioned hunt have been spotted in a forest in western India and could be rescued and rehabilitated, officials said Thursday.

The mother was shot dead in early November after being accused of killing more than a dozen villagers, capping off one of India's most high-profile [tiger](#) hunts and angering conservation activists.

The months-long search deployed 200 hunters using paragliders, infrared cameras, sharpshooters on elephant back, and even Calvin Klein fragrance to lure the big cat.

Maharashtra state's forestry department's A.K. Mishra said the cubs were "healthy and are surviving" and that specialists would assess whether they had acquired a taste for humans from their mother.

"The cubs may or may not have become man-eaters, depending on their proximity to their mother when she attacked humans," he said.

"But we are hopeful of rescuing and rehabilitating them."

India's top court sanctioned the hunt in September, saying the big cat could be shot dead if tranquillisers failed.

Several appeals were lodged by animal activists who said the tiger—dubbed T1 by forestry officials but Avni by her advocates—said the mother was merely acting in defence of her young cubs.

The tiger shooting caused considerable anger, and raised questions over the nature of the killing.

An Indian cabinet minister and passionate animal lover even accused her counterpart in the forestry ministry of sanctioning a "ghastly murder" for sport.

The tiger was shot dead by Asghar Ali Khan, the son of India's most famous hunter Nawab Shafath Ali Khan.

Villagers in a Maharashtra district where the tiger had roamed celebrated her death by setting off firecrackers, local media reported.

India has launched a major campaign to boost tiger numbers. At the last tiger census in 2014 the population had risen to more than 2,200 from a low of less than 1,500.

But as urban areas have expanded in the country of 1.25 billion, conflict between humans and tigers has worsened.

Elephants and tigers kill on average one person a day in India, according to government figures.

Poaching is also a concern.

A three-year-old tiger was found dead Thursday after being caught in a poachers trap set in a protected reserve in Odisha, in eastern India, local media reported.

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