

Hair from tiger thought to be extinct found by conservationist on Java

April 2 2024, by Bob Yirka



The location where the putative Javan tiger *P. tigris sondaica* hair was found in the vicinity of Cipendeuy village, Sukabumi, West Java province, Indonesia.

Credit: *Oryx* (2024). DOI: 10.1017/S0030605323001400

A team of environmentalists and zoologists affiliated with several institutions in Indonesia has confirmed that a tiger species once thought extinct is still living on the island of Java. In their [study](#), published in the journal *Oryx*, the group conducted a DNA analysis of a hair found by a conservationist on a plantation on the island.

Prior research has shown that the Java tiger once flourished on the island. The tiger is a subspecies of the more well-known Sumatran tiger. But as humans encroached on their territory, leaving little land for the tigers, their numbers began dwindling. After farmers began shooting them for killing livestock, they disappeared completely. In 2008, the [species](#) was declared extinct. In this new effort, the research team has found evidence that the declaration may have been premature.

Over the past several decades, there have been reports by nonscientists of tigers still living on the island; some even suggested that livestock had been killed by one or more of them. But the sightings were unconfirmed.

Then, five years ago, a conservationist working on the island saw what he believed to be a Java tiger on a western part of the island near a plantation. He reported this to a researcher on the island who visited the site and found footprints and claw marks on shrubbery and also a single hair stuck to a fence.

A later in-depth interview with the [conservationist](#) led the researchers to believe the hair was indeed from a Java tiger. They tested it genetically and compared the results with samples from a museum specimen of a

Javan tiger collected in 1930, which showed them to be closely matched.

Based on the [genetic evidence](#), the researchers concluded that the hair had come from a Java tiger. The finding shows that the [tiger](#) did not go extinct when thought and members of its species had been living on the island, but whether Javan tigers are still there needs to be confirmed with further genetic and field studies.

More information: Wirdateti Wirdateti et al, Is the Javan tiger *Panthera tigris sondaica* extant? DNA analysis of a recent hair sample, *Oryx* (2024). [DOI: 10.1017/S0030605323001400](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0030605323001400)

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