

World's wild tiger count rising for first time in a century

April 10 2016, by By Katy Daigle



In this May 29, 2010, file photo, school children with tiger's ears headband gesture in front of a tiger poster during an event to encourage people to protect the endangered wild tiger species around Asia countries held at the National Animal Museum in Beijing, China. The world's count of wild tigers roaming forests from Russia to Vietnam has gone up for the first time in more than a century, in the latest global census, conservation groups said Monday, April 11, 2016. (AP Photo/Andy Wong, File)

The world's count of wild tigers roaming forests from Russia to Vietnam has gone up for the first time in more than a century, with some 3,890 counted by conservation groups and national governments in the latest global census, wildlife conservation groups said Monday.

The tally marks a turnaround from the last worldwide estimate in 2010, when the number of [tigers](#) in the wild hit an all-time low of about 3,200, according to the World Wildlife Fund and the Global Tiger Forum.

India alone holds more than half of them, with 2,226 tigers roaming reserves across the country, from the southern tip of Kerala state to the eastern swamps in West Bengal, according to its last count in 2014.

But while experts said the news was cause for celebration, they stopped short of saying the number of tigers itself was actually rising. In other words, it may just be that experts are aware of more tigers, thanks to the fact that survey methods are improving and more areas are being included.

Still, this is the first time tiger counts are increasing since 1900, when there were more than 100,000 tigers in the wild.

"More important than the absolute numbers is the trend, and we're seeing the trend going in the right direction," said Ginette Hemley, [senior vice president](#) of wildlife conservation at WWF.

The global census, compiled from national tiger surveys as well as the International Union for Conservation of Nature, was released a day before ministers from 13 countries meet for three days in New Delhi as they work toward doubling the world's wild tiger population from the 2010 low by 2022.

Not all nations are seeing progress, though. While Russia, India, Bhutan

and Nepal all counted more tigers in their latest surveys, Southeast Asian countries have struggled. They are also behind the others in conservation measures, and do not yet conduct a tiger census on their own.

"When you have high-level political commitments, it can make all the difference," Hemley said. "When you have well protected habitat and you control the poaching, tigers will recover. That's a pretty simple formula. We know it works."

Cambodia is looking at reintroducing tigers after recently declaring them functionally extinct within its borders, meaning there are no longer any breeding tigers in the wild. Indonesia has also seen a rapid decline, thanks to having the world's highest rate of forest destruction to meet growing demand for producing palm oil as well as pulp and paper.

Tigers are considered endangered species, under constant threat from habitat loss and poachers seeking their body parts for sale on the black market. They are also seeing their habitats rapidly shrinking as countries develop.

The global tiger count is based on data from 2014. Here is the tally broken down by country:

Bangladesh, 106; Bhutan, 103; Cambodia, 0; China, more than 7; India, 2,226; Indonesia, 371; Laos, 2; Malaysia, 250; Myanmar, no data available; Nepal, 198; Russia, 433; Thailand, 189; Vietnam, fewer than 5.

The experts said the Myanmar government's count of 85 tigers in 2010 was not included because the data was considered out of date.

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