

# Tiger Watch

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## How many tigers are there in India?

In December 2004, a shock wave hit the tiger conservation community – tigers had disappeared from Sariska, an Indian tiger reserve. Tigers were not faring well in several other tiger reserves either. As the headlines were being made, reserve managers were reporting healthy tiger numbers for Sariska. While the system of tiger reserves established in India represents an exceptional commitment to conservation, it has long been plagued by a problem illustrated by the graph (right). Tiger numbers in most parts of their range cannot be reliably determined by counting their pugmarks, yet it has been the primary method used to assess tiger numbers in India.

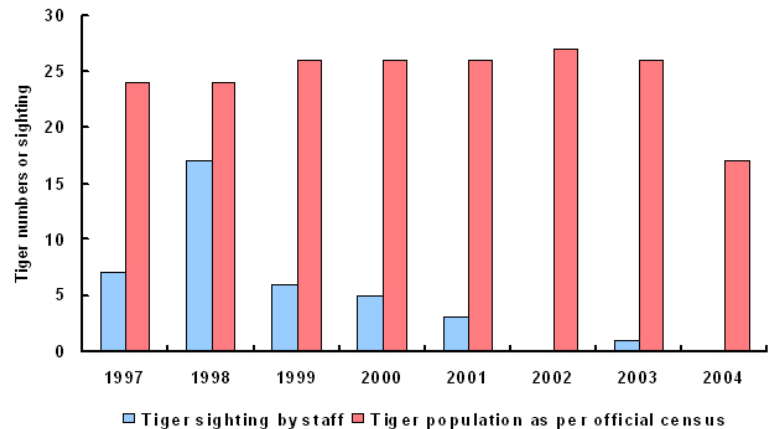
The government has continued to invest money and effort into obtaining tiger counts that were inaccurate and this has been an source of ongoing concern in the tiger community. In addition, examples like Sariska indicate that other sources of error may have crept in as reserve managers felt that if they reported downward trends in tiger numbers, it would reflect badly on how they were doing their jobs. The overall effect was ballooning populations of “paper” tigers that started at 1,800 individuals in 1972 and grew to 3,600 in 2002, yet some experts working on the ground suggest that the current number of tigers in India is actually between 1,200-1,500 – about half the official estimates. Which begs the question: how many tigers are there in India?

It appears that the Indian Government is taking this question and the loss of tigers from its tiger reserves very seriously. They arrested Sansar Chand the notorious king-pin of the tiger trade. In April 2005, they constituted a tiger

task force to investigate the causes of the loss and to make recommendations. Four months later, this task force presented *Joining the Dots*, a comprehensive report on the state of the countries tiger reserves to the Prime Minister. In addition, India’s Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) Project Tiger Directorate, in collaboration with the Wildlife Institute of India, launched a three year \$1.1 million initiative to survey tiger and prey populations using the latest technology known as the *Framework for Monitoring Tiger Population Trends in India*. This uses remote sensing and GIS to generate ecologically audited maps for all tiger areas in India.

The *Framework* outlines 4 steps to improve our understanding of Indian tiger numbers: 1) A systematic sampling of tiger

Tiger sightings vs census results in Sariska Tiger Reserve



pugmarks has been completed in 40,000 forest beats (15-20 km<sup>2</sup> administration units) across the country. 2) The relative abundance of tigers from these surveys will be classified as low, medium or high, then linked to tiger habitat information determined using satellite images. 3) Detailed surveys will be conducted using camera traps that will give the most precise tiger estimates in areas with medium and high tiger densities. 4) These will be accompanied by in-depth ecological studies of tigers in selected areas to better understand their needs.

Save The Tiger Fund council chairman Dr. John Seidensticker was in India last February to provide some external peer-review of the framework at the invitation of the IUCN: World Conservation Union. The entire process is still a work in progress but this unprecedented initiative engages the highest levels of the government who have the mandate and access to resources that will improve tiger conservation programs country-wide. It also brings local and international experts together to solve the problems, and is a real silver lining to the Sariska debacle.



Survey Team examining a tiger pug mark on the banks of a river in northern India.

Photo credit: K. Ramesh.

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Learn more about how you can take actions to save wild tigers see  
[www.savethetigerfund.org](http://www.savethetigerfund.org)

# Anti-trafficking campaign takes off

Six months into Save The Tiger Fund's (STF) three-year Campaign Against Tiger Trafficking (CATT), some Tibetans are shunning tiger-trimmed robes and the traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) industry is petitioning to end the use of tiger-bone medicines for all time.

STF created CATT because tigers were disappearing from reserves in India, while increasing numbers of Tibetans were showing up at special events in robes laden with tiger skins and China began talk of reopening trade in tiger bone for use in medicines and tonics. CATT, which is the only global partnership initiative to stop tiger trade, works in alliance with more than 20 conservation organizations as well as government and intergovernmental agencies. CATT's aim is twofold: first is to engage consumers through targeted groups such as Tibetan leaders and the TCM industry in efforts to stop not only tiger trade but also demand for tiger parts and derivatives. Second, CATT aims to catalyze government authorities to improve anti-poaching and law enforcement efforts to stop tiger trafficking at all points in the chain of supply and demand.

Thanks to CATT partners, significant progress has already begun. The Dalai Lama has repeatedly asked his followers

to stop selling, buying and wearing tiger skins. As a result of this and efforts by CATT partners and the Chinese government, some Tibetans are now burning their tiger skins and tiger-trimmed robes publicly to demonstrate their commitment to saving wild tigers.

One of the most exciting aspects of CATT is its new partnership with the World Federation of Chinese Medicine Societies, based in Beijing, and the American College of Traditional Chinese Medicine, which have agreed to work with STF to take tiger bone out of traditional Chinese medicine pharmacopoeia once and for all. A series of joint events will culminate just prior to China's 2008 "green" Olympics with a gala at the Great Wall presenting a global petition from the TCM industry calling on the world to stop use of tiger parts and derivatives.

In order to save wild tiger populations, improvements must occur on the supply side as well. Tiger range countries, such as India, must police and punish tiger poaching as a serious crime. CATT has communicated these concerns directly to India's prime minister and is working with the U.S. State Department to ensure that the tiger's plight is on the U.S. administration's agenda in bilateral talks with India. Good news came on this front in early March when India an-



Tiger skin costume at Litang Horse Festival  
Photo Credit: Wright WPSI/EIA

nounced it would become a member of the U.S.-led Coalition Against Wildlife Trafficking (CAWT). Both countries promised to "collaborate in the fight against illegal trade in wildlife and wildlife parts" and acknowledged the necessity of "curbing wildlife crime with strong investigation and prosecution regimes." Our hope is that more countries will join the coalition. For more information see [www.savethetigerfund/CATT](http://www.savethetigerfund/CATT).

## Grantee Spotlight: Wildlife Conservation Society in Sumatra

Indonesia's Bukit Barisan Selatan National Park (BBSNP), home to an estimated 40-43 tigers, is being squeezed from all sides by human encroachment and assaulted from within by poachers laying snares for tigers, rhinos and other animals



Examining a tiger camera trap photo (WCS Sumatra)

Since 1998, the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) has been monitoring threats to tigers and trying to mitigate them through anti-poaching support, public outreach and mentoring local people to take up the fight to save the park and its tigers. "WCS is as committed as ever to tiger conservation in Indonesia. We are now looking to take the lessons we have learned at Bukit Barisan Selatan National Park and expand our work to new regions" said WCS Indonesia Director, Dr Noviar Andayani.

Recently, as part of a Save The Tiger Fund sponsored project in cooperation with the Illegal Logging Response Center, WCS used satellite imagery and ground surveys to document encroached areas on 64,280

hectares of this 357,000-hectare park – a full 18%. More than half of the encroached area is under cultivation, mostly for environmentally unfriendly coffee that requires full sun – and thus cleared forests.

In response to the escalating pressures on this long, narrow patch of rich biodiversity along Sumatra's southwest coast, WCS has spearheaded an effort under the name Conservation Action Network Program, Indonesia (CANOPI). This successful partnership of local NGOs, government agencies and park authorities is working together to share information, engage stakeholders and realize the vision of collaborative park management and regional planning necessary to prevent further encroachment in BBSNP, and it may also serve as a model for collaborative efforts further afield.

# SAVE THE TIGER FUND PROJECTS – LAST HALF OF 2005 AND FIRST HALF OF 2006

The Save The Tiger Council approved funding for nearly \$800,000 in 2005 and the first half of 2006 in the following landscapes as outlined in the STF strategic plan:

## WESTERN GHATS OF INDIA

**1) Tribal Livelihood Support for Tiger Conservation:** Motivate and coordinate resident tribal communities living in the Nagarhole National Park to take up the government-sponsored resettlement package and directly support them during the post-resettlement period; Wildlife Conservation Society, \$34,450.

**2) Human Disturbance and Tiger Conservation:** Research the correlation between tigers, prey and human disturbance and vegetation type in the Western Ghats; State University of New York, \$20,000.

**3) Training Biologists for Tiger Conservation:** Sponsor three Indian students to take a two-year Master's Degree Program in Wildlife Studies at the Manipal Academy of Higher Education; Center for Wildlife Studies, \$30,000.

## TERAI ARC LANDSCAPE

**4) Tiger Trade Reduction in Nepal:** Reduce the illegal trade in wildlife parts in Nepal by forming monitoring cells in rural (anti-poaching) and urban (anti-trafficking) settings; Wildlife Conservation Nepal, \$25,935.

**5) Tiger Responses to Prey and Human Disturbance, India:** Conduct an intensive, replicated camera-trapping survey of tigers in Rajaji NP and correlate tiger numbers with human disturbance measures; Wildlife Institute of India, \$30,980.

## EASTERN HIMALAYAS

**6) Implementation of Tiger Action Plan for Bhutan:** Conduct anti-poaching, camera-trap surveys, distribution of tigers and prey density in three key national parks as well as an education awareness program; World Wildlife Fund, \$52,681.

## RUSSIAN FAR EAST

**7) Siberian Tiger Protection and Outreach Activities II, Russia:** Ensure long-term survival of Amur tigers in the Russian Far East by strengthening and expanding protection, conflict resolution, and outreach activities; Phoenix Fund, \$75,000.

**8) Public Monitoring to Defend the Amur Tiger, Russia:** Organize a stakeholder discussion about tiger-friendly hunting lease systems and disseminate high-quality investigative reports on tiger conservation through the "Zov Taigi" magazine; Zov Taigi, \$20,000.

**9) Long-term Amur Tiger Research and Conservation, Russia:** Continue radio-collaring, tracking, camera trapping and spoor research of Amur tigers especially dispersal, predation and



carrying capacity; Wildlife Conservation Society, \$82,435.

**10) Monitoring Amur Tigers 2005-2006, Russia:** Continue the longest running, most comprehensive tiger survey in the world to examine Amur tiger abundance, recruitment, mortality and prey; Wildlife Conservation Society, \$44,820.

## REMAINING SUMATRAN FOREST

**11) Tiger Conservation in Tesso Nilo - Bukit Tigapuluh, Indonesia:** Build scientific capacity, local leadership, and law enforcement capacity in the Tesso Nilo conservation landscape; World Wildlife Fund, \$47,950.

## OTHER

**12) Tiger Trade Interventions in Sumatra and Malaysia:** Map the tiger trade between Sumatra and Peninsular Malaysia and identify key locations and issues for action; TRAFFIC, \$83,540.

**13) Asian Wildlife Interpol-Phase I:** Provide technical assistance to form an Asian Wildlife Enforcement Team to reduce illegal trade in wildlife parts across Asia; WildAid Foundation of Thailand, \$22,500.

**14) Reduction of Tiger Skin Consumption in Tibet, China:** Develop comprehensive approaches to reduce tiger and leopard skin trade

and consumption in the Tibetan Region; Conservation International, \$50,000.

**15) Curbing Big Cat Skin Markets in Tibet, China:** Eliminate Asian big cat skin markets in Tibetan communities by strengthening law enforcement, improving wildlife policy and by educating skin consumers, traders and other targeted audiences. World Wildlife Fund -China, \$80,000.

**16) Investigating tiger bone markets in China:** Investigate illegal tiger bone and attitudes in China to establish baseline data to combat trade in tiger parts; International Fund for Animal Welfare, \$80,400

**17) Taking Tiger Bone Out of Chinese Medicine & Tonics:** Support STF's CATT initiative in fulfilling its agreement with the World Federation of Chinese Medicine Societies to eliminate the use of tiger bone in traditional Chinese medicines and tonics; American College of Traditional Chinese Medicine, \$42,000.

**18) Tiger Conservation Prioritization Plan Launch:** Launch and socialize the Tiger Conservation Landscapes concept, a geographically explicit framework to guide and prioritize in situ tiger conservation efforts across Asia; Wildlife Conservation Society, \$54,855.

# Think globally, act locally

Save The Tiger Fund gives social entrepreneurs the tools and the information to take actions within their own communities. It also provides the vehicle to funnel money raised into the world's most promising wild tiger conservation projects. The variety and ingenuity of people touched by the plight of tigers never ceases to amaze.

In the last month Save The Tiger Fund encountered two wonderful examples of this entrepreneurship. Zachary Merink who just turned 6 years old, sold lemonade the whole of last summer, raising \$31.30 to help save wild tigers. In Littleton, Colorado, The Grant Ranch Homeowners Association sponsored an art show and local artists contributed their work for a silent auction that raised \$1,116 for tigers.

Over the last 11 years, Save The Tiger Fund has received over 20,000 individual donations, totaling about \$1.8 million. Save The Tiger Fund has sent supporting materials out for bar mitzvahs where guests contributed to Save The Tiger Fund in lieu of

gifts. Our materials have also helped school teachers develop a curriculum with some bite.

Boyfriends have honored their sweethearts with contributions, office colleagues have donated in the name of a hard-to-buy-for boss, and children have sent poems and crayon drawings with their dollars. And tigers have benefited.

Conscious of criticism that large sums of money are raised on the back of tigers without ever making it to the ground, Save The Tiger Fund has invested 90 percent of public contributions straight into tiger conservation projects. That commitment has made Save The Tiger Fund one of the world's biggest investors in tiger conservation. According to a study by the Zoological Society of London, Save The Tiger Fund provided about 1/3 of



Lemonade stand - Zachary Merink

the funding non-governmental organizations for on-the-ground tiger conservation efforts between 1998 and 2004.

## Help save the world's wild tigers

Send tax-deductible donations to:

**Save The Tiger Fund**  
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation  
Department 4037  
Washington, D.C. 20042-4037

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Established in 1995, Save The Tiger Fund is a special initiative of the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation in partnership with ExxonMobil Foundation to support diverse tiger conservation projects. For more information about Save The Tiger Fund, please visit

[www.savethetigerfund.org](http://www.savethetigerfund.org) or write to us at:

**Save The Tiger Fund**  
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation  
1120 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.  
Washington D.C. 20036-3920

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