Tigers

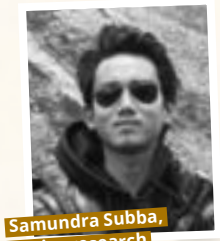
YOUR FIELD REPORT

ISSUE 30

The moment one of two tigers was released into its new home at Ile-Balkhash Nature Reserve in Kazakhstan

Hello!

Welcome to your latest tiger update



Samundra Subba, senior research officer, WWF-Nepal

As you may recall from our earlier update, tigers in Kazakhstan were hunted to extinction decades ago. But thanks to efforts by the Kazakhstani government, supported by us and our partners, a male and female tiger have been relocated to a spacious semi-natural enclosure within a nature reserve. Hopefully, cubs born to this pioneering pair will be released into the wild, becoming the first tigers to roam the country in 70 years. Work to restore the tiger's forest and prey populations is already under way. With more translocations planned, it's the first step towards building a population of 50 tigers by 2034. We're excited to see what the future holds!

Pheri bhetaula!

(This means 'see you again' in Nepali!)

FIELD NOTES

NOTES FROM THE FIELD

TIGER FRIENDS

Around India's Pilibhit Tiger Reserve, volunteers are helping tigers and people share the landscape safely

Tigers have always been part of Atul Singh's life. As a child, he often explored the dense forests of nearby Pilibhit Tiger Reserve with his grandfather, who was the area's first private tiger hunter. He was hired by the forest department to shoot tigers that were seen as a threat by communities around the edge of the reserve.

But while his grandfather hunted tigers, Atul was developing a deep appreciation for these majestic animals and knew there had to be another way to live alongside them. Using the skills passed down from his grandfather, Atul began tracking tigers that ventured into settlements and would warn people to keep a safe distance. When the big cat population began to surge, doubling in number within the space of a few years, the increasing risk of encounters between people and tigers needed greater intervention.

Atul gathered like-minded locals to set up the Bagh Mitra ('tiger friends'). These dedicated volunteers work with the region's forest department to respond swiftly when tigers roam outside the reserve and near farmland or settlements. Following any report of a tiger, they quickly locate the animal and monitor its movements, and use pawprints and eyewitness reports to deduce its age, sex and likely behaviour. They also alert local people so they can take appropriate precautions to stay safe.

Whenever a tiger is spotted, the Bagh Mitra rush to the scene to help people stay safe

Tiger prints!

There are now around 200 Bagh Mitra volunteers in Pilibhit and the local area

"I feel very proud of our work"

Atul's grandfather was a tiger hunter

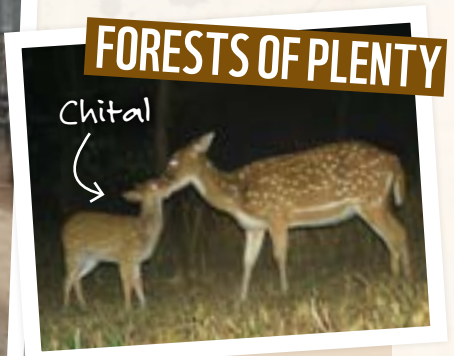
Family connections

Forest watchers

Five years on, the Bagh Mitra network has grown to some 200 volunteers, trained with your support. "We're proud to be Bagh Mitra," says Atul. "Through our work to raise awareness, conflicts have decreased significantly, and the community is realising that the tiger is a beautiful animal that can coexist peacefully with people."

As both human and tiger populations grow, your support is helping us work towards a future where people and tigers can thrive together. Thank you.

Samundra



Since your last update, we've surveyed all the tiger prey species living in Khata Corridor, a vital wildlife route between India and Nepal that you helped restore. Thanks to you, we now know there are 78 prey animals in every square kilometre of the corridor. This is a healthy number – a sign the corridor is thriving.

We counted plenty of nilgai (a type of antelope) and chital and barking deer. These herbivores aren't just the tiger's main prey – they're also vital for the health of the forest as they keep vegetation under control and disperse seeds through their poo. We're working to ensure they all continue to flourish.

Nilgai: a meal for a tiger

Photographer Emmanuel Rondeau uses his own motion-sensing camera traps to capture stunning images of tigers and other wildlife. These photos help us study and monitor big cats, and also raise awareness of the threats they face

CAUGHT ON CAMERA

Finding and counting elusive creatures such as tigers is crucial to conservation efforts. But it's not easy. That's why camera traps are vital

Just a century ago, perhaps 100,000 wild tigers prowled swathes of Asia. But the 20th century wasn't kind to these big cats. Decimated by hunting, habitat loss, illegal poaching and conflict with humans, their numbers plummeted by around 95%.

After decades of conservation efforts, their numbers are on the rise. The Global Tiger Forum announced a global estimate of 5,711 tigers in the wild in 2025, which is an incredible achievement. But the tiger's long-term survival is still threatened by habitat loss and fragmentation, and conflict with people.

To tackle these threats, we need to know more about these elusive predators. Where do tigers live? How far do they travel? How do they use wildlife corridors? How do they interact with other species in their habitat? How are they affected by interactions with livestock and people? And, of fundamental importance, how many are there, and how densely concentrated are remaining populations?

Tigers roam widely, stalking huge home ranges up to 100 sq km, often in remote, hot, humid or otherwise challenging conditions. So monitoring them is tricky. That's where camera traps come in.

It's a century since early camera traps were first used in India's Himalayan foothills to capture high-quality photographs of tigers. Today, large numbers of much smaller, more sensitive and versatile models are deployed to help us answer those key questions.

Innovation for conservation

Modern digital camera traps have large memory capacities and long-lasting batteries, so they can be left in the field for weeks or even months, capturing thousands of images between checks. They offer a highly repeatable method of data collection, often out-performing other sampling methods, and are highly cost-efficient. And they typically cause minimal disturbance to the lives of the animals photographed.

By placing them on both sides ▶

Words: Paul Bloomfield | Images: © Emmanuel Rondeau / WWF-US | © WWF-US / Yawar Films

HOW CAMERA TRAPS WORK

Modern camera traps are digital cameras that typically use infrared sensors to detect the heat of warm-blooded animals. They're most easily triggered by larger mammals – ideal for tigers.

1
The camera trap is fixed on a steady mount at a suitable height (for a tiger, around 40-50cm above the ground) preferably facing a trail known to be used by that animal.

2
The infrared sensor detects a sudden change in temperature when a warm-blooded animal enters the detection zone. This triggers the camera to capture an image.

3
An animal will only set off the camera trap if it's moving. If a tiger is stationary in the detection zone there's no change of temperature so the camera might not be activated.

of a known trail, we can capture photos of both sides of a tiger. That's important because each individual's markings – its stripe patterns – are unique, like a human fingerprint. It means we can identify tigers as individuals, helping researchers estimate the number in any given area.

We use camera traps to help us identify priority areas for tiger conservation. In addition, the images and footage they produce are beautiful and inspiring, helping us engage with communities and raise funds for conservation efforts.

The development of networked camera traps, which send images over phone or satellite networks, can also help tackle poaching. Meanwhile, new software tools and statistical models are making it easier and faster to get useful information from the thousands of images generated. All this is improving our understanding of human impacts on wildlife. In turn, this helps community-based institutions and managers of protected areas preserve these spaces to benefit tigers.

Real results

Award-winning photographer Emmanuel Rondeau has worked with WWF for several years, using his flair with camera traps to gain insights into rarely seen tiger populations. In 2017, he captured the first high-resolution photograph of a wild tiger in Bhutan, a mountainous, long-isolated country that's home to around 100 of the cats. After analysing the stripes we believe this individual had never been recorded before.

In 2019, Emmanuel set up camera traps in Khata Corridor, a stretch of forest between Bardia National Park in Nepal and Katarniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary in India. They captured images of wild tigers living in the corridor and using it to move between the two protected areas to feed and find mates. His photos emphasised the importance of this 13km-long stretch of forest.

In Malaysia, where tiger numbers had plummeted to fewer than 150 by 2022, Emmanuel captured a camera trap photo that drew attention to the need to safeguard crucial habitat and restore numbers of the national animal. His mission was supported by Indigenous Orang Asli tiger patrol teams, who've now set up hundreds of camera traps to monitor wildlife and identify threats.

When people power is combined with camera trap technology, conservation efforts can become more targeted and efficient, to give tigers a brighter future.

DID YOU KNOW?

Camera-trap photography was pioneered by American politician George Shiras in the late 19th century. Early attempts used trip wires.

Camera-trap images, such as this one captured in India's Khata Corridor, can be used to estimate tiger populations, detect their movements and monitor threats

Illustration: Julia Young | Image: © DoFSC / WWF-Nepal

THE BIGGER ISSUE

A WORLD OF GOOD

Try a daily dose of nature to boost your mental and physical wellbeing

In fast-paced Hong Kong, many of us are living under constant pressure. Work, studies, family responsibilities and digital overload can take a real toll on both our emotional and physical wellbeing – particularly for young people growing up in an increasingly urban and screen-dominated environment.

Yet one of the most effective remedies lies closer than we think, often just beyond our doorsteps: nature.

How nature helps us feel better

An overwhelming body of evidence shows that connecting with nature is one of the best things we can do for our mental wellbeing. It helps us relax, lowers stress levels, boosts confidence, self-esteem and creativity, and helps us to find focus and emotional balance.

However, despite Hong Kong's rich biodiversity, stunning landscapes and easy access to country parks and beaches, recent studies show that Hong Kong people scored the lowest among 18 studied regions globally for the level of nature connectedness and well-being index.

While many people recognise that nature makes them feel better, busy urban lifestyles often leave little room to do so.

Let's reconnect with nature

At WWF, we believe that strengthening our connection with nature is essential – not only for our own wellbeing, but also for fostering greater care and action in protecting the natural world.

You don't need a long hike or a remote destination to make a difference. Spending just 20 minutes a day engaging with nature can make a massive difference to our mental wellbeing.

While spending time in the great outdoors is rewarding, you can also connect with nature when you're at home too – from growing herbs, listening to birdsong, to enjoying images of nature to bring a sense of calm to your day.

The great news is that many of the powerful mood boosters are totally free – as long as we look after our world. Let's restore nature, and let nature restore us– as long as we look after our world. Let's restore nature, and let nature restore us.

GET YOUR DAILY DOSE OF NATURE

Take a moment each day to reconnect with the natural world around you – for your own wellbeing, and for the planet we all share.

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WWF

Working to sustain the natural world for people and wildlife

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(Incorporated in Hong Kong with limited liability by guarantee 於香港註冊成立的擔保有限公司)

As well as helping to safeguard tigers, you support our other vital work to help protect our beautiful planet and its wildlife. Thank you.