

Human Animal Conflict - Nagarhole Tigers

Why in news?

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In one month, seven tigers including a six-month-old cub have died in the Nagarhole-Bandipur reserves in Karnataka.

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Where is Nagarhole National Park?

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 - Nagarhole National Park also known as Rajiv Gandhi National Park, is a national park located in Kodagu and Mysore district in Karnataka.
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 - This park was declared as a Project Tiger tiger reserve in 1999.
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 - The reserves form an integral part of the Nilgiri biosphere which holds world's single largest tiger population estimated over at 570 tigers.
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 - It is located to the north-west of Bandipur National Park and the **Kabini reservoir** separates the two parks.

- Bandipur and Nagarahole hold more than 221 tigers cumulatively.
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- In terms of tiger mortality, however, the two reserves have taken a huge hit since 2010, with 68 deaths .
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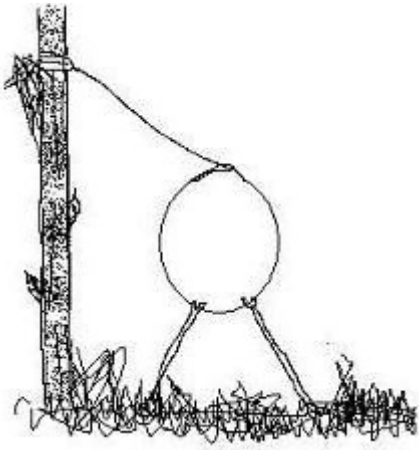
What is the reason for the deaths?

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- Protection against poachers and habitat manipulation has seen the prey base increase.
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- With the increase in the weaker tigers (injured or older tigers and younger males) are pushed to the periphery.
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- Coffee and areca nut plantations are prevalent near Nagarahole Tiger Reserve.
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- Tigers enter the plantation in search of rabbits and wild boars.
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- They get caught in the barbed-wire fence cannot extricate itself from the wire and dies.
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- They also get trapped in the snares setup by humans.
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- The snare is a loop of wire in the form of a noose.
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- When an animal enters the noose, any slight weight on the dangling string makes it tighten. The more the animal struggles, the tighter it gets.
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Why snares have been set up?

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- The snares are often set for rabbits and wild boars.
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- They are source of food for locals and the estate owners encourage it as a way to deal with the crop loss due to boar raids.
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- They result in killing the tigers, and the panicked people who set the trap, dump the body of the tiger and clears the evidence of the snares.
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- Forest officials ended up in this speculation because the body of the tigers dead are left with nails, claws and skin untouched. This rules out the role of poachers.
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- The post-mortem of some dead tigers showed that they have had lost their canines and their stomachs were empty.
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- This confirms that the tigers that are unable to hunt in the wild, move to the peripheries to hunt slow-moving livestock.
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- The recent government order allowing hunting of wild pigs to reduce crop damage may be a prime driver for the increase in the number of snares.
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What has been done?

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- The forest department resolved to weed out all these traps.
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- Elephant camps have been mobilised to aid the search. Over 200 snares were found in the first two days.
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- The operations are concentrated around Lakshmana Tirtha river.
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- There is no way to find out who has placed the traps.
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- Also the forest officials do not want to antagonise locals as they need them for conservation.
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- This trend will continue as long as “unscientific” ways of dealing with crop loss continue.
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- In the reserve and surrounding areas, the anger among the people is generally against wild boars and elephants.
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- Dynamites and Pellet Guns have been used against elephants, while cases of electrocution have also been witnessed. This also should be seriously addressed.
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- But the presence of the tiger is largely tolerated.
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- These lands are considered as sacred groves and the big cat are worshipped.
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- They do not want the tiger killed. They only ask for was protection for the people and livestock.
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- This sentiment should be harnessed and enough awareness about snares should be made to conserve tigers.

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Source: The Hindu

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