

## Project Tiger

### Why in news?

Recently Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched 5th cycle of India's Tiger Census to mark 50 years of 'Project Tiger'.

### Why is tiger so significant?

- It is a **top predator** and is at the apex of the food chain.
- The presence of tigers in the forest is an indicator of the well-being of the ecosystem.
- Tigers are both a **Flagship and Umbrella species**.
- As a Flagship species they are important for conservation and as Umbrella species, conservation of tigers leads to conservation of other species.

#### Conservation Status of Tiger

- IUCN – **Endangered**
- Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 - **Schedule I**
- CITES - **Appendix I**



### What is Project tiger?

- Project Tiger was launched by the Central government on April 1 1973 in a bid to promote conservation of the tiger.
- First launched at the **Jim Corbett National Park**.
- **Centrally Sponsored Scheme** of the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change providing central assistance to the tiger States for tiger conservation in designated tiger reserves.
- Focuses on the conservation of big cats and ensures the preservation of their natural habitat as tigers are at the top of the food chain.

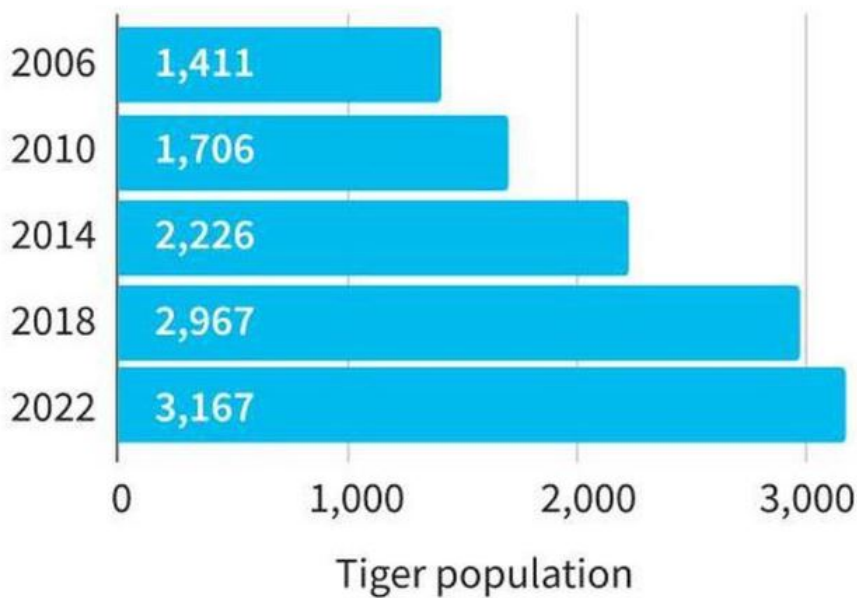
### What about the recent tiger estimates?

*Nearly 75% of the world's tiger population can now be found in India and tiger reserves in the country span 75,000 square kilometres.*

- As per the All India Tiger Estimation (AITE) 2021-2022, the number of tigers in India has increased by 6.74% from 2,967 in 2018 to **3,167 in 2022**.
- The tiger census is held once in every 4 years by **National Tiger Conservation**

**Authority (NTCA)** in association with state forest departments and the **Wildlife Institute of India.**

- The current estimate is a part of a larger report and the final tiger estimates for 2022 are likely to be available in the near future.
- According to the 2022 report, the tiger population has increased substantially in the Shivalik and Gangetic flood plains in the north followed by central India.
- But the **Western Ghats** showed a *decline* in tiger population.



***MSTriPES (Monitoring System for Tigers: Intensive Protection and Ecological Status)*** - Uses Global Positioning System (GPS), General Packet Radio Services (GPRS), and remote sensing, to collect information from the field, create a database, analyses the information to provide inferences for better management of tiger reserve.

### **What is the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA)?**

- NTCA, a statutory body under the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change was established in 2005.
- It has been constituted under **Section 38 L (1) of Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.**
- **Composition**
  - The Union Minister of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (Chairperson)
  - The Minister of State in the Ministry of Environment and Forests (Vice-Chairperson)
  - Three members of Parliament, Secretary, Ministry of Environment and Forests and other members.
- **Headquarters** - New Delhi
- **Functions** - The NTCA has power to check poaching and preserve the tiger population.
- It sets up a Tiger Protection Force and funding the relocation of villages from the protected areas.

- It also provides statutory authority to Project Tiger.
- The NTCA / Project Tiger conducts the country level assessment of the status of tiger, co-predators, prey and habitat, using the refined methodology, as approved by the Tiger Task Force.

## What is International Big Cats Alliance (IBCA)?

- **Launched by** - Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2023 at Mysuru, Karnataka, to commemorate 50 years of Project Tiger.
- **Aim** - To conserve 7 big cats namely Tiger, Lion, Leopard, Snow Leopard, Cheetah, Jaguar and Puma
- **Membership** - Open to **97 range countries**, which contain the natural habitat of the big cats, as well as *other interested nations, international organisations, etc.*
- **Features** - Assured support over 5 years with guaranteed funding of over Rs 800 crore
- Rehabilitation of the big cats
- Dissemination of information on benchmarked practices, capacity building, resources repository, research and development, and awareness creation

### GENUS PUMA

Closely related to the domestic cat, this genus has **only one extant species**, the cougar.

#### COUGAR

PUMA CONCOLOR  
**SIZE:** 40-100KG  
**STATUS:** LEAST CONCERN

The Cougar is the **second-largest cat in the Americas**; jaguar is largest. Cougars are also called mountain lion/panther across their range from the Canadian Yukon to the Southern Andes. Concolor is latin: "of uniform colour".



### GENUS ACINONYX

This is a unique genus within the cat family, with **only one living member**, the cheetah.

#### CHEETAH

ACINONYX JUBATUS  
**SIZE:** 20-70KG  
**STATUS:** VULNERABLE

Fastest land mammal; only cat **without retractable claws**— the grip helps it accelerate faster than a sports car (0-100 km/hr in 3secs). They are not aggressive towards humans; they have been tamed since the Sumerian era. They don't breed well in captivity— females play hard to get. Cheetahs are not big; they hunt during the day to avoid competing with other big cats.



### GENUS PANTHERA

Large wild cats that roar but can't purr. Among them, the **lion, leopard, and jaguar** are more closely related; the other strand has the **tiger and snow leopard**. The snow leopard is an exception in that it can't roar.

#### TIGER

PANTHERA TIGRIS  
**SIZE:** 75-300KG  
**STATUS:** ENDANGERED

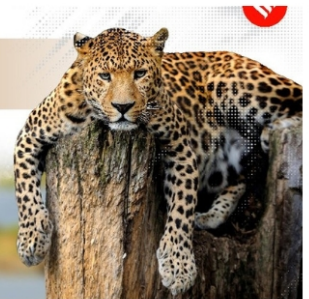
Jim Corbett's "large-hearted gentleman with boundless courage", the **solitary and strongly territorial tiger** is the largest of all wild cats and the most ancient of the Panthera. Primarily a forest animal, its range is the Siberian taiga to the Sunderban delta. It's the **national animal of India**, Bangladesh, Malaysia, and South Korea.



#### LEOPARD

PANTHERA PARDUS  
**SIZE:** 30-90KG  
**STATUS:** VULNERABLE

Similar in appearance to the jaguar with a rosette patterned coat, the leopard was described by Jim Corbett as "the most beautiful of all animals" for its "grace of movement and beauty of colouring". The **most adaptable of all big cats**, they occupy diverse habitats at all altitudes across Africa and Asia. Like black jaguars, melanistic leopards are called black panthers.



#### SNOW LEOPARD

PANTHERA UNCIA  
**SIZE:** 25-55KG  
**STATUS:** VULNERABLE

Ghost of the mountains, this smokey grey cat lives above the snow line in **Central and South Asia**. The most elusive of big cats, it **cannot roar**, and has the **longest tail of all**— which comes in handy for balance while hunting along cliffs, and also gives warmth when wrapped around the body. The snow leopard is the state animal of Ladakh and Himachal.



#### LION

PANTHERA LEO  
**SIZE:** 100-250KG  
**STATUS:** VULNERABLE

Native to **Africa and Asia**, the lion is the most social cat, and **lives in groups** called 'prides'. They prefer open forests such as scrubland, and adult males have a prominent mane. The lion is among the most widely recognised of animal symbols— from the pillar of Ashoka to the main entrance of Buckingham Palace to the logo of MGM.



#### JAGUAR

PANTHERA ONCA  
**SIZE:** 50-110KG  
**STATUS:** NEAR THREATENED

The **largest cat in the Americas**, the jaguar has the **strongest bite force** of all wild cats, enabling it to bite directly through the skull of its prey. Melanistic (black) jaguars are common, and are often called black panthers. Jaguar was a powerful motif in the Mayan and Aztec civilisations.



## References

1. [The Indian Express | Project Tiger](#)
2. [Times Now | International Big Cats Alliance \(IBCA\)](#)
3. [NTCA | About NTCA](#)

