

## Tiger Conservation

### Why in News?

Recently National Tiger Conservation Authority gave instructions to states to start the process of relocation from core areas of tiger reserves.

### What are the Tiger conservation initiatives in India?

#### Tiger

- **Tiger** - 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.
- 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**



- India is home to around **75%** of the global tiger population.
- **Current Tiger Population** - 3700
- Largest tiger population of 785 is in Madhya Pradesh, followed by Karnataka (563) & Uttarakhand (560), and Maharashtra (444).
- Highest number of Tiger is found in Jim Corbett (260) followed by Bandipur (150), Nagarhole (141), Bandhavgarh (135).

- **Project Tiger** - It 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.
- **National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA)** - It a statutory body under the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change was established in 2005 to manage tiger reserves and lead tiger conservation efforts.
- **Tiger reserves** - They were set up as a part of Project Tiger initiated in 1973 and are administered by the NTCA.
  - **Number of Tiger Reserves** - 55(As on August 2024)

*Andhra Pradesh's Nagarjuna Sagar Srisailem Tiger Reserve is the country's*

*largest tiger reserve, covering 3,296.31 sq. km and Manas Tiger Reserve in Assam is the second largest with an area of 2,837.1 sq. km.*

- 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.
- **The Tiger Census** - It 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.
- **MSTripes** - Monitoring System for Tigers: Intensive Protection and Ecological Status
- It creates a database and analyses the information to provide inferences for better management of tiger reserve.
- **International Big Cats Alliance (IBCA)** - It is an international collaboration to conserve 7 big cats namely Tiger, Lion, Leopard, Snow Leopard, Cheetah, Jaguar and Puma.
- **Tiger Corridors** - It enables the tigers move freely between the protected areas.

### **What is the Significance of Tiger Conservation?**

- **Balancing Ecosystem** - Since Tigers are the apex predators in their ecosystems, their conservation regulates prey populations and helps maintain a healthy balance in the ecosystem.
- **Biodiversity** - Protecting tigers ensures the conservation of a wide range of other species within their habitats, as their presence indirectly supports the survival of many other animals.
- **Habitat Preservation** - Tiger conservation efforts benefitted in conserving sub-Himalayan forests, tropical rainforests, savannahs and mangroves.
- **Ecotourism** - Tiger reserves attract tourists from around the world, generating significant revenue for local communities and the national economy.
- **Sustainable Livelihoods** - Ecotourism can provide alternative livelihoods for local communities, reducing their dependence on activities that might harm tiger habitats.
- **National Symbol** - The tiger is a symbol of India's rich biodiversity and cultural heritage, representing strength, courage, and beauty.

### **What are the negative impacts of tiger conservation plan?**

- **Impact on Other Species** - Altering and manipulating habitats to favour tigers, does not necessarily help other species that share the tiger's habitat.
- **Extinction of Caracal** - Rare caracal of open savannahs and rocky stretches, were silently disappeared in early 2000s from Sariska Tiger Reserve due to the plantation of *vilayati kikar*, an invasive tree.
- **Decline of Antelope** - Neglect of rich microhabitats such as the riverine forest abutting perennial streams, led to the decline of the four-horned antelope.
- **Ecological Change** - Construction of numerous artificial waterholes for improving tiger sightings increased the soil moisture in this naturally dry forest, leading to changes in vegetation.
- **Social Impact** - Local hostility in several tiger reserves due to lose of access to resources and livelihood once the tiger reserve come into place.

- **Loss of Identity** - Local residents became “illegal” overnight when the tiger reserve was established.
- **Legal Ambiguities** - Contradictions between the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 and the Forest Rights Act, 2006 undermine the conservation efforts inside protected areas.
- The direction by the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) to declare critical tiger habitats is considered to be in contravention of the Forest Rights Act.

### What are the challenges in Tiger conservation?

- **Development Challenges** - Fragmentation by rampant infrastructure development such as Highways, dams and industries threaten a number of tiger reserves across.
- **River Interlinking impact** - 58 sq. km of savannah in Panna tiger reserve will soon be submerged by the Ken-Betwa Interlinking Project.
- **Hydroelectric projects** - These projects in the vicinity of Dibang tiger reserve will likely affect tigers and their movement.
- **Unplanned development** - It threatens to create habitat islands that will not support most wild species, let alone large carnivores such as tigers.
- **Rural to Urban Transformation** - Rapid rural-to-urban transformation also has consequences for biodiversity.
- **Urban Expansion** - Suburban built-up spaces are closing in on not just tiger reserves, but also other protected areas.
- **Loss of Agri buffer** - Agricultural habitats that once formed buffer habitats between the forest and the city, and aided wildlife dispersal, are fast disappearing.
- **Inadequate Settlements** - Large-scale evictions, without attention to socio-cultural, ecological and economic particularities can only result in continuing the trend of inadequate resettlements.

### What lies ahead?

- Consider the long-term sustainability of tiger conservation effort.
- Include Social viewpoints and ecological aspect with the conservation plan.
- Enhance the relocation package, keeping up with the changing needs of livelihood security.
- Increase the participation and absorbing of local tribes into wildlife management.
- Share the tourism proceeds with local villages.

### Reference

[Hindustan Times | Rising Tiger Numbers](#)