

General Studies – 3; Topic: Conservation

Tiger Conservation in India

1) Introduction

- Tiger conservation involves attempts to prevent the animal from becoming extinct and preserving its natural habitat.
- India is home to 70 per cent of global tiger population. Therefore, the country has an important role to play in tiger conservation.

2) Need for Tiger Conservation

- Tiger is a symbol of our National Pride
- The aesthetic, ethical and cultural value of tigers are the critical factors for saving tigers.
- Tigers are called “umbrella” species. By saving them, we save everything beneath their ecological umbrella - including the world's last great forests
- The presence of tigers in the forest is an indicator of the well being of the ecosystem.
- They prevent over-grazing by limiting herbivore numbers and maintain ecological integrity.
- Tigers attracting tourists, which provide incomes for local communities.
- A healthy tiger population lives in large forests – which are nothing but the natural sinks of Carbon.

3) Threats

- Habitat loss and poaching continue to pose a threat to the animal's survival.
- Tiger parts are used in traditional Chinese medicines, tiger skin is used for decorative and medicinal purposes
- Habitat degradation by human beings and other natural factors (such as fires and floods).
- The loss of habitat resulted in the reduction of their prey species.
- The Ken-Betwa River interlinking project would have greater impact on Panna Tiger Reserve.

4) Concerns / Challenges

- Government is slow to adopt good science for conservation purposes as stated by Ullas Karanth, an expert on tigers.
- Lack of access to data.
- Researchers from non-governmental, institutions such as the National Centre for Biological Sciences and the Indian Institute of Science face difficulties to get permissions (to visit parts of forest) for research.
- Tiger conservation effort is losing steam due to excessive Bureaucratization.
- Fight against poaching is not efficient in all parts of the country. In eastern India it is almost ineffective.

5) Efforts being made to save tigers

- ‘Project Tiger’ in 1972.
- The National Tiger Conservation Authority is constituted for escalating tiger conservation.
- In-principle approval has been accorded for creation of New tiger reserves at Ratapani Tiger Reserve (Madhya Pradesh), Sunabeda Tiger Reserve (Odisha), and Guru Ghasidas (Chhattisgarh).
- Rajaji National Park (Uttarakhand), Orang National Park (Assam) & Kamlang Wildlife Sanctuary (Arunachal Pradesh) have been declared as 48th, 49th & 50th Tiger Reserves.

- Curbing wildlife trade through international agreements like Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).
- NGOs such as Trade Records Analysis of Flora and Fauna in Commerce (TRAFFIC) assist member states with the implementation of CITES.
- India is a member to Global Tiger Forum which is the only inter-governmental body for tiger conservation.
- Financial and technical help is provided to the State Governments under Project Tiger and Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats.
- 'Monitoring system for Tigers' Intensive Protection and Ecological Status (M-STripes)' for effective field patrolling and monitoring.
- To control the Trans -boundary illegal trade in wildlife and conservation, India signed a bilateral understanding with Nepal.
- For the conservation of tigers in Sunderban region, India has signed a protocol with Bangladesh.

6) **Way Forward**

- Tiger conservation / protection is a collective responsibility between the Centre, tiger States and country citizens.
- The tiger survey must be shifted from the government to scientists and researcher institutions.
- Foster awareness about tiger conservation through discussions, exhibitions and local campaigns
- Interact with local schools for mainstreaming conservation as an important curricular/ extracurricular activity
- Say 'NO' to tiger trade by refusing to buy tiger parts and items prepared from tiger derivatives.
- Creating opportunities for young people to take up a career in wildlife is also a very conducive method of saving the animals.
- Research and monitoring activities is a crucial element in tiger conservation
- Timely infrastructural support to State Forest Departments to enhance their protection capabilities.
- Promoting sustainable livelihoods, reducing forest dependence and strengthening local support for conservation.