ASIATIC LION:-

What?

*Scientific Name: Panthera leo persica*

The Asiatic lion is a Panthera leo leo population in India.The Asian lion is a species of large cat. These lions are predators, quite similar to African lions both in appearance and size. However, they are slightly smaller compared to their African relatives. Other notable differences include: tassels on the end of their tails as well as bunches of hair on their elbows are longer than these of African lions; unlike their African cousins, Asian lions are clearly identified by long folds of skin, stretched along their bellies; their manes are shorter than these of African lions, so the ears are seen. Being cats, Asian lions possess strong retractable claws and sharp canine teeth. The color of their fur varies from buffish-grey with occasional silvery tones, to ruddy-tawny, covered with black spots

Where?

There are only around 600 Asiatic lions left in the wild, living in the Indian state of Gujarat, Western India. The population largely live in the protected park area of the Gir Forest National Park and Sanctuary.

The lions live closely alongside humans in their last remaining natural habitat, including the Maldhari community, who live within the Gir Forest. Some of the lion population live outside of the protected areas, amongst local communities in the surrounding farmland and hills.

As well as the last Asiatic lions, the Gir Forest located near the town of Sasan Gir is also home to an incredible array of diverse wildlife, including langur monkeys, jackals, leopards, antelope, deer, crocodiles and over 300 species of birds.

Why?

Today there are just over 600 lions living across southern Gujarat. The small population is steadily increasing but the species is listed as Endangered by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), as it is still vulnerable to many threats. An outbreak of contagious disease or natural disaster could have drastic consequences for the species.

The Asiatic lion currently exists as a single subpopulation, and is thus vulnerable to extinction from unpredictable events, such as an epidemic or large forest fire. There are indications of poaching incidents in recent years. There are reports that organized gangs have switched attention from tigers to these lions. There have also been a number of drowning incidents after lions fell into wells.

Asiatic Lions which once ranged from Persia (Iran) to Palamau in Eastern India had almost been driven to extinction by indiscriminate hunting and habitat loss.

Nearly 25 lions in the vicinity of Gir Forest were found dead in October 2018. Four of them had died because of canine distemper virus, the same virus that had killed several Serengeti lions earlier.

Prior to the resettlement of Maldharis, the Gir forest was heavily degraded and used by livestock, which competed with and restricted the population sizes of native ungulates. Various studies reveal tremendous habitat recovery and increases in wild ungulate populations following the Maldhari resettlement during the last four decades.

How?

The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change on 2018 launched the 'Asiatic Lion Conservation Project' with an aim to protect and conserve the world's last ranging free population of Asiatic Lion and its associated ecosystem.Total budget of the project will be funded through a centrally sponsored scheme, the Development of Wildlife Habitat, with the contributing ratio of 60:40 for central and state share.The Asiatic Lion Conservation Project will strengthen the ongoing measures for conservation and recovery of Asiatic Lion with the help of state-of-the-art techniques, regular scientific research studies, disease management, modern surveillance techniques.It supplement with sufficient eco-development works ensuring a stable and viable Lion population in India.

Conservation efforts for Asiatic Lion were made for the first time in the year 1910. The Nawab of Junagadh imposed a ban on the hunting of lions within the boundaries of his province. The ban was continued even when India gained independence in 1944. In 1960s and 1970s, Gir forest, the home of the last surviving Indian lions, was converted into a National Park and Sanctuary. Presently, Kuno Project is being undertaken with a view to reduce the overcrowding at Gir.

Conservationists are trying to develop Kuno Wildlife Sanctuary, situated in Madhya Pradesh, into a natural habitat for the Asiatic lions. The excess population of Gir will be relocated here. However, still much is left to be done to prevent the Asiatic lions from getting extinct. In the following lines, some Asiatic Lion conservation efforts have been proposed.

One of the major threats that the Indian lions are facing is the hostility they suffer at the hands of humans living near the sanctuary. It has become necessary to involve people in the conservation efforts being planned for the Indian lions. A step that needs to be taken in this regard is to include the local residents within the field staff of the Gir Protected Area. It will not only sensitize people about the majestic species, but also educate them about the need to protect the species from extinction. At the same time, efforts should be undertaken to relocate as many humans out of the protected area of Gir as possible.

The park boundaries can be consolidated to prevent the human-lion clash. Much attention needs to be paid on the protection of the Asiatic lions from poachers. It is becoming one of the greatest threats to the life of the lions. The natural habitat of Gir National Park also needs to be protected. The afforestation programs that were earlier carried out in the grasslands and savannah areas of Gir need to be avoided as far as possible. Efforts should be made to open up forest canopies and to increase the range of the Gir PA (Protected Area).

BENGAL TIGER

What?

Scientific name:Panthera Tigris Tigris

No two Bengal tigers look alike! Every Bengal Tigers has a unique stripe pattern. We may have seen many tigers in our life, but no two tigers have similar strip patterns. Every tiger on earth has a distinct striped pattern which makes them different from other tigers and makes it easy in counting them during tiger census.

Their color ranges from yellow to light orange, with stripes from dark brown to black. Some of the Bengal Tigers are white in color. The tail is orange in color with black rings. Unlike the other white tigers that have blue eyes, Bengal tigers have yellow irises. Average Body Weight- Male Bengal Tigers weigh around 225 kg whereas Females Bengal Tigers weigh around 135 kg.

Tigers can eat up to 40 kg of meat in one go. They have expertise in hunting and They are born killers. They apply a strategy to catch the prey and take the life out of them instantly.

Tigers mostly hunt during night time. They are very dedicated for their prey; Royal Bengal Tigers can climb trees for their prey even though they are not good climbers of the tree. They are very powerful and can drag a ton weighted bison by themselves.

Where?

The Bengal tiger, or Royal Bengal tiger, roams a wide range of habitats including high altitudes, tropical and subtropical rainforests, mangroves, and grasslands. They are primarily found in parts of India, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh and Myanmar.

Like most tigers, the Bengal subspecies prefers living in areas without excessive human populations nearby. Unfortunately, undisturbed habitats are few and far between in the range of this subspecies. Because of this, this subspecies’ populations are fragmented and far apart. Within their range, these tigers live in both tropical and dry forests, mangroves, grasslands, and more.

Bengal tigers live in small “islands” of livable habitat, surrounded by large patches of areas where no tigers can survive. Most of these populations live within wildlife refuges or sanctuary areas. There are various patches across India where tigers live, but large expanses of inhospitable areas separate them. These tigers also live in Bangladesh, Nepal, and Bhutan.

Why?

Considered a “man-eater”, the tiger was long believed to be an enemy that must be killed. Firearms used for commercial tiger hunting, as well as poison bait aimed at protecting livestock, opened the way for a genuine carnage. It became the official policy to encourage the killing of tigers as rapidly as possible, rewards being paid for their destruction in many localities. The United Provinces supported large numbers of tigers in the submontane Terai region, where man-eating had been uncommon Tigers were also poached for the supposed medical benefits of their organs.

Rampant population growth in India has greatly reduced the range the tiger needs to survive. Agriculture and road construction have fragmented its territory and reduced the availability of prey. The tiger’s range today is 20 times smaller than at the beginning of the 20th century.

The habitat loss caused by deforestation also leads to the major reason for it being endangered species. In traditional Chinese medicine, for example, tiger bones are used for treating typhoid, malaria and other ailments. These are not in effective in treating the ailments and the practice is barbaric.

How?

To ensure a world with healthy populations of Bengal tigers, Key strategies:

* Protect tigers and their habitat.
* Build capacity in range states.
* Reduce human-tiger conflict.
* Conduct scientific research on tigers to help inform conservation strategies.
* Promote tiger-friendly policies.
* Monitor tiger numbers, population trends, and threats to tigers and their habitats.
* By reducing the use of products derived from forests, such as timber and paper.
* Tell others that the tiger and its habitat are under threat and that they need our help.
* You can form forums (or join existing ones) on the web for discussions and exchange views on tiger conservation.
* The wilderness is to be experienced and not to be disturbed and polluted. Follow the forest department guidelines when visiting any wilderness area, tiger reserve in particular. As the saying goes ‘Don’t leave anything behind except foot steps, and don’t take anything except memories.
* If you are really concerned and feel that more needs to be done for tiger conservation, then write polite letters to the decision makers - the Prime Minister, the Minister for Environment and Forests or even your local MP.
* Say ‘NO’ to tiger trade by refusing to buy tiger parts and items prepared from tiger derivatives.

An area of special interest lies in the "Terai Arc Landscape" in the Himalayan foothills of northern India and southern Nepal, where 11 protected areas composed of dry forest foothills and tall-grass savannas harbour tigers in a 49,000 square kilometres (19,000 sq mi) landscape. The goals are to manage tigers as a single metapopulation, the dispersal of which between core refuges can help maintain genetic, demographic, and ecological integrity, and to ensure that species and habitat conservation becomes mainstreamed into the rural development agenda. In Nepal a community-based tourism model has been developed with a strong emphasis on sharing benefits with local people and on the regeneration of degraded forests. The approach has been successful in reducing poaching, restoring habitats, and creating a local constituency for conservation.

WWF partnered with Leonardo DiCaprio to form a global campaign, "Save Tigers Now", with the ambitious goal of building political, financial and public support to double the wild tiger population by 2022. Save Tigers Now started its campaign in 12 different WWF Tiger priority landscapes, since May 2010.

Following the revelation that only 1,411 Bengal tigers existed in the wild in India, down from 3,600 in 2003, the Indian government set up eight new tiger reserves.[97] Because of dwindling tiger numbers, the Indian government has pledged US$153 million to further fund the Project Tiger initiative, set up a Tiger Protection Force to combat poachers, and fund the relocation of up to 200,000 villagers to minimise human-tiger interaction. Indian tiger scientists have called for use of technology in the conservation efforts.

In January 2008, the Government of India launched a dedicated anti-poaching force composed of experts from Indian police, forest officials and various other environmental agencies. Ranthambore National Park is often cited as a major success by Indian officials against poaching.

Kuno-Palpur in Madhya Pradesh was supposed receive Asiatic lions from Gujarat. Since no lion has been transferred from Gujarat to Madhya Pradesh so far, it may be used as a sanctuary for the tiger instead.