

Tigers in Crisis

Promoting the Plight of Endangered Tigers and the Efforts to Save Them

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OVERVIEW OF TIGERS IN CRISIS:

Of the original nine subspecies of tigers, three have become extinct in the last 80 years; an average of one every 20 years. It has been predicted all tigers may become extinct in the wild within the next decade.

Poaching, habitat loss and fragmentation have reduced the global population of tigers from over 100,000 in the 1900's, to less than 4,000 in the 1970's.

Today, four of the remaining subspecies of tigers are considered endangered by the IUCN, while two of the subspecies are considered "critically" endangered. The total number of all the wild populations of the six remaining subspecies of tigers (Bengal, Indochinese, Malayan, Siberian, South China, and Sumatran) is estimated to be between 3,000 - 3,600 tigers.

REMAINING TIGER SUBSPECIES:

Bengal tigers (*Panthera tigris tigris*) are the most numerous tiger subspecies with its remaining wild populations estimated at around 2,500. The 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 and Bangladesh. Bengal tigers are sometimes called Indian tigers and account for over half of all tigers remaining in the wild. Poaching for tiger parts is their major threat. The Bengal tiger is classified as endangered by the IUCN.

Indochinese tigers (*Panthera tigris corbetti*) are located in Thailand, Cambodia, China, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Vietnam. The population of this subspecies had fallen by more than 70 percent in slightly more than a decade, and the total population of Indochinese tigers is estimated at fewer than 300 individuals. However, due to restricted access to areas where the Indochinese tiger lives, little is known about their population status. Human development, such as road construction is fragmenting habitats. And decades of poaching has also contributed to their rapid decline. The Indochinese tiger is classified as endangered by the IUCN.

Malayan tigers (*Panthera tigris jacksoni*) are found only on the Malay Peninsula and in the southern tip of Thailand. They were recently recognized as a new subspecies closely related to –but being genetically distinct– from the Indochinese tiger. Habitat



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Endangered Earth Websites

- Bagheera
- Endangered Earth
- Endangered TV
- Endangered Earth News
- Endangered Species News
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fragmentation due to development projects and agriculture, along with commercial poaching are serious threats to the remaining 500 Malayan tigers. In Malaysia there is a very active market for tiger meat and manufactured tiger bone medicines. The Malayan tiger is classified as endangered by the IUCN.

Siberian tigers or Amur tigers (*Panthera tigris altaica*) are found mainly in the Sikhote Alin mountain region and the southwest Primorye province in the Russian Far East. It is estimated there are around 300 Siberian tigers in this region with small pockets of Siberian tigers in China and North Korea. The primary threats to the survival of Siberian tigers are poaching and habitat loss from intensive logging and development. The Siberian Tiger is classified as endangered by the IUCN.

South China tigers (*Panthera tigris amoyensis*) are the smallest of all the tiger subspecies; it is also the most critically endangered. Little is known about their exact numbers in the wild, but some estimates would put the number at under 20 tigers. Others would say that estimate is high and that the South China tiger is extinct in the wild. The reality is that no South China tiger has been seen in the wild for the last 20 years. The South China tiger was native to the provinces of Fujian, Guangdong, Hunan, Jiangxi in southern China. However now, the less than 100 South China tigers that remain on the face of the earth, are found only in Chinese zoos. The South China tiger is classified as critically endangered by the IUCN.

Sumatran tigers (*Panthera tigris sumatrae*) are found only on the Indonesian island of Sumatra off the Malaysian Peninsula. Their habitat ranges from lowland forest to mountain forest and includes evergreen, swamp and tropical rain forests. It is estimated that only between 500–600 Sumatran tigers remain in the wild, and the actual number may be as low as 400. The major threats to Sumatran tigers are habitat loss due to expansion of palm oil plantations, the planting of acacia plantations and illegal trade for tiger parts and products. The Sumatran tiger is classified as critically endangered by the IUCN.

EXTINCT TIGER SUBSPECIES:

The Bali tiger (*Panthera tigris balica*), is an extinct subspecies of tiger which was found solely on the Indonesian island of Bali. It was one of three subspecies of tigers found in Indonesia, together with the Javan tiger, which is also extinct, and the critically endangered Sumatran tiger. It was the smallest of the tiger subspecies. Bali tigers were last positively recorded from western Bali in the late 1930s. The Bali Barat National Park was established in 1941 in tiger habitat, but it is likely that Bali tiger became extinct by the end of World War II or possibly as late as the early 1950s. The causes of extinction include hunting and loss of forest habitat and prey base. There are no Bali tigers in captivity.

The Caspian tiger (*Panthera tigris virgata*), is an extinct tiger subspecies with the last records in the wild dating to the early 1970s. The Caspian tiger is also known as the Hyrcanian tiger, the Mazandaran tiger, the Persian tiger and the Turanian tiger. Caspian Tigers were found in the sparse forest habitats and riverine corridors west (Turkey) and south (Iran) of the Caspian Sea and west through Central Asia into the Takla Makan desert of Xinjiang, China. Its extinction can be attributed to hunting of tigers and their prey, habitat loss and conversion, and increased vulnerability of small populations. The last Caspian tiger was seen in the early 1970s, and there are none in captivity.

The Javan tiger (*Panthera tigris sondaica*) is an extinct tiger subspecies that inhabited the Indonesian island of Java until the mid-1970s. Javan tigers were last positively recorded from Java's Meru Betiri National Park in 1976. They likely disappeared from much of the rest of the island –outside the park boundaries– by the 1940s. It is estimated that only 20–25 Javan tigers remained on Java by the mid-1950s. The causes of the Bali tiger's extinction include hunting of the tiger, along with loss of forest habitat (destroyed for agriculture uses) and the demise of the tigers prey base. There are no Javan tigers in captivity.

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Tigers in Crisis is Produced by [Endangered Species Journalist](#) Craig Kasnoff
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