

VOL. 1 / ISSUE 1 / SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER 2024

Big Cats

A magazine by IBCA on wildlife conservation



+

Up Close with the African Lion
Meeting T-105 in Ranthambhore
Pumas on the Urban Edge



सत्यमेव जयते

प्रधान मंत्री
Prime Minister

MESSAGE

It is heartening to learn about the publication of the first issue of the magazine, 'Big Cats'. A 'first' is always a special occasion. Heartiest greetings and congratulations to everyone connected with the International Big Cat Alliance - IBCA.

It is no coincidence that the IBCA was launched in 2023 to commemorate 50 years of successful implementation of the iconic Project Tiger. It was a move driven by sensitivity and concern for the well-being of wildlife, particularly the regal big cats. It is laudable that the enthusiasm towards this initiative has only increased since then.

It is noteworthy that the IBCA aims to bring together governments, conservation partners, scientific organisations and various stakeholders, including the local communities and the youth on a common platform. Such a massive effort is indeed important to ensure greater global awareness and action.

Blessed with nature's abundance, India has a tradition and heritage of love for wildlife that goes back thousands of years. Our earliest scriptures emphasised the importance of forests for the conservation and protection of wildlife.

We continue to carry forward this responsibility with a sense of duty and pride. It is only natural that India plays a prominent role in global efforts towards conservation of iconic big cats such as tigers, Asiatic lions, leopards and cheetahs.

Over the years, a combination of policy initiatives, scientific management, leveraging of technology and most importantly, community participation has yielded rich dividends. These efforts resulted in doubling the population of tigers four years ahead of the target set as part of the St. Petersburg declaration. Similarly, the leopard population has increased appreciably due to our proactive approach. However, we are not resting on these achievements, but are looking to work with the world to ensure that big cats thrive everywhere, especially through initiatives like the IBCA.

May the deliberations at the IBCA devise a futuristic blueprint for the conservation of big cats and make their landscapes secure. It will also help governments the world over to further global efforts towards sustainability, climate mitigation and adaptation, providing food, water and security, as well as secure the livelihood and well-being of millions of people, who depend directly, or indirectly on these ecological habitats.

I am sure that the IBCA will play a meaningful role in making our planet a cleaner, greener and safer place for the big cats. May the magazine being published on the occasion capture the spirit and essence of wildlife conservation.

(Narendra Modi)

New Delhi

आश्विन 22, शक संवत् 1946

14 October, 2024

Photo: Shikhar Mohan

LION

(*Panthera leo*)

Globally, the lion population has dropped dramatically. Conservation efforts for the Asiatic lion have resulted in an increase in population, primarily due to reduced poaching and habitat protection.




Photo: Shikhar Mohan


TIGER

(*Panthera tigris*)


Historically, tigers roamed much of Asia, from the Siberian taiga to the forests of India and South Asia and Turkey.




मंत्री
पर्यावरण, वन एवं जलवायु परिवर्तन
भारत सरकार



सत्यमेव जयते
भूपेन्द्र यादव
BHUPENDER YADAV



MINISTER
ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA



MESSAGE

It gives me immense pleasure to address the readers of the first edition of the bi-monthly magazine of the International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA) '*Big Cats*', a significant platform that underscores the importance of conserving these majestic creatures.

India has distinction of harbouring 5 big cats namely Tiger, Lion, Snow Leopard, Cheetah and Leopard out of the 7 big cats in the world and has been a global leader in conservation of these species.


We all are aware about the critical importance of these species not only as apex predators that maintain the ecological balance but also as symbols of the biodiversity that sustains our planet. Unfortunately, these majestic creatures are facing unprecedented threats from habitat destruction, poaching, human-wildlife conflict, and climate change. Under the leadership of PM Narendra Modi ji, India recognizes that our responsibility extends beyond our borders, and we are ready to share our expertise, resources, and passion for conservation with the world. We also aim to implement effective strategies to ensure the survival of these iconic species across their natural habitats.

The establishment of the International Big Cat Alliance is a testament to our shared global responsibility to protect and conserve these magnificent creatures.

We are committed to playing a crucial role in this global endeavour and international cooperation to protect and preserve these species. It is our collective responsibility to safeguard these species, ensuring that future generations inherit a world where big cats continue to roam free.

'*Big Cats*' magazine serves not just as a tribute to the magnificent seven (7) major big cats but as a call to action for nations, communities, and individuals to unite for this cause. By bringing together insights from conservationists, researchers, and policymakers, *Big Cats* aims to inspire collective action and drive effective strategies to ensure the survival of big cats worldwide.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to all contributors, supporters, and conservationists who are part of this noble mission. Together, we can make a difference.



(Bhupender Yadav)

पर्यावरण भवन, जोर बाग रोड़, नई दिल्ली-110003, फोन : 011-20819190, 011-20819187, फैक्स: 011-20819299
Paryavaran Bhawan, Jor Bagh Road, New Delhi-110003, Tel.: 011-20819190, 011-20819187, Fax : 011-20819299
ईमेल / E-mail : mefcc@gov.in



INTERNATIONAL BIG CAT ALLIANCE

MESSAGE

Big cats are majestic top predators that signal the health of the ecosystems they inhabit. There are seven species of big cats globally: tiger, cheetah, leopard, lion and snow leopard – in Asia; lion, leopard and cheetah – in Africa; jaguar and puma – in the Americas. These animals are valued as spiritual and cultural icons in the respective countries and generally enjoy a high conservation status, thereby, adding a degree of protection to their habitats.

Big cats remain in the wild in 95 countries, of which 85 are Low & Middle Income (LMI) countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America. Over 6 billion people live there, comprising over 90% of the population of the world's LMI countries. Most of these countries tackle the same pressing and increasing challenges that undercut the viability of big cats, and the broader biodiversity they symbolise – natural habitat loss and degradation from land conversion, landscape fragmentation from infrastructure, wildlife poaching and illegal trade, human-wildlife conflict.

The conservation of big cats can be a catalyst for a new model of sustainable development. Big cats constitute an integral component of the natural heritage across Americas, Africa and Asia. They play a crucial role in maintaining the health and balance of the ecosystem they share with local communities and indigenous people. Big cat conservation helps achieve at least 15 out of the 23 Kunming Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) targets. Just as an example, as important indicators of the integrity and functionality of larger ecosystems, they reflect the effectiveness of conservation efforts, a core element for Target 3. Moreover, the conservation of landscapes under a 'big cats' lens, provides the scale needed to design impactful interventions to maintain key ecosystem services for people and nature, such as climate mitigation and adaptation, key elements based on the concept with Peace with Nature.

I am sure that readers would find the bi-monthly magazine "Big Cats" interesting, informative and useful.


10.10.24
(Dr. S.P. Yadav)
Interim Head, IBCA

118, First Floor, Jor Bagh, New Delhi, India-110003.
+91 11 45063497, +91 8800304857, ibcasett@gmail.com

Editor's Note



A Mission of Hope

In the history of wildlife conservation, these are the worst of times, and also the best of times. A recent report warns that there has been a "catastrophic 73% decline in the average size of monitored wildlife populations" in the last five decades. There has been a 57% decline in nesting female hawksbill turtles; a 65% decline in Amazon pink river dolphins; and an 88% decline in Chinook salmon in the Sacramento River in California.

Sadly, it is human activity that is putting the planet at risk. Loss of habitat, conflicts with humans, hunting and poaching for trade, and climate change have dramatically reduced the populations of the seven big cats: cheetah, jaguar, lion, leopard, puma, snow leopard and tiger. Most of the big cats are listed as Endangered or Vulnerable on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species.

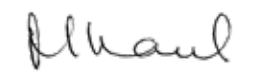
However, amidst these warnings, constructive ideas and plans for action have also emerged. Almost 200 countries have committed to the 22 UN Agreement, pledging 30% of the planet for nature by 2030. Hope springs eternal in India that shelters close to 70% of the world's tiger population in the wild. With its conservation ethos and experience in protecting the tiger and lion, India is well placed to offer skill and understanding in tackling the current challenges. The launch of IBCA is also a step in the right direction.

The Big Cats magazine is the joint commitment of IBCA and Sankala Foundation towards the global mission of wildlife conservation. Our publication, a bi-monthly, will delve into a wide range of topics connected to the big cats, including conservation success stories, new research, innovative protection strategies and community engagement results.

Our first issue focusses on the crucial role IBCA shall play in protection of big cats through its various collaborative strategies. This issue also brings some wonderful snapshots of the Bengal tiger and African lion. Two in-depth reports also examine how different countries are approaching conservation and protection programmes.

Big Cats will offer in-depth knowledge about wildlife, and be a platform for conservation discourse across the globe.

Wish us roaring success! 🐾


MALVIKA KAUL

Editor

Malvika Kaul

Senior Feature Writer

Pramod K Yadav

Staff Writer

Ravina Yadav

Designers

Anuradha Sen & Bipro Kumar Sen

Research Support

Tamali Mondal, Yamini Rajora, Ravina Yadav

Photo Editor

Shikhar Mohan

Production

Disha Joshi

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Address for Correspondence

Sankala Foundation
414-416, B-Block, 4th Floor,
Somdutt Chambers – I,
Bhikaji Cama Place, New Delhi-110 066
Email: bigcats@sankala.org

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MISSION POSSIBLE

The dwindling population of big cats across the world is a cause of concern. Only seven big cat species survive today. A new global partnership, the International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA) is on a mission to save the species from extinction

BY TAMALI MONDAL &
PRAMOD K YADAV

Photo: Kalyan Varma

The big cats – cheetah, jaguar, leopard, lion, puma, snow leopard and tiger – are apex predators that have been under threat in recent years. The term ‘big cats’ describes the charismatic and keystone species in their ecosystem. Historically, big cats have been symbols of power and majesty and integral to the art and culture of the region. They have fascinated humans for centuries, as wild creatures and as key contributors to the ecosystem.

Each wild cat is special and has unique characteristics: the cheetah with its unmatched speed; the jaguar with its awe-inspiring size; the leopard with its stealth; the lion with its majestic mane; the puma with its adaptability; the snow leopard with its high-altitude acrobats; and the tiger with its powerful roar.

In recent decades, habitat loss due to developmental projects, retaliatory killing due to livestock predation, and poaching for the illicit trade of their body parts has reduced their numbers significantly. Climate change has posed significant challenges to big cat conservation – frequent forest fires, ecosystem imbalances and extreme weather events (floods, landslides, etc.) have dealt a blow to their population.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species classifies six of the big cats (cheetah, jaguar, leopard, snow leopard and tiger) as Endangered to Near Threatened, and only the Puma has the Least Concern status.

IBCA – A PARTNERSHIP FOR CONSERVATION

On 9 April 2023, the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA) to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Project Tiger. During his address, the Prime Minister said, “Wildlife protection is not a one-country issue but a universal one.” Urging for an international alliance, he said that such an alliance will make mobilisation of financial and technical resources easier for the entire ecosystem associated with the big cats. In recent years, India has made tangible progress by recovering tiger population (3,682) in the wild which is



Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi inaugurated the programme ‘Commemoration of 50 years of Project Tiger’ at the Mysuru University in Mysuru, Karnataka, India, on 9 April 2023. Here the Prime Minister also launched the International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA)

Photo: NTCA



Delegates at IBCA's first International Steering Committee meeting held in New Delhi

Photo: IBCA



VISION & MISSION

-  Cultivate a global ecosystem where big cats thrive, symbolising the harmony between wildlife and humans
-  To bring together leaders, conservationists, businesses, and scientists to develop effective conservation strategies, exchange knowledge, and initiate investment to recover big cat species in the wild
-  Foster a platform for international cooperation, knowledge exchange, and capacity building to conserve seven big cat species in the wild

almost 70% of the world's tiger population. India's efforts in providing a safe haven to the Asiatic lions in Gir forests of Gujarat (a state in western India) has been recognised worldwide.

On 12 March 2024, IBCA's Secretariat was established in New Delhi, India. The Alliance aims to reach out to 95 range countries covering the natural habitats of the cheetah, jaguar, leopard, lion, puma, snow leopard and tiger. Since its inception, the focus has been on negotiation for collaboration with various UN bodies, international environmental agencies, and regional groupings like the South Asia Wildlife Enforcement Network (SAWEN), the Global Snow Leopard & Ecosystem Protection Program (GSLEP) and several NGOs.

India acknowledges the importance of fostering collaboration among national

governments to guarantee the protection and preservation of big cats, ensuring their continued flourishing in their natural habitats. This includes joint efforts to address conservation challenges such as habitat loss, poaching, and human-wildlife conflict, with the aim of promoting the long-term well-being of these majestic species.

The Interim Head and Director General of IBCA Dr SP Yadav says, "By safeguarding big cats and their habitats, IBCA aims to contribute to climate resilience, water and food security and well-being of communities and creatures reliant on these ecosystems." Big cat conservation needs collective action through international alliances where countries can share knowledge, resources, and techniques to ensure the conservation of the species and their habitat. Dr Yadav elaborates that IBCA aims to link big cat conservation with forest

management, carbon sequestration, and sustainable livelihood efforts to enhance countries' development agendas. He asserts that the alliance also aims to harmonise countries' policies and legislation, strengthen conservation efforts, and achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through environmental leadership and diplomacy.

Dr Yadav hopes that in the future IBCA will play a crucial role in global advocacy to prevent local extinction of big cat species and promoting international cooperation on common interests, such as addressing climate change and achieving SDGs.

The Government of India has committed approximately US\$ 182 million to IBCA for five years (from 2023-24 to 2027-28). To become self-sustainable, IBCA plans to augment its corpus by obtaining financial support from the public and private sectors,

intergovernmental organisations, non-profit organisations (NGOs), and national and international financial institutions.

WHY BIG CATS MATTER

The habitats of big cats, with their forests, grasslands, and wetlands, play a significant role in ecological security for wildlife and water availability for irrigation and households. The cat habitats also play a crucial role in minimising sedimentation in rivers, helping reduce water-related risks such as landslides, floods, droughts, desertification and salinisation. The extinction of big cat species from a landscape suggests that its ecosystem lacks adequate protection and management.

Big cats play a crucial role in conserving biodiversity, as they offer a range of economic, social, and cultural benefits through ecosystem services. For instance,



Photo: IBCA

Representatives of big cat range countries at IBCA's first International Steering Committee meet held on 15-16 April 2024 in New Delhi, India

PREDATORS UNDER THREAT

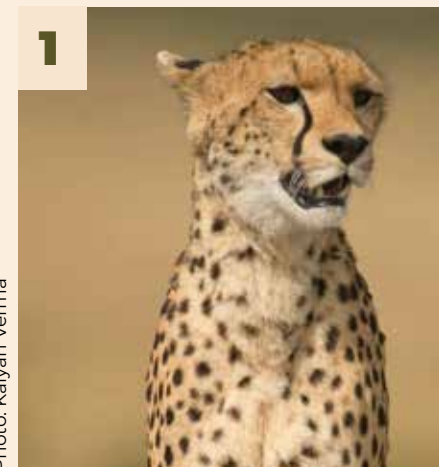


Photo: Kalyan Verma

CHEETAH

(*Acinonyx jubatus*)

Today, the wild population of cheetahs has dwindled to fewer than 7,000. Over the past 50 years, cheetahs have become extinct in at least 13 countries and are now seen in Kenya and Tanzania in East Africa and Namibia and Botswana in Southern Africa. This species needs large areas of connected habitat for its survival.

Most known cheetah habitats (76%) exist on unprotected lands. This leaves the cheetah population extremely fragmented. In Asia, the situation is dire, with only 30 cheetahs surviving in Iran. Though, once the sub-species roamed freely in regions extending from Saudi Arabia to India.

The species was declared extinct in 1952 from India. In 2022, the Indian Government embarked on an ambitious programme to introduce African cheetahs to the Kuno National Park in the central Indian state of Madhya Pradesh. This initiative, along with other conservation efforts, offers hope for the survival of these magnificent creatures in the wild.



JAGUAR

(*Panthera onca*)

It is estimated that jaguars have lost approximately 50% of their historic range, with a 20% population decline in the last 14 years. They have gone extinct in countries like El Salvador and Uruguay. The jaguar population across the Americas keeps declining with IUCN estimating there are only between 130,000 and 208,000 jaguars left in the wild. Jaguar habitat includes wet and dry forests, savannahs, shrublands and wetlands. The cats are strong swimmers and climbers and are dependent on freshwater systems.

Deforestation and agricultural activities have encroached on jaguar territory, slowly shrinking the range of the species and isolating populations. Brazil is home to half of

Photos: Shikhar Mohan

the world's jaguars, and the highest-priority protected areas for jaguar conservation are in the Amazon. Conservation programmes like the Jaguar Corridor Initiative aim to connect and protect jaguar habitats across their range, promoting genetic flow and reducing the risk of population isolation. However, due to limited funding, political instability in some range countries, and insufficient data on jaguar population and behaviour, conservation strategies have little impact.



LEOPARD

(*Panthera pardus*)

Leopards are one of the most

adaptable and widely distributed big cats found across Africa and Asia. Renowned for their strength, stealth, and spotted coats, leopards can survive in various habitats, from savannas and forests to mountains and urban edges. However, their population has declined by more than 30% over the last 22 years.

The IUCN's updated Red List indicates that the species may have disappeared from the 26 countries where they formerly roamed. Leopards inhabit 62 nations across Africa and Asia, from Senegal's Atlantic coastline to eastern Siberia. These cats live in every imaginable landscape: forest, mountain, savanna, desert, jungle, and even Sanjay Gandhi National Park in the centre of Mumbai, a city of 21 million people in India.

The Indian leopard is doing comparatively well, with a population of 15,000-plus, resulting from increased research and better management. The Sri Lankan leopard is still vulnerable as only 777 remain.

African leopards are also in the vulnerable category and are rapidly disappearing. The Javan leopard has been downlisted from critically endangered to endangered and is still highly imperilled, with just 319 remaining. The Amur and Persian leopard populations have also recovered in the wild.



LION

(*Panthera leo*)

Globally, the lion population has dropped by 43% over the past 21 years. The IUCN estimates that between

the flow of ecosystem benefits from selected tiger reserves (Corbett, Kanha, Kaziranga, Periyar, Ranthambore and Sundarbans) in India ranges from US\$769 ha⁻¹ year⁻¹ to US\$2923 ha⁻¹ year⁻¹. These tiger reserves in India offer multifaceted benefits that are crucial for environmental sustainability, local livelihoods, cultural preservation and national conservation efforts.

India's national tiger conservation policies have also demonstrated a significant ancillary climate co-benefit of enhanced protection in tiger reserves by avoiding one million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e) emissions. This substantial environmental benefit translates into an estimated US \$93 million in ecosystem services derived from the avoided social costs of these emissions. In the Amazon forests, the jaguar's present habitat encompasses areas with the most

extraordinary terrestrial biodiversity, some of the largest rivers on the planet, and possesses 17% of the globe's carbon.

Big cats are an indicator of climate change, and there is an ongoing debate about whether a warming climate has pushed tigers, leopards, and snow leopards to share habitats in the Himalayas. For instance, captured images of a snow leopard and a leopard in the Gaurishankar Conservation Area of Nepal in 2023 add to the evidence of habitat overlap between the two species. Photographic evidence also indicates that tigers, leopards and snow leopards share habitats in the Thimphu Forest Division of Bhutan.

In many parts of the world, big cats are used for posterity with the prospect of livelihood and sustainable development mascot. For instance, Snow Leopard Enterprises, a conservation programme in

India, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, and Pakistan, generates economic opportunities for families residing in snow leopard habitats. The enterprise also diminishes the motivation for illegal hunting in these countries. The households participating in the initiatives can boost their income by up to 40% by getting livelihood opportunities. In return, the entire community agrees to protect the snow leopards in their area from any possible danger.

Kenya's lion conservation success also lies in the rise of community-led conservancies that manage protected areas to safeguard the lions and support education, healthcare, agricultural, and social programs for the local communities.

Transboundary cooperation is crucial, as big cats often roam across national borders. Effective conservation requires coordinated efforts between countries to

Indian leopard at Kanha Tiger Reserve



Photo: Abhishel Bhatt

ensure contiguous and protected habitats. For instance, the KAZA (Kavango-Zambezi) transboundary landscape is

a critical habitat for cheetahs, leopards, and lions that covers contiguous parts of Angola, Botswana, Namibia, Zambia,

and Zimbabwe. Other transboundary landscapes include the Himalayas for snow leopards, tigers and leopards, and the Amazon for jaguars and pumas. Therefore, there is a need for a treaty-bound alliance among the governments of big cat range countries to facilitate transboundary conservation.

Despite significant efforts, big cats face numerous conservation challenges in all 95 range countries. The urgency of these challenges cannot be avoided, and all stakeholders, including range courtiers need to come together on a common platform to protect the big cats. The birth of IBCA is a significant step in reaching this goal. 🐾

Dr Tamali Mondal is Programme Associate at IBCA.

Dr Pramod K Yadav is Programme Associate at Sankala Foundation.

23,000 to 39,000 lions remain in the wild, placing them on the infamous Red List of threatened species. In many of the lion's core habitats across Africa, populations have plummeted due to habitat fragmentation, poaching and human-wildlife conflicts. However, some African lion populations are increasing, in parks in Mozambique and Chad. The efforts of countries like Kenya and South Africa for conservation have met with notable success through community engagement, innovative conservation strategies, and collaboration among government, non-governmental organisations, and local communities.

The Asiatic lions have roamed freely in the wilderness of Gujarat, a state in western India. A century ago, the lion subspecies inhabited most of southwest Asia and were present across India. According to the IUCN, the lowest numbers of Asiatic lions were recorded in the 1880s; the population was reduced

to merely a dozen. India has created vast protected landscape mosaics, with natural corridors stretching far beyond core protected lands, considering the large areas lions need to roam seasonally. Now, with conservation efforts, their population has risen to over 700.



Photo: Felidae Fund

PUMA

(*Puma concolor*)

The puma, also known as the mountain lion or cougar, is one of the most widespread big cats in the Americas. The species inhabits 23

countries in the Americas, and their habitat extends from Canada to areas of the United States and down to Central and South America. These habitats include tropical rainforests, seasonally flooded savannas, semi-arid scrublands, and high mountains.

Pumas play an important role in regulating prey, producing carrion for scavengers, and providing ecosystem services, each of which contributes to ecological resilience and healthy human communities. Pumas may more directly benefit humans by reducing automobile collisions with deer, protecting human lives and reducing expensive damages. Habitat loss, poaching, and legal hunting are the leading causes of the decline in populations of pumas. Additionally, pumas are sometimes hunted for sport or to reduce perceived threats to livestock.

Fire frequencies in southern California have already increased beyond the threshold to which the ecosystem is resilient. If this trend continues across the region, suitable puma habitat may be lost through vegetation-type conversion to homogenous non-native annual grasslands, a habitat avoided by pumas during foraging and resting.

6

Photo: Uttarakhand Forest Department



SNOW LEOPARD

(*Panthera uncia*)

Snow leopard's habitat range extends across the mountainous regions of 12 Central and South Asian countries. The estimated size of the snow leopard's distributional range is about 1.8 million km², with the largest share in the Tibetan plateau of China, followed by Mongolia and India. However, there is a great deal of uncertainty about the species' current distribution, as the size of their total population is roughly estimated to be between 4,000 and 6,500 individuals. Some national estimates are outdated, and up-to-date estimates of the area of occupancy and population size are urgently needed. However, countries like Bhutan and India have recently estimated snow leopard populations to be 134 and 718, respectively. Nevertheless, the species population is very likely declining.

Climate change poses a long-term threat to snow leopards by altering their high-altitude ecosystems. Warming temperatures can shift vegetation zones and reduce the availability of prey species, such as blue sheep and ibex, which are crucial for snow leopard survival. Furthermore, snow leopards' habitat is at risk of becoming smaller, and their populations may become more fragmented as their Himalayan habitat becomes less suitable due to climate change.

7

Photo: Shikhar Mohan



TIGER

(*Panthera tigris*)

Historically, tigers roamed much of Asia, from the Siberian taiga to India and Southeast Asia forests to Turkey. However, their range and population have drastically reduced due to

various threats. Tigers have declined globally due to direct hunting, prey depletion and habitat destruction and have lost an estimated 95% of their historical range.

Tiger conservation has a long and complex history, reflecting the changing attitudes and approaches towards wildlife preservation over the past century. Human activities have destroyed, degraded, and fragmented their habitat. Clearing forests for agriculture and timber, building road networks, and other development activities severely threaten tiger habitats.

Poaching is a significant threat to tigers, driven by the high demand for tiger parts in traditional Chinese medicine. However, tiger population in the wild increased by 74% (reaching 5,574) around 2023 after St Petersburg's commitment in 2010. India alone currently harbours close to 70% of the world's wild tiger population. However, the situation for tigers in Southeast Asian range countries has become grim. For instance, tiger populations have become extinct in Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam, and numbers are decreasing or have not grown in other Tiger Range Countries, i.e., Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar and Thailand.



Photo: Sharon Osberg

PUMAS ON THE URBAN EDGE

A conservation project uses non-invasive methods to protect pumas in California

BY ALYS GRANADOS & ZARA MCDONALD

Pumas, also known as mountain lions or cougars, are incredibly adaptable creatures with the widest distribution of any terrestrial mammal in the Americas, second only to humans. They inhabit forests of Northern Canada down to the Patagonian steppe. These large carnivores play a crucial role in maintaining the health of ecosystems. Despite their significance, puma populations are declining across their range, with potentially serious implications for both the environment and human health.

Pumas are keystone predators, meaning they have significant direct and indirect impacts on other species, and their environment. By preying primarily on hoofed-animals like deer, pumas help control these populations, preventing overgrazing and reducing the risk of deer-vehicle collisions, which can be dangerous for humans and wildlife. Additionally, deer are known carriers of tick-borne diseases such as Lyme disease, so by keeping deer populations in check, pumas indirectly help manage the spread of these diseases. Further, when pumas kill prey, the carcasses they leave behind provide vital food sources for other scavengers, including birds of prey, mammals, and insects.

Despite their ecological importance, pumas face numerous threats, primarily due to human activities. In the United States, urban expansion and habitat fragmentation have forced pumas into closer proximity with human settlements. As a result, they

must increasingly navigate urban edge habitats. Historically, pumas were found across the country, but now their range is mostly limited to the western states. Roads, cities, and agricultural developments have fragmented their habitats, making it necessary for pumas to move through urban and residential areas. Pumas are elusive and they avoid contact with humans. However, the growing overlap of shared spaces increases the likelihood of human-wildlife conflicts, as pumas may opportunistically prey on domestic animals like pets, hobby animals and livestock.

The overlap between pumas, domestic animals, and humans also raises concerns about zoonotic disease transmission. Zoonoses can compromise wild felid health, while also affecting public human health and that of domestic animals. Felids are definitive hosts of a parasite called Toxoplasmosis, which is widespread among domestic cats. Toxoplasmosis is a threat to public health and is of interest because of its potential to alter host behaviour (risky behaviour) and because of the risk of transmission between wildlife, pets, and people. This risk may also be greater at the urban edge, where domestic cats (especially unsupervised or feral ones) are more prevalent and where they overlap with wild cats like pumas or bobcats. Because pumas can carry potentially lethal parasites, viruses and bacteria, this poses health risks to humans. Zoonoses and spillover risk are particularly concerning in areas where pumas, domestic cats, and humans frequently interact.

California, the most populous state in USA, is home to a

vital population of pumas. In most of California, pumas are the only apex predators left so their presence is crucial to a healthy ecosystem. In the San Francisco Bay Area, pumas often live at the edge of urban and wilderness areas. Despite the region's extensive network of protected areas, human development surrounds much of this land. Millions of people visit these open spaces each year, increasing the potential for human-puma encounters. Educating the public on how to safely coexist with pumas is crucial to preventing negative encounters.

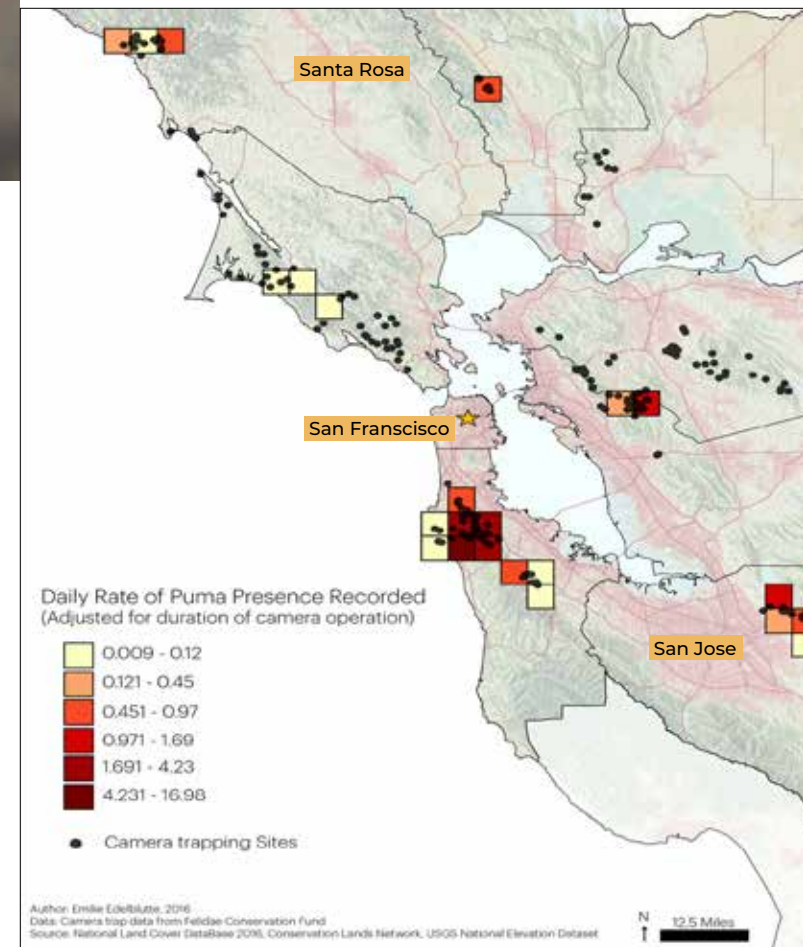
Beginning in 2020, the Central Coast and southern California puma subpopulations entered an extinction vortex due to early signs of inbreeding and reduced genetic diversity, and are now listed as candidate species under the California Endangered Species Act (CESA). Since 1990 the sport hunting of pumas has been prohibited in the state. However, depredation permits are issued when pets or livestock are taken by pumas, and are more rarely issued for threats to public safety. The CESA status provide stricter protections. This is in contrast to other states such as Montana, Wyoming, Texas, Idaho, Colorado, and others where hunting pumas for sport is legal.

Bay Area Puma Project

To address the challenges facing pumas along California's central coast, the Bay Area Puma Project (BAPP) was established in 2007 by the Felidae Conservation Fund. This is the first long-term puma project in the region, using research, technology, and community engagement to ensure the persistence of pumas in the greater San Francisco Bay Area. Under this project, data is collected on puma presence, behaviour, movement, and health using non-invasive methods like camera traps, fecal surveys and hair snares. A current focus of BAPP research is tracking zoonoses and spillover risks.

Most of the San Francisco Bay Area is puma habitat. So, BAPP educates local communities on how to respond should they encounter a puma in the wild. Despite the extremely low chance of a puma encounter, many people have a disproportionate fear towards large carnivores. Thus, BAPP engages with local communities through in-person and virtual outreach, putting into perspective the level of risk of a puma attack, which is less than one in six million. This is far less common than being attacked by a dog or being in an accident due to a distracted driver.

Our understanding of puma ecology and behaviour has significantly improved, thanks to projects like the BAPP. This growing body of knowledge reveals insights about pumas at the urban edge. Despite widespread human presence, pumas are largely successful at avoiding people. There are under three public safety incidents in the state each year and pumas in California have largely managed to avoid conflicts. However, continued urban development poses ongoing challenges. By supporting research and community engagement, we can help ensure that pumas and humans can coexist peacefully in shared landscapes. 🐾



Dr Alys Granados is a Wildlife Ecologist for Felidae Conservation Fund.
Ms Zara McDonald is President of Felidae Conservation Fund.



Malayan Tiger on a Comeback Trail

Four years ago, a countrywide survey warned that only 150 tigers were left in Malaysia. Today, the country's protection efforts give a lot of hope to conservation experts

BY MOHNISH KAPOOR & SIVANANTHAN ELAGUPILLAY

Conserving a flagship species like the tiger calls for efforts at the site, and at the national, regional, and global levels. The St. Petersburg Summit on tiger, organised by the Russian government and the World Bank (through its Global Tiger Initiative programme) in 2010, successfully convened tiger range countries (TRCs), resulting in an agreed framework of the Global Tiger Recovery Programme (GTRP).

South Asian countries like Bangladesh,

Bhutan, India and Nepal have managed to increase their tiger population in the last decade. Russia too has reported population stability. However, in Southeast Asia, the situation in three countries (Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam) has been precarious – each has declared functional extinction of tigers. Another country, Malaysia, is however giving a lot of hope to conservationists.

Malaysia has in recent years taken up the mantle of effectively implementing

the best available models on wild tiger conservation. The intergovernmental platform of the Global Tiger Forum (GTF), along with other partners has worked closely with Malaysia for a “turnaround” – ensuring the Malayan tiger does not become extinct.

The Malayan tiger (*Panthera tigris jacksoni*) roamed freely in the deep forests of the Malaysian Peninsula for hundreds of years. Considered the smallest subspecies in the Southeast Asian region, the Malayan tiger is known to be a skilled swimmer. In the 1950s, it was estimated that close to 3,000 Malayan tigers existed in the country. But within a few decades, rapid development, resulting in deforestation and habitat loss, and hunting and poaching, led to the decline in the tiger population. The decline was swift. In 2010, barely 500 were left. By 2020, Malayan tiger was critically endangered, with only 150 tigers left in the country.

Malaysia was one of the first TRCs in Southeast Asia to develop its own Tiger Action Plan (in 2008) for the Tiger Summit

The St. Petersburg Declaration

The St. Petersburg Declaration on tiger conservation was signed in Saint Petersburg Russia on 23 November, 2010. The declaration was made by the heads of governments from TRCs (Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Russia, Thailand and Vietnam). Multi-lateral bodies, TRCs and conservation NGOs agreed to collaboratively implement the Global Tiger Recovery Programme (GTRP). The said summit also led to the commitment towards achieving a TX2 goal for doubling the tiger numbers by the year 2022. The goal not only served as a measurable target, but brought back the much needed global attention on the tiger conservation agenda, and promoted transboundary cooperation between tiger range countries.

Photo: DWNP Malaysia

that paved way for the government and its partners to take action locally, based on global best practices. A priority action was the first National Tiger Survey (NTS) undertaken by the Department of Wildlife and National Parks (DWNP) and NGO partners. This first country-wide large mammal survey using camera traps was implemented in phases, between 2016 to 2020 spread across 40,000 sq km of rainforest and was funded by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Sustainability (NRES) Malaysia. The survey cost RM18 million (US\$ 4 million).

In 2018, DWNP, with the technical assistance of GTF, conducted a workshop to examine the survey data. This mammoth survey enabled Malaysia to scientifically determine that its Malayan tiger population had reduced to an alarming 150 in the wild. This also enabled Malaysia to take some immediate actions locally, and reach out to partners within the country and internationally.

The GTF and its partners facilitated

several programmes in Malaysia. These efforts were backed by political will of the leaders. India's experience in conservation has been very inspiring for the Malaysian team. Mission visits by Malaysian and Indian teams helped forge the tiger agenda that was adapted from the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) model. Frontline capacity building on recovery efforts and related tiger conservation themes were given priority. Bilateral dialogues between Thailand and Malaysia on transboundary protected areas were also initiated. Within a few years, Malaysia has been able to champion the cause of tiger conservation owing to expedited implementation of actions across all fronts.

The pilot efforts have now been upscaled to full-fledged policy measures, and wild tiger conservation is

also serving as a diplomatic bridge between Malaysia, India, and other countries in the region. This is evident from the active participation of Indian representatives in Kuala Lumpur during several workshops, senior officers' dialogues, ministerial meet, and launch programmes on the wild tiger front in the past six to seven years.

Some of the key actions for conservation by the Malaysian government need a mention. These are:

- The countrywide campaign on 'Saving our Malayan tiger' created wide awareness about the challenges facing the species and garnered the much-needed citizen support for the initiative.

- In 2022, Malaysia, along with the GTF organised the 4th Asia Ministerial Conference (AMC4) in Kuala Lumpur which led to the KL Joint Statement on Tiger Conservation adopted by the TRCs. This also led to more regional engagement resulting in the development of a South-East Asia Tiger Recovery Action Plan (STRAP).

- Within Malaysia, the government adopted the Nine Extraordinary Actions in 2021 which led to the formation of a high-level National Tiger Conservation Task Force, chaired by the prime minister. Malaysia also developed the Malayan Tiger Crisis Action Plan (MTCAP) to recover the Malayan tiger by 2030.

- The creation of a Wildlife Crime Bureau (WCB) under the Royal Malaysian Police (RMP) strengthened the fight against organised wildlife crime.

- Assessing and benchmarking the tiger habitats under global standards, including the use of CA|TS as a tool to strengthen the management of the habitat also brought in positive results.

On World Tiger Day (29 July 2023), the first tiger reserve in Southeast Asia, Al Sultan Abdullah Tiger Reserve, was opened in the state of Pahang. It was inaugurated by the Sultan of Pahang (who was then the King of Malaysia), HRH Al-Sultan Abdullah ibni Sultan Ahmad Shah. The idea of creating a tiger reserve was inspired by India and the details were discussed with GTF and NTCA officials during the visit of the Crown Prince of Pahang, HRH Tengku Hassanal Ibrahim Alam Shah and his team to Mysuru (city in Karnataka, India) to attend the Commemoration of 50 years of Project Tiger on 9 April 2023. The Crown Prince continues to champion the cause on Malayan tiger conservation, and recently at the Second Pahang Tiger Summit held on 7 August, 2024, he announced a wide-scale programme on “saving the Malayan tiger”.

In recent years, the Malaysian government has also taken steps to patrol tiger habitats. Since the adoption of the Nine Strategic Actions, more government agencies, multi-lateral institutions, NGOs, communities, universities and private sector companies have joined the tiger conservation efforts.

Malaysia has set an example for the entire Southeast Asian region in tiger conservation. 🐾

Mr Mohnish Kapoor is Head, Programme and Partnerships, GTF, India.

Mr Sivananthan Elagupillay is Advisor and Member of National CA|TS Committee, DWNP, Malaysia and Hon. Member, GTF Malaysia.



T-105, also called Noori, gracefully walks out of the thickly wooded hilly areas of Zone 2 of Ranthambore Tiger Reserve. She calls for her cubs while approaching the vehicle tracks.



Obeying to their mother's call, Noori's two sub-adult male cubs, not very comfortable around humans, come out of hiding.

MEETING T-105 IN RANTHAMBHORE

Inside the Ranthambore Tiger Reserve in India, a wildlife photographer follows a family of tigers

TEXT & PHOTOS SHIKHAR MOHAN

After some cautious examination, the family eventually gets comfortable and forgets my presence. The cubs engage in brotherly brawl. These friendly fights train and equip the young tigers with critical combat skills that help them in defending territory in the future.



A moment of bonding between the mother-son duo. At around two years of age, the cubs start to venture out without their mother to carve out a territory for themselves. The females tend to occupy areas closer to the mother, while the males travel farther away. Once on their own, the males generally do not come in much contact with the mother. While the two cubs are still under the mother's care and protection, wholesome moments like these between the mother and sons are a delight to watch.



Ranthambore Tiger Reserve in northwestern India is one of the most renowned national parks in India. Established as the Sawai Madhopur Game Sanctuary in 1955, it was one of the first nine tiger reserves declared in 1973 under Project Tiger and became a national park in 1980. The reserve covers an area around 1400 km² and is named after the

historic Ranthambore Fort, which lies within its perimeter.

Ranthambore is known as one of the best sites to spot these majestic tigers in their natural habitat. The park's diverse ecosystems, including dense forests, open grasslands, and rocky hills, provide a perfect setting for a wide variety of flora and fauna. Apart from tigers, the reserve is home

to leopards, sloth bears, sambar deer, chital, nilgai, and a rich diversity of bird species.

The park's landscape is dotted with ancient ruins, including temples and a fort, adding a historical dimension to the wildlife experience. The Ranthambore Fort, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, offers panoramic views of the park. 🐾

FROM THE FIELD

SERENGETI LIONS

Wildlife Photographer Rathika Ramasamy found the African lions a 'thing of beauty' and majesty

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY RATHIKA RAMASAMY

Magnificent
Male Lion



Lioness perched on a tree, scanning for any potential threats

It wasn't until a few years after I started wildlife photography that I got the chance to photograph lions. The first time I saw a pride of lions was in the Serengeti National Park in Tanzania. I was stunned to see them standing majestically with their heads bowed.

On the second day, we went on a safari into the park. I spotted something

resembling a flock of birds in one of the trees. As I approached, I realised they were not birds, but lions. 10 to 15 lions were sleeping in that tree. This arrangement is because animals like wolves hunt and eat lion cubs. Only the head of the family, the mother of the lion cubs, was keeping a watchful eye on them. She appeared tired,

as if she had been awake for a long time, and soon dozed off for a couple of minutes. I witnessed a 'cat nap' firsthand. They were so beautiful even while sleeping. This is one of most beautiful and tender moments to watch.

Lions belong to the big cat family. Unlike other felines like tigers and Leopards, lions always roam



as a family, not alone. Once they eat, lions can rest and move minimally for up to 20 hours. Because they need water so much, they are often found near water bodies. However, they can sometimes go without drinking water for up to five days.

A male lion's roar can be heard up to 5 km away, letting other animals know its territory. Lions cannot

run fast, so they join their family to hunt particular animals.

Lions have been celebrated throughout history for their courage and strength. Once roaming across most of Africa, as well as parts of Asia and Europe, these majestic creatures are now found only in specific regions of sub-Saharan Africa. A small population

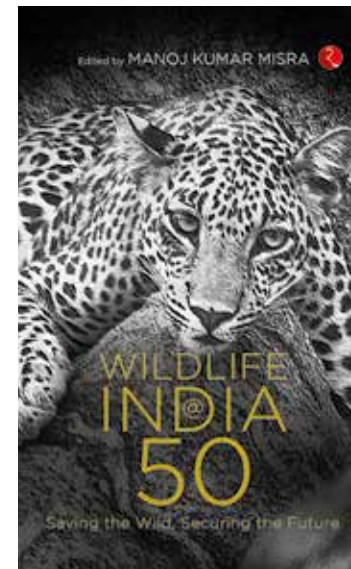
of Asian lions also survives in India's Gir Forest, in the state of Gujarat.

Sadly, the number of African lions in the wild is steadily declining, putting them at risk of extinction. In the past decade alone, their population has decreased dramatically. The primary threat to these magnificent animals comes from organised game hunting. 🐾

Wildlife India @ 50: Saving The Wild, Securing The Future

BY SHIKHAR MOHAN

The state of affairs for India's natural world in the 1960s was far from favourable. The colonial legacy of 'shikaar' had continued, compounded by pressures from the loss and degradation of natural habitats. Our beloved tiger was slowly sinking into the dark ditch of extinction; the Asiatic cheetah had long vanished; the swamp deer, too, faced potential extinction. Countless small yet enigmatic birds and reptiles faced similar crisis. Against that backdrop, the Tenth General Assembly of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) held in the winter of 1969 in New Delhi served as a last-minute wake-up call regarding the state of Indian wildlife. A national-level wildlife legislation was the need of the hour, and the Indian government delivered the same in the form of the Wildlife (Protection) Act (WPA) of 1972, thus opening up the field for firm action against the threats facing our wildlife. This book (released in 2022) edited by Manoj Kumar Mishra, a former member of the Indian Forest Service, is an ode to the 50 years of this keystone legislation and aims to capture India's conservation journey. Mishra passed away in 2023.



The book is neither a historical account nor a scholarly analysis but a treatise celebrating the successes, and a reflection on the challenges faced in the realm of wildlife and the instrumentality of the Wildlife (Protection) Act in safeguarding India's diverse flora and fauna



As admitted by Mishra himself, a book covering a topic with as much depth and vastness as wildlife conservation in a mega-diverse country like India could not be an enterprise of just a single author. With that in mind, the author has approached and collected tales from many reputed names in this sector. The list of contributing storytellers includes wildlife pioneers like H S Panwar and Usha Rai, veteran photographers and filmmakers like Joanna Van Gruisen, government servants like Saket Badola and Sudha Ramen, and also enthusiasts working for the cause of wildlife conservation like Neha Sinha (wildlife biologist and author) and Ananda Banerjee (journalist and artist).

Regardless of whether you are a wildlife

enthusiast or a general reader curious about the wildside, *Wildlife India @ 50* is a pleasure read. The stories about the lived experiences of the "self-effacing doers" spread across 500+ pages both inform and captivate anyone who reads it, while also encouraging readers to ponder and reflect. The book is divided into two parts, with Part 1 dealing with matters directly related to the legislation, and Part 2, focusing less on the statute and more on the people, projects and institutions. The final chapters are dedicated to the future of wildlife conservation in India.

The book is neither a historical account nor a scholarly analysis but instead is a treatise celebrating the successes, and a reflection on the challenges faced in the realm of wildlife conservation while highlighting the transformative impact and the instrumentality of WPA in safeguarding India diverse flora and fauna. Through a series of well-researched essays, the book covers various aspects of conservation, including habitat restoration, anti-poaching efforts, and community involvement that would engage readers on multiple levels. It provides a thorough analysis of conservation policies and their implementation while also sharing inspiring stories of individuals and communities who have made significant contributions to wildlife protection.

In summary, *Wildlife India @ 50: Saving the Wild, Securing the Future* highlights India's steadfast dedication to conserving its natural heritage, dictated by some of the leaders and visionaries of this field. This book is indispensable for anyone interested in wildlife conservation and underscores the need for ongoing efforts to protect our planet's biodiversity. It not only informs but also motivates readers to support the ongoing mission to safeguard India's wildlife. 🐾

Wildlife India @ 50: Saving the Wild, Securing the Future, edited by **Manoj Kumar Mishra**, published by Rupa Publications India Pvt. Ltd. is also available online.



BY RAVINA YADAV

India's 1st Survey on Snow Leopards

Snow leopards inhabit the high reaches of the Himalayas, one of the least hospitable and most challenging regions for conducting population assessments. Categorized as Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List, these big cats are largely elusive. Starting 2019, a four-year survey in India estimated that 718 of these distinctive large cats reside in the country. Led by the Wildlife Institute of India, the survey involved collaborative efforts from snow leopard range states and conservation partners, including the Nature Conservation Foundation and World Wide Fund-India.

Covering over 100,000 sq.km across Indian states such as Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, and the union territories of Ladakh and Jammu and Kashmir, the survey included use of camera traps, DNA analysis and

satellite telemetry. Approximately 2,000 camera traps were strategically placed in potential snow leopard habitats, capturing numerous images that were meticulously analysed to estimate population density and distribution.

Conservationists were elated when on 19 September 2022, scientists captured the first photographic evidence of snow leopards in Jammu and Kashmir's Kishtwar High Altitude National Park. An online article (May 2024) in *Oryx* published eight photographs of snow leopards taken during close to 6,000 camera trappings. The photographic evidence is crucial as earlier the presence of snow leopards was calculated based on sighting records or signs. Such surveys and studies are a critical step in the global effort to conserve this iconic species. It reaffirms India's steadfast commitment to wildlife conservation and active participation in global initiatives aimed at protecting endangered species.

Jaguar Keraná is the New Hope of Argentina

In Argentina, rewilding jaguars (*Panthera onca*), Americas' largest feline, began in March 2024 with the release of Keraná, a female jaguar, into El



Photo: Porto Jofre, Mato Grosso, Brazil, ©Valeria Boron

Impenetrable National Park. Rewilding is global conservation movement that aims to restore individual species and ecosystems. For Argentina, this is a crucial step towards rebuilding healthy wild populations in the Gran Chaco region, where fewer than 20 jaguars remain, and no females have been seen for decades. Rescued as a cub after her mother was killed by hunters, Keraná represents a hopeful future for the region's wildlife.

Reintroducing female jaguars like Keraná is critical for restoring wild populations. This effort, led by Argentina in collaboration with the National Parks Administration, aims to prevent the jaguar population from near extinction to a thriving community. Keraná is likely to be joined by another female jaguar born in semi-captivity in the park, further enhancing genetic diversity and connectivity among jaguars.

Rewilding efforts in El Impenetrable National Park include projects to reintroduce other important species like the giant otter, marsh deer, red-footed tortoise, and lowland tapir. Similar initiatives are taking place in Iberá Park, where Rewilding Argentina has been active since 2012. In Iberá, about 20 jaguars roam, and the birth of wild cubs marks a significant step in their recovery. These efforts are part of a larger mission to create jaguar corridors, promoting ecological restoration on a large scale and benefiting many species.



Photo: Uttarakhand Forest Department



Photo: Mahesh Kapoor

Kenya's Lion Conservation Success

Kenya has managed to buck the trend of dwindling lion population in the world. The population of wild lions drastically decreased from approximately 200,000 a century ago to just 20,000-25,000 today. Lions have been on the infamous Red List of threatened species for a while now. However, in Kenya lion population has increased by 25%, from 2,000 in 2010 to 2,589 in 2021, with even greater numbers reported in 2023.

Kenya's lion conservation efforts have achieved notable success through community engagement, innovative conservation strategies, and collaboration among government, non-governmental organisations, and local communities. These efforts have been crucial in addressing lion populations' challenges, such as habitat loss, human-wildlife conflict, and poaching.

In Kenya, to prevent human-wildlife conflicts, predator-proof bomas have been used and lion lights installed. Predator-proof bomas are fortified enclosures that protect livestock from lions at night, while lion lights are flashing lights that deter the big cats from approaching human settlements. A study published in the journal *Frontiers in Conservation Science* found that predator bomas reduced

livestock predation by 80%. In addition, a study published in the journal *Oryx* found that lion lights reduced lion attacks on livestock by 70%. These measures have played a crucial role in creating a safer environment for lions and people.

Kenya's lion conservation success is attributed also to the community-led conservancies that manage protected areas to safeguard the lions and support education, healthcare, agricultural, and social programs for the local communities. The conservancies play a pivotal role in community policing, helping to manage disputes and lower crime rates. Kenya's successful lion conservation model can be helpful for other African countries (Uganda, Senegal, and Ethiopia) grappling with declining lion populations.

\$ 1 Billion Pledge for Saving the Tiger

Bhutan and Tiger Conservation Coalition pledged to mobilise US \$ one billion over the next decade to conserve tigers and their habitats across Asia. This commitment was made at the Sustainable Finance for Tiger Landscapes Conference, hosted in Paro, Bhutan, on Earth Day (22 April 2024). The conference brought together tiger range countries, visionary private and public sector donors, international development agencies, the Tiger Conservation Coalition, and other

conservation organisations to identify innovative solutions for financing tiger landscape conservation.

At the conference, stakeholders released the 'Paro Statement for Tigers,' a significant document that lays the groundwork for a resilient economic future. The plan aims to build this foundation by leveraging public-private partnerships, establishing dedicated conservation trust funds, and utilising eco-tourism and carbon credits as revenue sources. These innovative strategies seek to create a stable financial base for conservation initiatives, addressing challenges such as habitat loss, poaching, and climate change through targeted and actionable plans, ultimately paving the way for the long-term survival of tigers in the wild.

Such conservation efforts result in preserving healthy forests in tiger ranges and ensuring clean water supply for millions of people. The 'Paro Statement for Tigers' envisions a future where sustainable financial frameworks, innovative funding mechanisms, and multi-sector collaborations are the norm. Private companies, with their funding and technical expertise, will collaborate with public entities, which provide regulatory support and policy frameworks, to significantly impact tiger conservation at the landscape level. 🐾

Ms Ravina Yadav is Junior Fellow at Sankala Foundation New Delhi.



FORTHCOMING EVENTS OF IBCA

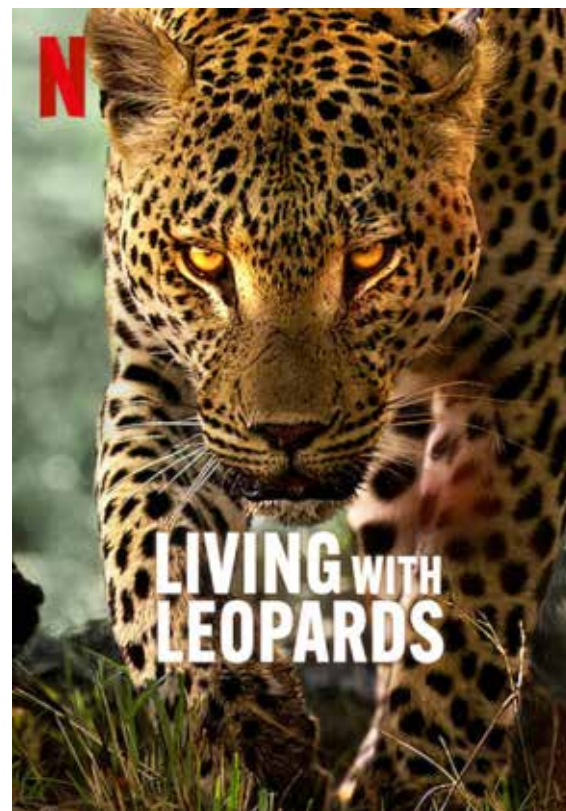
- ▶ ITEC-Executive course for Senior Foreign Officials on 'Capacity Building for Wildlife and Conservation Practitioners' at Kaziranga National Park & Tiger Reserve, Assam, India
- ▶ IBCA Assembly: The tentative date of the IBCA Assembly is 20-22 January 2025
- ▶ "The BIG Cats" Art Competition by Aarts Maestro

Living with Leopards

BY SHIKHAR MOHAN

Set in the beautiful and geographically unique UNESCO World Heritage Site of Okavango Delta, *Living With Leopards* is a cinematic dive into the Botswanan wilderness, focusing on a leopard family. The documentary undertakes the arduous task of following a mother leopard and her two cubs from birth to adulthood. It does an excellent job of uncovering the secretive aspects of this elusive big cat's life, breathtakingly depicting them. From the start, you'll be captivated by stunning visuals that hold your attention for the next hour.

The documentary also does a uniquely good job of highlighting the crew behind the camera and



Living With Leopards is directed by **Alex Parkinson** and is streaming on Netflix.

the difficulties of being wildlife photographers and filmmakers in the African bush, adding a more personal and human touch to your viewing journey. Occasionally, other wildlife megafauna from the landscape, such as African elephants, lions, wild dogs, and impalas, make an appearance.

Particularly enthralling is the fight sequence between two massive male leopards—one an intruder and the other the sire of the two cubs—the outcome of which dictates the future of the young leopards. While the build-up to the fight is well-filmed and presented, it might dishearten some that the filmmakers could not capture the key moments of the actual battle, which occurs out of sight in a thick bush. This highlights the challenges of capturing these wild animals on film.

The producers made a unique choice for the background music. After watching countless wildlife shows, this is probably the first time I've encountered peppy and upbeat pop music in such a context, which takes you by surprise. Most of us are more accustomed to ethereal and intense scores. The effort to offer a different musical score needs to be appreciated, though for some the music may appear distracting for a wildlife documentary.

Overall, if you're in the mood to spend just about an hour watching a leopard family do leopard things—grow up, hunt, fight and frolic—*Living With Leopards* is a great watch. Buckle up for a beautifully presented story of the elusive spotted cat. By the end of the documentary, you are likely to feel a personal connection with the two cubs and have a better understanding of the secret life of these felines. 🐾

“
The documentary undertakes the arduous task of following a mother leopard and her two cubs from birth to adulthood. It does an excellent job of uncovering the secretive aspects of this elusive big cat's life, breathtakingly depicting them

CALL FOR ACTION



Sustainable Finance for Tiger Landscapes Conference

Paro Statement for Tigers

A Billion-Dollar Commitment to Biodiversity Conservation

We, the Royal Government of Bhutan, with the Tiger Conservation Coalition, having concluded this Sustainable Finance for Tiger Landscapes Conference held in Paro, Bhutan under the esteemed patronage of Her Majesty The Queen of Bhutan, Jetsun Pema Wangchuck:

Acknowledging the tiger as the emblematic species of Asia, a revered cultural and spiritual symbol for many hundreds of millions of people throughout tiger range and around the globe;

Recognizing the importance of targeted species conservation to achieving the ambition of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework to address biodiversity loss and extinctions by 2030;

Noting that tigers are measurable indicators of healthy ecosystems that play a critical role in preserving the ecological integrity of Asia's forests and their contribution to climate change mitigation, livelihoods, and human health, aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals;

Concerned that, while the global tiger population has stabilized in the past 12 years, tigers are continuing to decline rapidly in many places due to the persistent threats of habitat loss, unsustainable development, poaching, and the illegal wildlife trade;

Recognizing Indigenous Peoples and local communities living with tigers as essential partners in conservation actions that equitably and sustainably contribute to their economic well-being;

United around a vision of a world where tigers thrive once again, roaming freely throughout their vast range, and restoring our balance with nature;

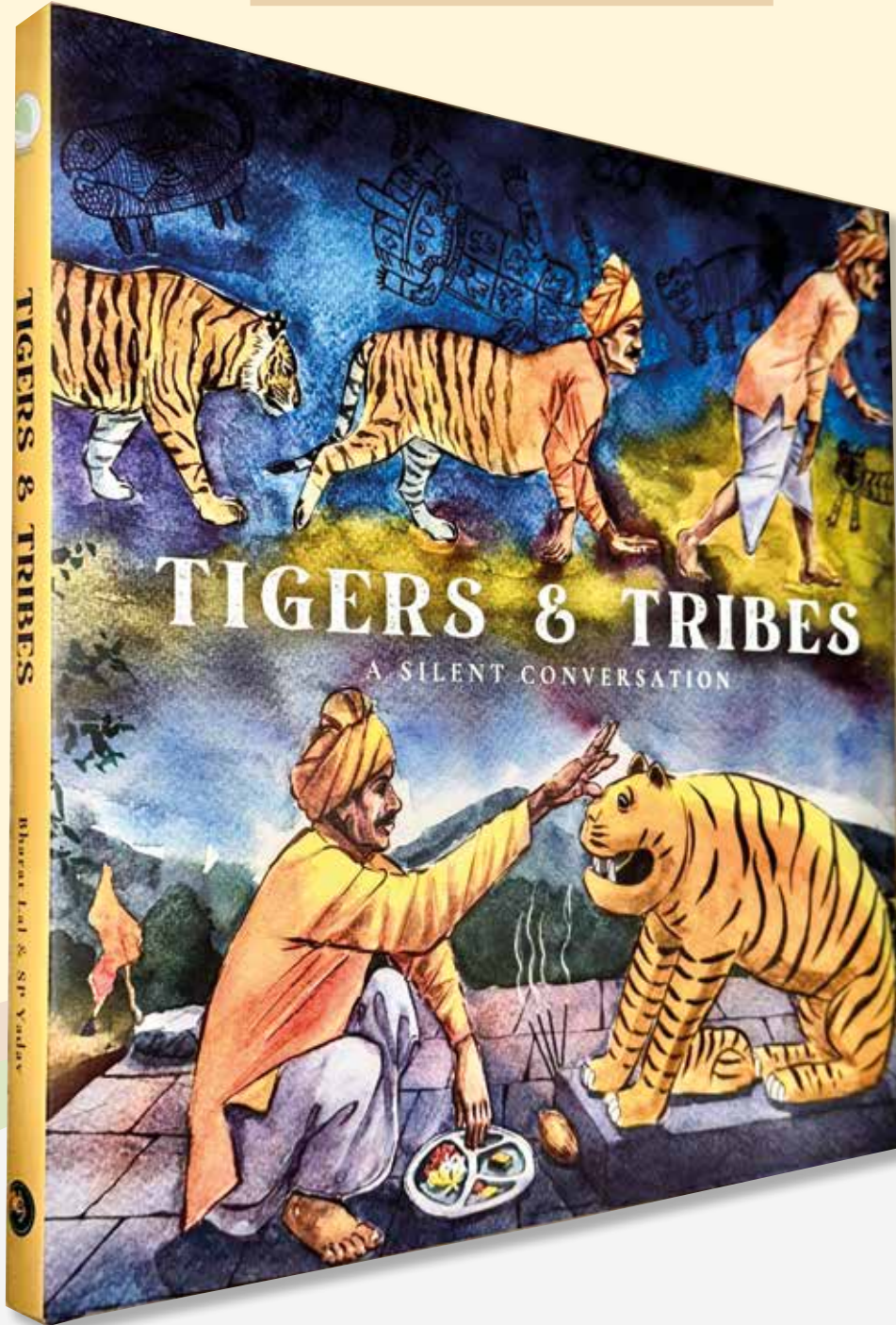
Invite the esteemed guests convened here to support our joint effort to catalyze US\$1 billion in additional funding for tiger conservation by 2034, the next Year of the Tiger, by:

1. Mobilizing new and additional financial resources, the latest science, and technical expertise;
2. Developing and capitalizing new financial mechanisms for tiger conservation in support of the Global Tiger Recovery Program 2.0 and beyond;
3. Inviting the full participation of Indigenous Peoples and local communities;
4. Linking tiger conservation to the global agendas on biodiversity and climate;
5. Monitoring our activities and measuring conservation impact;

We call upon all Tiger Range Countries, non-range governments, public and private sector entities, financial institutions, civil society organizations, and individuals to join us in this historic endeavor. Through this Paro Statement for Tigers, we can bend the curve toward increasing populations of tigers and all that conveys for nature and people in Asia and around the globe.

Agreed on this day, 23 April 2024, in the spirit of cooperation and shared responsibility to meet our global goal to live in harmony with nature by 2050.

PERFECT READ



Scan to get your copy

Big Cats

Address for

Correspondence:

Sankala Foundation
B-414 - 416, Somdutt Chamber -I,
Bhikaji Cama Place
New Delhi - 110 066, India.
Tel: +91 - 8800123344

E-mail: bigcats@sankala.org



CHEETAH



JAGUAR



LEOPARD



LION



PUMA



SNOW LEOPARD



TIGER