



TIGER CONSERVATION: A PATH TO A GREENER FUTURE

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ABSTRACT

The article's main objective is to analyse Project Tiger, an initiative for the conservation of Indian tigers. There is a discussion of the events that led to and the circumstances of the program's debut. As an unintended consequence of conservation, national parks in India cause the local forest dwellers to lose their homes and means of subsistence. The biggest of the felids, the tiger, is currently a globally endangered species, with just around 3000 wild tigers remaining. About 2000 of the animals, or 60%, are found in India, but because of strong conservation efforts, the number of tigers is increasing. The performance of tiger conservation efforts over the past 30 years in the different protected areas of India has been wildly consistent. Due to poaching and habitat destruction, it was discovered that India's tiger population was in danger of going extinct in the middle of the 1960s. Tiger hunting was thus outlawed in 1968. It was discovered that there needed to be a national law protecting wild birds, animals, and plants, in addition to concerns pertaining to the ecological and environmental security of the nation. In 1972, the Wildlife (Protection) Act was created. After the tiger was designated as the country's national animal in 1973, the ambitious "Project Tiger" was launched by then-Union Tourism Minister Dr. Karan Singh at nine key habitats. There are now 54 tiger reserves, up from nine previously. In this paper, we will see how the project has grown in past years and what we have achieved so far from this project. To determine the causes of a decline in tiger habitats and to counteract those causes using effective management techniques. To protect the tiger population in order to preserve its importance in terms of economy, ecology, culture, and aesthetics was the main motive behind the project being implemented.

Keywords: *Tiger, conservation, habitat, ecology, techniques.*

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Introduction

We must take precautions since the number of tigers is steadily declining in order to prevent their extinction. A lot of work is being done so that species can be conserved, Furthermore, Project Tiger is a huge effort aimed at tiger conservation in India. It is important to create the correct habitat for tigers and to avoid any tree-cutting in that location. Being India's national animal, it is the responsibility to effectively protect wildlife. India has undertaken numerous programs that have reduced the tiger population decline. To ensure that no one could access the region and endanger the tiger or its habitat, many conservation areas were established. On April 1st, 1973, Project Tiger was originally launched and is still active today. The preservation of tigers is the aim of this project. The critical project was launched in Uttarakhand's Jim Corbett National Park on Indira Gandhi's orders. The Project Tiger's objectives were very clear: save the Royal Bengal Tigers from extinction. Humans are the main contributor to their depletion; hence every single conservation zone has been declared completely human-free.¹ They ensured that the area where tigers resided was secure and safe. The project faced several challenges, such as poaching and the Forest Rights Act, but the government successfully overcame them all, and it is now moving on at full speed.

Challenges Faced in the Project

Despite attempts to protect tigers, there are still a number of issues that must be resolved. Aligning the goals of extensive economic expansion with the protection of forests and their animals and the reduction of human-tiger conflict is one of the biggest issues. Adaptation to climate change has an impact on habitats, and forests are increasingly losing their quality. Only one-third of the 400,000 sq. km. of forests in the tiger states are in a comparatively healthy state. The illegal trade in wildlife is a serious obstacle. The demand for tiger items is still great despite the fact that poaching is prohibited, and poachers continue to murder tigers for the money. The Indian government has responded by enacting stringent legislation and stepping up monitoring to stop poaching and illegal trading. The rise in tiger numbers is encouraging, but we must maintain our efforts to preserve the survival of this great species and protect the totality of our wooded ecosystems.² We must avoid complacency. Tigers are not only a part of India's rich animal history but also a representation of the nation's ecological diversity and prosperity. In the habitats of tigers, the habitat fragmentation risk brought on by linear

¹ *Project Tiger*, <https://www.insideindianjungles.com/project-tiger/>. (July 1,2023).

² *STATUS OF TIGERS 2022*, <https://ntca.gov.in/reports/#reports2>. (July 1,2023).

infrastructures and the threat of habitat loss brought on by dams, hydropower projects, and the transfer of land for infrastructure development still loom large. Young and inexperienced tigers often travel more than 800 km to create new homes distant from the dominant tigers' territory. This refers to the tiger dispersion phenomenon. Tiger reserves serve as a source of tigers, while nearby woods and other non-forested regions act as sinks for the population as it disperses.³ Tigers that are dispersing will go to new areas by using river bottoms, coffee, and tea gardens, degraded woods, and agriculture fields. Conflict with the communities living there results from this. Soon after, tigers in India began to multiply, and by the 1990s, it was thought that there were about 3,000 of them. However, the Project Tiger success story experienced a significant blow when news broke in January 2005 about the local tiger cull in Rajasthan's Sarika.

Case Law

Dr. Jerryl Avinash Banait vs State of Maharashtra Thr.⁴

The hunt for the "man-eater" tigress Avni, also known as T-1, has not abated, with the Maharashtra Forest Department even hiring "expert hunter" Nawab Shafat Ali Khan to locate and kill the large cat. The fact that the Bombay High Court and later the Supreme Court authorized the quest for the tigress with the stipulation that tranquilizing and capturing the large cat first should be attempted before killing her seems to have been conveniently overlooked. Later, the Nagpur division of the Bombay High Court asked the forest department to explain why there haven't been any attacks by the tigress since August 28 if she is a habitual man-eater. This was in response to a petition filed by wildlife activists Jerryl Banait and Sarita Subramaniam asking for a stay on plans to kill the 'man-eater' and instead capture her alive.

How the Project Helped the Public

The need for human assistance emerged as the enterprise became more and more successful. Every facet of it, from creating national parks to managing them, created jobs. General labour was employed once the sites were transformed into national parks. And since the project is continually running over budget, labour is always needed. Other than that, the region has to be planned by architects and builders. The Project Tiger makes it a priority to hire the very best employees, regardless of age. The national parks need administration once the construction is

³ Digvijay Singh Khatri, *50 golden years of Tiger conservation in India*, HINDUSTAN TIMES, (Apr 09, 2023 11:43 AM IST), <https://www.hindustantimes.com/opinion/fifty-golden-years-of-tiger-conservation-in-india-project-tiger-101681020297971.html>. (July 1, 2023).

⁴ Dr. Jerryl Avinash Banait vs State of Maharashtra Thr., (2018) 6 AIR Bom R 774 (India).

finished and the wildlife has been re-established. Each state has its conservation team. Employees, managers, and supervisors were recruited for that team. A marketing team was hired to raise awareness of Project Tiger and to assist people in appreciating the seriousness of the situation. The message was conveyed through posters, banners, television advertising, and social media. Professionals handle the breeding of animals. Due to the project's expansion, this portion of the work is always growing. They ensure that all the species, infrastructure, and other elements are suitable for tiger breeding. The tourist sector is the most important employment with the highest profit margin. Tourists frequent the area because it has several national parks and is home to uncommon creatures that are being preserved. In order to increase money, the national parks now impose an entrance fee and provide safaris. There are more possibilities for the local tour guides to do their duties.⁵

The success of the Project

It has not been simple to increase the tiger population. The number of tigers was just 1,200 in the 1970s, but the most recent census shows that there are now 3,167 of them constituting 75% of the global tiger population. According to estimates, there were 3,167 tigers in India in 2022, up 6.74 percent from 2,967 in 2018 statistics from the 5th cycle of the country's Tiger Census, which Prime Minister Narendra Modi revealed at an event honouring 50 years of "Project Tiger" in Mysuru, Karnataka. This says a lot about the effort put in by the government and national parks. While the entire globe looks for ways to increase the number of tigers, India has already begun to make progress with Project Tiger. India has demonstrated its mastery in protecting wildlife in general by converting hunting zones into tiger reserves. The legislation governing forests and wildlife has also been revised. Animal trades of any type are not permitted under any circumstances. It is forbidden for humans to enter any of the reserves or woods. The Tigers now have a suitable environment in which to live, hunt, and survive. This initiative has been acknowledged as the "Most Successful Project" in the entire world. The initiative is still in progress and will go on for as long as the tigers remain an endangered species. As a result of the establishment of tiger reserves, numerous rivers and the bio-geochemical cycles necessary for the maintenance of healthy forests were preserved. The minerals and organic manure created by bio-geochemical cycles, together with the river's

⁵*Project Tiger Launched - [April 1, 1973] This Day in History*, <https://byjus.com/free-ias-prep/this-day-in-history-apr01/>. (July 11,2023).

water, all contribute to the agricultural land's fertility and productivity. The agricultural area close to tiger-bearing woods has been shown to be particularly fruitful.⁶

Recommendation

Project Tiger needs to simplify its cash flow. At the level of the Central Government, administrative work takes time. The process in the United States is added to this. Due to the National Parks delayed receiving of finances, which leads to several operating challenges, these administrative procedures. A consistent stream of income is both desired and required. For sanctioned positions, it is difficult to find new employees to replace open positions. In most National Parks, it is necessary to approve new positions and fill open positions. The hiring and training of frontline employees may fall more on the shoulders of the central government.⁷

Conclusion

Project Tiger has involved more than fifty national parks, and each park is working hard to save the threatened species. The expansion of tigers has been one of the project's most notable successes in recent years. Thanks to human action, tiger skin hunting and illicit trafficking have essentially ended. The endeavour has made it such that tigers won't suffer as a result of selfish people's desires. The disappearance of all other animals has now stopped as a result of human interference. The national parks are preserving and saving every wildlife. The problem with animals is becoming more widely known, and people are acting to stop it from growing worse. Project Tiger also led to employment for a number of people. There has been a slight improvement in the wildlife's problems since the restoration project started. Also, other kinds of animals, other than tigers have been preserved by Project Tiger! Through the preservation of tigers' natural habitats and defense against threats like poaching and habitat degradation, Project Tiger's primary objective is to preserve the survival and expansion of the tiger population. The initiative has been effective in boosting the population of tigers and raising awareness among local communities of the significance of tiger conservation. Project Tiger has made important contributions to tiger conservation in India via conservation activities and scientific monitoring, highlighting the necessity for sustainable practices to save our animal heritage.

⁶ Vishwa Mohan, 'Project Tiger a big success, more reserves on the anvil', TIMES OF INDIA, (Apr 1, 2023, 15:31 IST), <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/project-tiger-a-big-success-more-reserves-on-the-anvil/articleshow/99159630.cms?from=mdr>. (July 11,2023).

⁷ Varun Khandelwal, *Tiger Conservation in India - Project Tiger*, Aug. 9, (2005).