



TIGERS





“ One of the most significant aspects of wildlife conservation is the education of local communities and raising awareness amongst tourists, who inadvertently create a big demand for the exploitation of wildlife ”.

Issues such as habitat loss, poaching, the illegal trade in wildlife as pets, the use of animals for entertainment in tourism, for the meat trade and use in traditional Chinese medicines, need to be fully understood by local communities and tourists in order for these problems to lessen.

Making people understand the consequences of their actions and persuading them to change their habits and attitudes towards wildlife is the first step to protecting them. If the buying stops, the killing will too. This is a long and arduous process and requires a holistic approach to education.

Each year WFFT welcome 1000's of visitors, whether as volunteers, day guests or school groups, we have a responsibility to educate them.

If you are an educator who is interested in visiting WFFT, please contact us at info@wfft.org for further information.

Wildcat Size Comparison

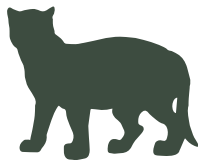
Human
174 cm



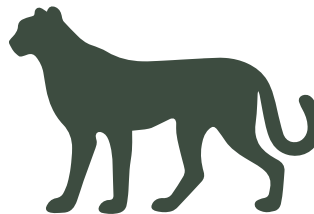
Leopard
cat
66 cm



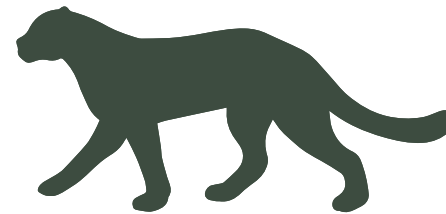
Fishing
Cat
78 cm



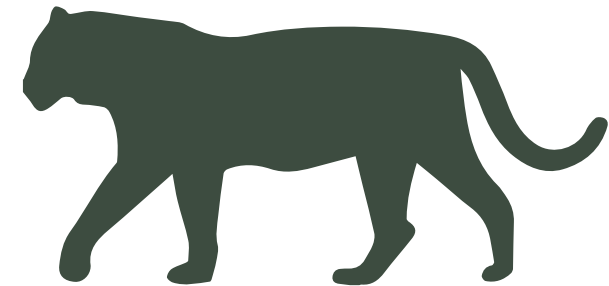
Asiatic
Cheetah
84 cm



Asiatic
Leopard
90 cm



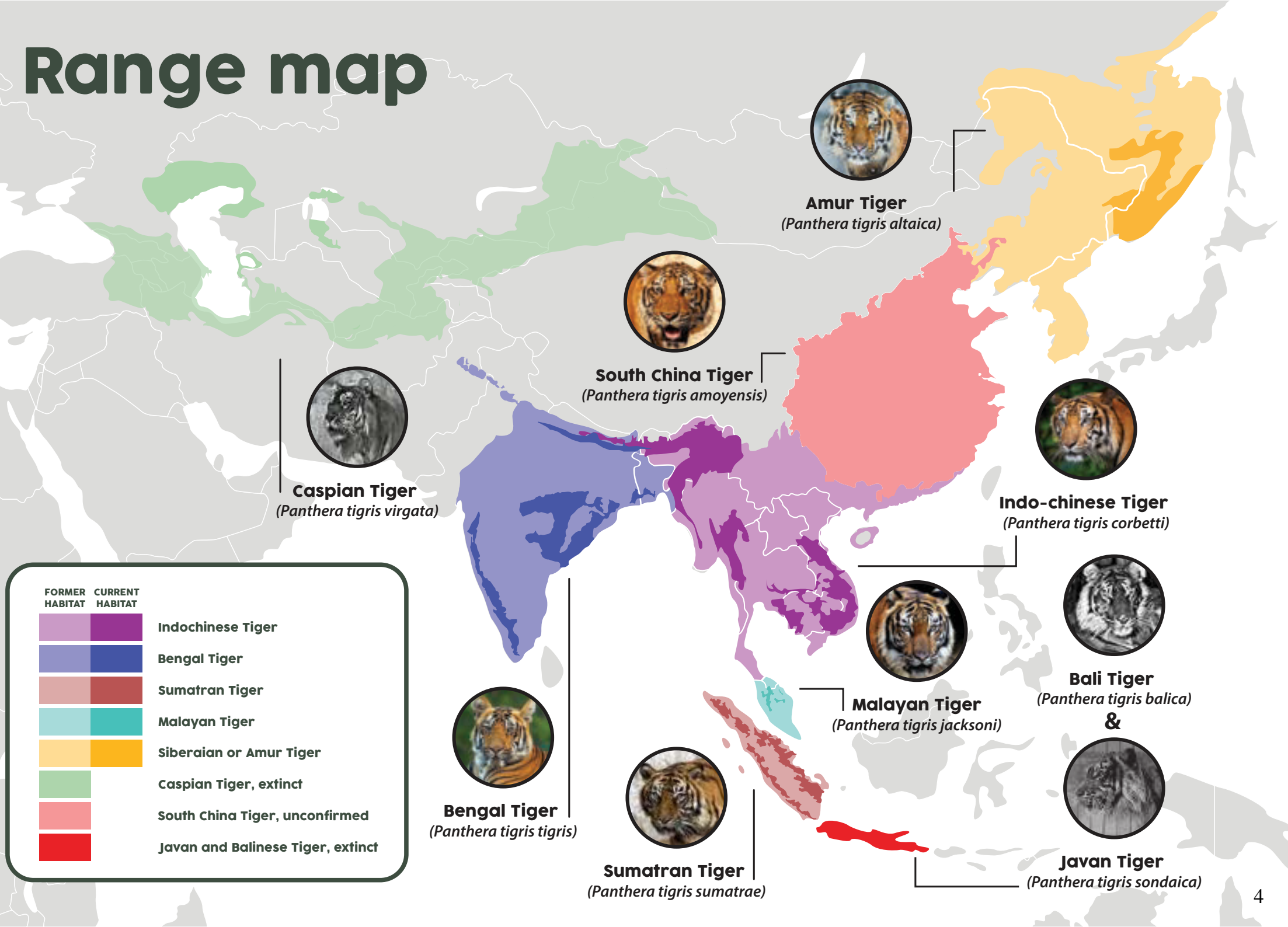
Tiger
300 cm



Taxonomy

ORDER	SUBORDER	FAMILY	GENUS	SPECIES
Carnivora				
	Feliformia			
		Felidae		
			<i>Panthera</i>	
				<i>Panthera tigris</i>

Range map



Species

Tiger (*Panthera tigris*) (Endangered)

Extant Subspecies



Bengal Tiger
(*Panthera tigris tigris*)
Endangered



Amur Tiger
(*Panthera tigris altaica*)
Endangered



Indochinese Tiger
(*Panthera tigris corbetti*)
Critically Endangered



South China Tiger
(*Panthera tigris amoyensis*)
Critically Endangered



Sumatran Tiger
(*Panthera tigris sumatrae*)
Critically Endangered



Malayan Tiger
(*Panthera tigris jacksoni*)
Critically Endangered



Bali Tiger
(*Panthera tigris balica*)
Extinct In The Wild



Javan Tiger
(*Panthera tigris sondaica*)
Extinct In The Wild



Caspian Tiger
(*Panthera tigris virgata*)
Extinct In The Wild

New Subspecies Classifications

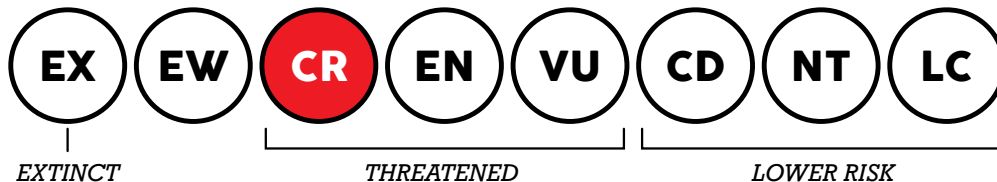
The taxonomy of tigers is currently under review by the IUCN SSC Cat Specialist Group (IUCN, 2022)

Habitat



Extant tiger subpopulations occur in the tropical, subtropical and temperate forests of South and Southeast Asia and the temperate evergreen forests of Palearctic realms in Russia and China. Tigers are habitat generalists, and have adapted to diverse habitats.

Tigers now occupy less than 7% of their historical range. Breeding subpopulations of tigers presently are confirmed in Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Russia, and Thailand. Tigers are present in Myanmar, but the southern and eastern subpopulations are likely dependent on immigration from Thailand (IUCN, 2022).



Tigers in Thailand

Thailand is home to 2 subspecies of tiger, Indochinese and Malayan. Thailand has become the last stronghold for the Indochinese tiger in Southeast Asia. The country's Western Forest Complex supports the largest single population of tigers remaining of this subspecies and is of global conservation importance.

Indo-Chinese Tiger

Thai Name : เสือโคร่งอินโดจีน

Scientific Name : *Panthera tigris corbetti*

IUCN Status : **CRITICALLY ENDANGERED**

Adult Size : 2.7m

Weight (adult male) : <195kg

Habitat

Tropical and subtropical moist broadleaf forests, dry forest.

Diet

Large ungulates, such as deer, pigs, and buffalo.

They will also eat small prey, such as rabbits and rodents.

Threats

Destruction of habitats, and poaching and illegal wildlife trade driven by the increasing demand for traditional medicines, folk remedies and wild meat.



Malayan Tiger

Thai Name : เสือโคร่งมลายู

Scientific Name : *Panthera tigris jacksoni*

IUCN Status : **CRITICALLY ENDANGERED**

Adult Size : 2.5m

Weight (adult male) : <150kg

Habitat

Tropical and subtropical moist broadleaf forests, dry forest.

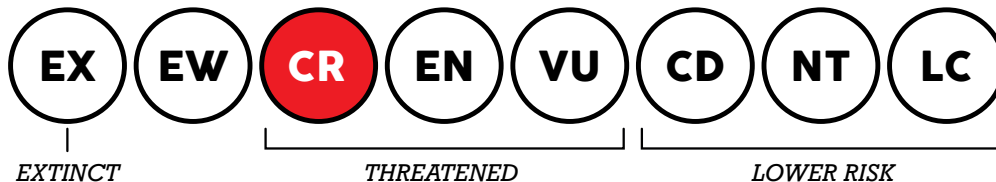
Diet

Large ungulates, such as deer, pigs, and buffalo.

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Threats

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Biology

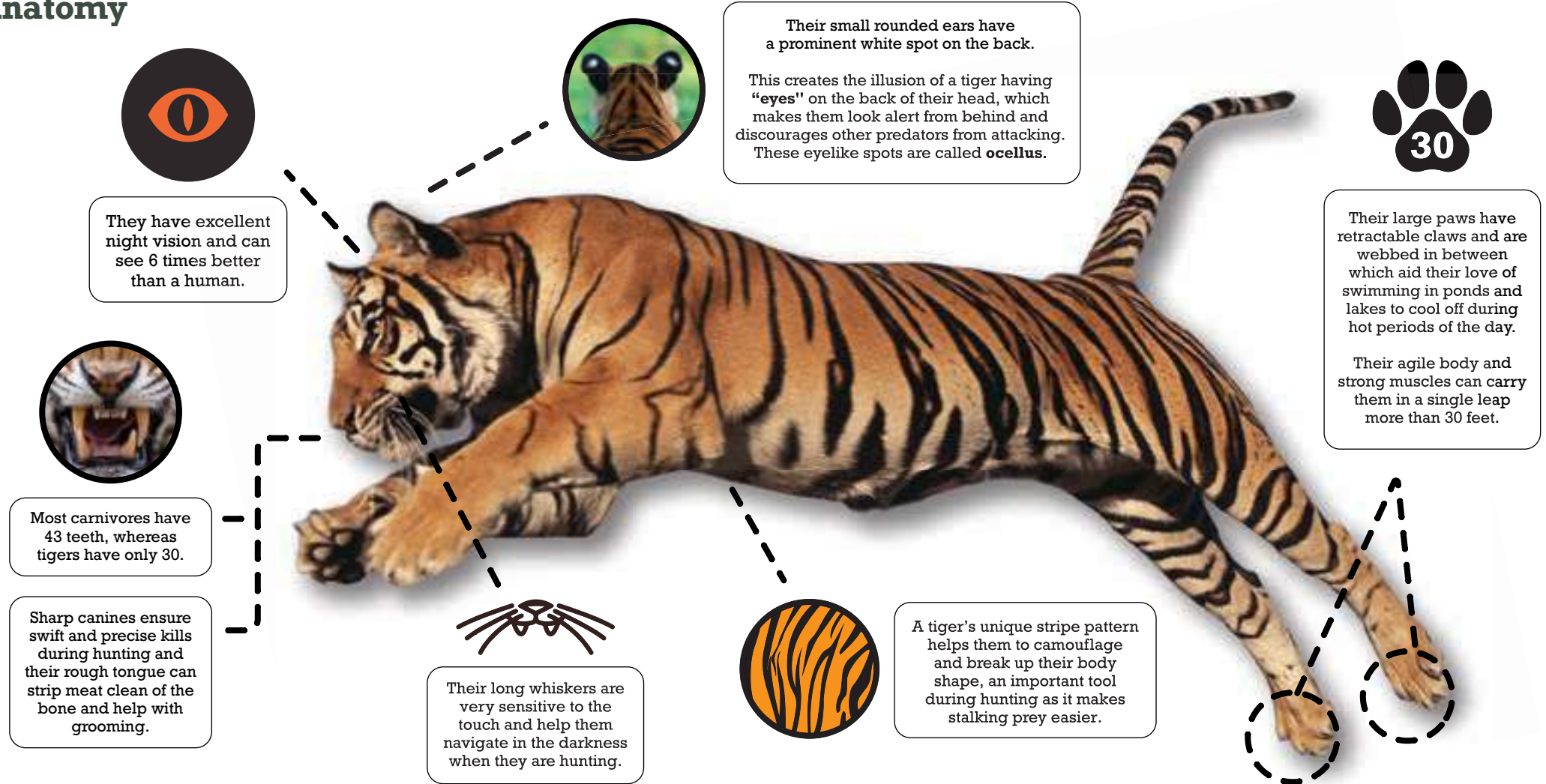
Tigers are the largest cat species in the world. Their muscular bodies and powerful forelimbs, large head and long tails make them exceptional apex predators. Tigers are generally solitary, except for mother-juvenile groups, with adults maintaining exclusive territories or home ranges (IUCN, 2022). They scent mark around their territories using a mixture of 'marking fluid' and urine which is often sprayed on trees. They also use faeces and scratch trees. In the wild, they feed on large to medium-sized animals, preferring herbivore species weighing at least 90kg. Hunting occurs mostly during the night and in solitude where they ambush and overpower their prey using their body size and strength.

Tigers, unlike many other felines, are strong swimmers and often bathe in large ponds, lakes and rivers to keep cool during hot periods of the day.

Tigers tend to be aware of other conspecific movements in shared territory but generally only come together to fulfill their needs for reproduction, when afterwards the female stays alone to raise the cubs in a sheltered location. Mating can occur all year around, but is more common between November to April. Litters usually consist of 2-3 cubs, most of which have a mortality rate as high as 50% in the first two years of their life due to starvation, freezing, accidents, or human interference. After 2 years the young Tigers will part from their mothers, females usually marking their first own territory near their mother and males further away.



Anatomy



Tigers are the largest member of the Felidae family. They also set themselves apart with their unique coat, as stripes are rarely found in other felines. Their coat ranges from shades of orange to brown and rarely seen white. All white Bengal tigers are captives that have been bred from one male tiger that was captured in the 1960s.

The color of the white tiger's fur is the result of a genetic mutation called leucism, they are NOT an endangered species.

Tiger's distinct black stripes can also be seen when they are bald, as the stripes are found on their skin as well as their fur.



Panthera

Tiger Cousins

Lion : Of the living felid species, the tiger is only rivaled in length, weight and height by its Panthera cousin, the lion. Native to Africa and India this muscular and broad-chested big cat varies in shades of yellowish-brown to a silver grey. The lion is listed as Vulnerable and has seen a 43% decline in wild population over the past 21 years (IUCN 2016).

They face a variety of complex threats including poaching for the bushmeat trade and for their body parts, particularly their bones, as well as human-wildlife conflict, habitat loss and degradation. It is predicted that the lion may be extinct before 2050.



Leopard: Compared to other big cats the leopard has shorter legs and a longer body. Their fur ranges in shades of yellow, gold, and black, and is marked with black rosettes. They are native to Africa, Western and Central Asia, Southern Russia and Southeast India. The leopard is categorized as Vulnerable, with threats including human-wildlife conflict, habitat loss and degradation, trophy hunting, and poaching for the trade in pelts and body parts (IUCN 2016).



Jaguar: The jaguar is the only living member of the genus *Panthera* found in the Americas and is the third largest cat species. Its distinctive marked coat of pale yellow is covered in spots that transition into rosettes on the side. The jaguar makes a fearful picture of a predator that usually kills its prey with a single bite through the skull.

The jaguar is categorized as Near Threatened and has had a rapid population decline of 25% since the 1990s (IUCN 2002). Like its cousins, it is threatened by habitat loss and degradation, through revenge killing for fear of livestock predation, and hunted for the illegal trade of its body parts.

Snow Leopard: The snow leopard is the smallest feline in the *Panthera* genus and is native to mountain ranges in Central and South Asia. Having adapted to their cold and mountainous environment, their bodies are built for minimizing heat loss: smaller rounded ears, thick fur on their underside, broad paws for stabilization, and their long and thick tail that stores fat and acts as a tool to maintain balance and to keep their face protected and warm.

It is categorized as Vulnerable and their population is estimated to be fewer than 10,000 mature individuals (IUCN 2022). Threatened by poaching and the illegal trade of skins and body parts, habitat loss and degradation, and revenge killings for fear of livestock predation.



Diet



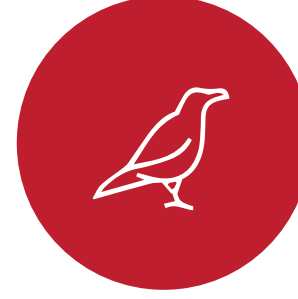
Deer



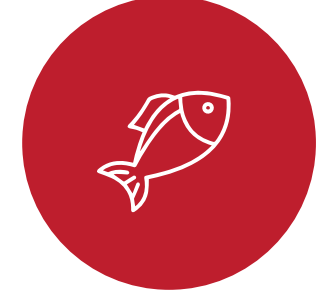
Wild Boar



Buffalo



Birds



Fish



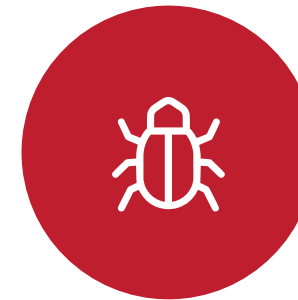
Rodents



Amphibians



Reptiles



Insects

Tigers are carnivores, and it is estimated that an adult consumes 4-11 kg of meat per day (4-7% of their body weight). However, they can go up to 2 weeks without eating and then devour a 34 kg meal in one sitting. In the wild, they prey on large to medium-sized mammals such as deer, wild boar and buffalo, as well as birds, fish and insects.

Primarily nocturnal predators, these lone hunters ambush their prey as most other cats do by using their body size and strength to knock prey off balance and grab the throat or nape with their teeth. After a successful hunt, tigers often drag their prey into high vegetation to conceal it.



Communication

Both humans and animals communicate using signals, which can include visual; auditory, or sound-based; chemical, involving pheromones; or tactile, touch-based, cues. Communication behaviors can help animals find mates, establish dominance, defend territory, coordinate group behavior, and care for young.

Tigers have a multitude of ways to communicate, and not all are vocalizations. Part of their non-verbal communication is defending their territory, which may include leaving claw marks, depositing their feces, or spraying a mixture of urine and a secretion from an anal gland to mark their territory. When aggravated, tigers will expose their canines, flatten their ears and widen their pupils to show aggression and to scare off any intruders. Similar to a house cat they will arch their back when threatened and protract their claws to show a readiness for fighting.

Tigers have the ability to emit a wide variety of vocalizations to communicate over long distances in different contexts. Their roar can be heard over a mile away. Typically, tigers vocalize when they try to attract attention, for example, a mother calling her offspring or stating their location and presence to others. There are other types of vocalizations that are quieter and less frightening. One of them sounds like a cough, and tigers make it when they are nervous because of other animals. A sound unique to tigers is the well-known “chuff” which they use as an alternative to the purr, although larger felines are unable to do so. Tigers use the “chuff” sound to communicate comfort and contentment to others, and it is a friendly vocalization that sounds a little like a sigh mixed with a grunt.

Exploitation

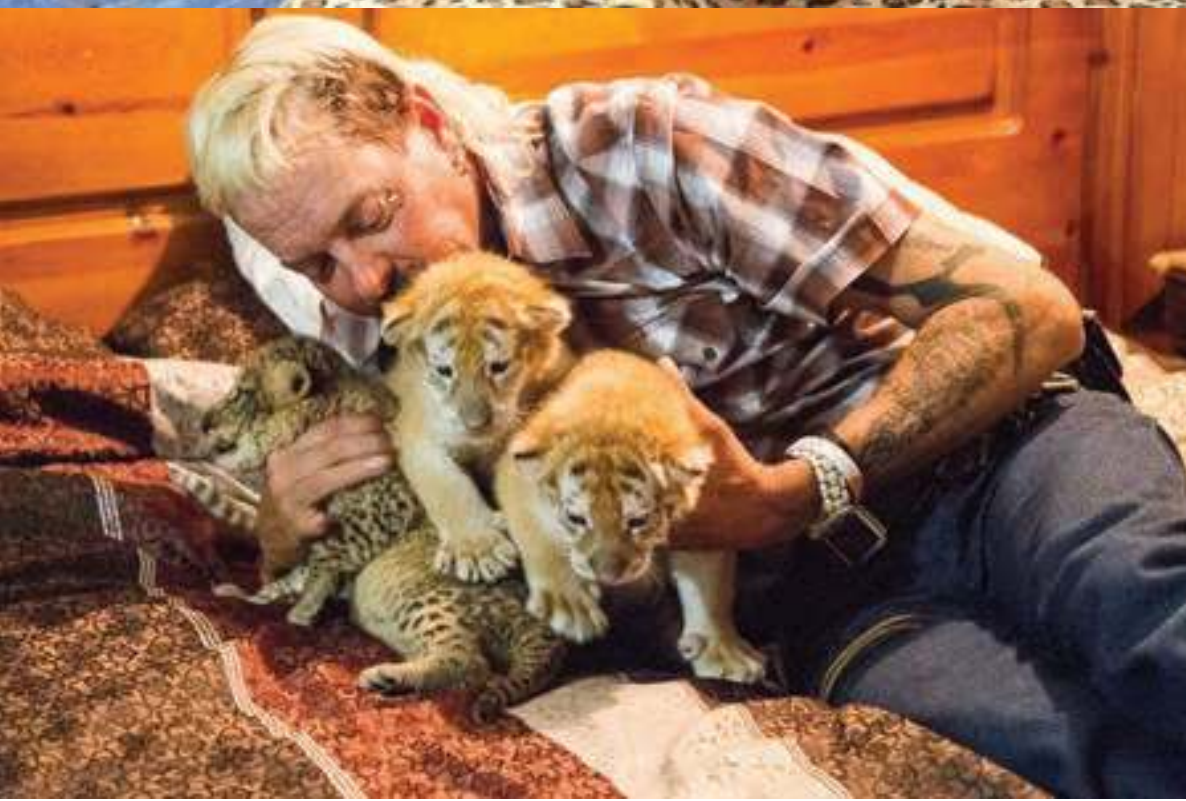
Tiger Farms and the Exotic Pet Trade

The worldwide exotic pet trade has increased exponentially over the past few decades and has led to many wild animals being threatened by poaching to feed this trade and most are subject to abuse and exploitation. Today, there are more tigers in captivity than found in the wild. The USA is only second to China for the total number of captive tigers. Tigers are bred in poor conditions and may be sold for upwards of \$500, which makes them less expensive than a purebred dog. There are an estimated 5000 tigers privately owned in the USA. Many more unregistered tigers are thought to be kept in roadside zoos, ranches, and breeding facilities that keep these animals as pets or for entertainment purposes such as photo prop animals. It is not only the USA that is seen keeping tigers under lock and key.

Many other nations have joined the trend in owning big cats to show wealth, status and breed tigers specifically for the illegal trade of tiger body parts and skins. It is estimated that more than 8,000 tigers live in zoos and tiger farms in China, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam.







Keeping a tiger or any other big cat as a pet can have dire consequences for these beautiful creatures. Many tigers that are privately owned receive improper diets or are underfed. Wrong diets in tigers can lead to severe health issues, physical pain and chronic diseases such as metabolic bone disease.

Many owners declaw their tigers at a young age, and pull their canine teeth out to prevent injuries towards the handler. When being declawed the last knuckle of the tiger's toe is often surgically removed. These procedures cause considerable pain and discomfort and may result in chronic health problems and/or permanent disabilities that may prevent the animal from walking, climbing and eating.

It is common that captive tigers develop abnormal behaviors because of limited space and the continuous contact with humans. When enclosed and confined to a small area, they cannot do what they usually do in the wild, like run, swim, climb trees, and hunt. Excessive stress results in unnecessary physical and psychological suffering. Caged wild animals often retaliate and attack and injure innocent bystanders or their trainers, many times ending in human casualties and the animal being shot dead, or being subjected to more mistreatment and abuse.

Thailand's Captive Tigers

As of 2022 Thailand is home to around 2000 captive tigers. Thailand's 'Wild-life Preservation and Protection Act 2019 (WARPA 2019)' prohibits the hunting, trading, keeping of preserved and protected wildlife. In principle, it is illegal to possess preserved and protected wildlife in Thailand, except for licensed public zoos, individual possession with temporary license under the Amnesty Act 1992 and 2003.

However, it is vastly known that tigers, a protected species and CITES I species are foremost being kept for tourism entertainment purposes in zoos all over Thailand which serves no conservation or educational values.

It is simply exploiting them through wildlife tourism and the entertainment industry, and many are destined to be laundered into the illegal wildlife trade as live animals and/or for their body parts. In addition to protected and preserved species, it is not only Tigers but also non-native species of big cat such as Lions. Lions are increasingly popular as pets in Thailand and can be seen in private houses all over the country due to farms breeding large numbers and legally trading them.

Under WARPA 2019, lions are treated as “control and dangerous species”, and those who possess the species must be registered to keep or trade them in line with described rules and regulations under the law.



Tigers in Entertainment

The majority of Thailand's captive tiger population is kept by commercial facilities, in many instances providing visitors with tiger selfies and interactions. Tigers at these types of venues are taken from their caged mothers at a young age, held in captivity and chained or kept in tiny cages solely to make money by entertaining tourists.



At present, despite repeated calls from the international community for “tiger farming” countries to end the practice, licensed businesses and criminal enterprises in China, Laos, Vietnam and Thailand continue to churn out tigers for entertainment purposes and feed the illegal wildlife trade.







Taking photos with a full-grown tiger or petting a tiger cub is seen as a fun tourist attraction and is very common to see advertised in areas popular for tourists all around the globe. Tiger cub petting and taking photos with them on a privately-owned farm, backyard or even unlicensed zoo has also become a trend in the USA. Tiger cubs are only used for 3 months of their life span before they grow too big for photos and petting and afterwards are used for breeding, sold to whoever wants them or simply put down to later sell their bodies.

The tigers shown on these photos receive harsh punishments such as violent beatings, if disobedient towards the keepers. Petting, feeding and taking selfies with a wild animal is a far cry from their natural life. But once tigers are born in captivity, they cannot be released into the wild. Kept in small and filthy cages, chained up and often huddled together with others they are kept solely for the purpose of making more money.

Tiger petting zoos create an illusion to attract tourists from around the globe for entertainment purposes while simultaneously fueling the illegal trade of live tigers, body parts and pelts.



Medicine and Status

As with many other wildlife species around the world the exploitation and abuse of tigers doesn't stop at the entertainment part. Wild tigers are still hunted for their meat, organs, bones, claws and teeth due to deep-rooted cultural practices of consuming tiger body parts. This occurs especially in many countries where the tiger is native such as South and Southeast Asia (IUCN, 2022).



An example of this exploitation is the so-called 'tiger bone wine', which is sold in East and Southeast Asia for around 1,000 USD per bottle under the pretense to cure diseases. Depending on age and prestige it is supposed to cure different diseases and make the consumer stronger.

Tiger bone glue bars of 100g are sold in Vietnam for more than 1,000 USD, again under the belief that this substance can treat rheumatic diseases and other ailments. Bones, meat and organs are also believed to have healing properties for different ailments in Traditional Chinese Medicine. Canines and claws are worn as prestige symbols and as jewelry in some places of the world including parts of Thailand.



Their skin, claws, and teeth are used to make amulets due to cultural beliefs that they possess powerful dark magic. They promise wealth, protection, and even sexual enhancement to those who acquire these amulets. Surprisingly, these exotic charms are very easy to buy on social media even though they are illegal.

They are believed to be spiritual amulets protecting the wearer from evil. Consumption of tiger bone wine is a status symbol of wealth and good fortune and often given as gifts. The high demand for tiger bone supplies led to seeking analogue species such as Lion, with much of the supply coming from the legal farming of lions in South Africa until the proposed trade ban in 2021 (ICUN, 2022).

Many of the tigers used for these products are animals born in captivity on so-called tiger farms. The sole purpose of these farms is to breed tigers to help supply the growing demand for the commercial trade of tiger parts and products. Only raised for slaughter, these animals are kept alive so that later their bodies and skins can be sold as home décor, their bones used to make non-essential tonics and medicine, their teeth and claws for jewelry and their meat served to satisfy ego.



A vat of the tiger wine "tonic"



Tigers are starved to death and then turned into wine.



Threats

With fewer than an estimated 3,900 tigers remaining in the wild, it is no surprise that these creatures face large and dangerous threats to their survival.

Human activity has led to an estimated 95% loss of the tigers' historical range, with illegal poaching standing on top of the list of reasons why. Poaching for illegal trade in high-value tiger products including skins, bones, meat, and tonics, is a primary threat to tigers, which, along with prey depletion, has led to their recent disappearance from broad areas of otherwise suitable habitat and this decline continues at unsustainable rates. Hunting is particularly significant in Southeast Asia, where intense snaring and poisoning have driven declines in tigers and their prey. The future of tigers depends upon the Asian governments creating effective tiger landscapes by conserving large areas of suitable habitat and by maintaining habitat connectivity.

Habitat destruction, loss and degradation due to agricultural developments, especially monocultures like palm oil plantations, deforestation for timber and the building of road networks and other development activities pose other serious threats to their survival. Habitat fragmentation driven by linear infrastructure development, land-use change, and urbanization can also drive the extinction of tiger subpopulations (IUCN, 2022).



Wildlife Friends Foundation Thailand's Tiger Rescue Centre

We've opened the Tiger Rescue Centre at WFFT, where we rescue, rehabilitate, and offer a forever home to former captive tigers. As Thailand's first tiger sanctuary, our tigers can live freely in over seventeen acres of near-natural habitat. The centre also helps our work to raise awareness of wildlife conservation and animal exploitation by educating tourists and local communities about the urgent issues facing tigers today and how we can help protect these animals for generations to come.

In 2022 we rescued nine tigers from Phuket Zoo as part of the biggest tiger rescue by an NGO in Thailand's history. Archive footage of the zoo shows the tigers pacing frantically in circles while kept on very short chains, so that tourists could pose with them for photos. When not being forced to interact with tourists, the tigers were held in barren concrete cages.



Now after years of captivity, the rescued tigers have a chance to live a wonderful new life at WFFT. Sadly, they can never live in the wild. But the forested land around our tiger rescue centre gives our tigers the chance to live in near-natural surroundings, where they can run around, swim in the huge lake, and socialise with other tigers.

It is likely that this is the first time that these tigers have ever felt grass beneath their paws.

Meet our Rescued Tigers



Baithong
Rescued: 10/5/2022
Rescue Age: 12 years



Maraui
Rescued: 26/4/2022
Rescue Age: 2 years (est.)



Mena
Rescued: 10/5/2022
Rescue Age: 12 years



Susu
Rescued: 26/4/2022
Rescue Age: 15 years (est.)



Pang
Birthdate: 22/10/2018
Rescued: 7/6/2022



Mee Mee
Rescued: 26/4/2022
Rescue Age: 2 years



Mukda
Rescued: 10/5/2022
Rescue Age: 19 years (est.)



Pong
Rescued: 7/6/2022
Rescue Age: <4 years



Rambo
Rescued: 7/6/2022
Rescue Age: >19 years (est.)

No More Chains For Susu the Tiger

Susu was one of the tigers who were saved from Phuket Zoo in 2022. She arrived at WFFT's Tiger Rescue Centre at age 15, after having experienced years of captivity where she was kept on a short metal chain and lived in a barren concrete enclosure.

She now lives in the centre's tiger habitat, where she loves to lay on the grass in the sun, and spend time with her playmate Rambo.





Seeing her outside, in a large outdoor enclosure on the first day she arrived, was truly incredible. Once we let her out, she didn't want to come back into her night enclosure. How incredible is this?

For an animal who has probably never walked on grass before, she took to her new, wild space like a duck to water. This is what it is all about for us! Trying to give rescued animals a new lease of life, no matter how old, or their background.

What Can You Do To Help?



DO NOT

have photos with wild animals being used as photo props.



DO NOT

purchase animal souvenirs, including snake or tiger wine, bush meat, ivory or any other animal products. When the buying stops the killing stops too!



DO NOT

go to animal shows, visit elephant (trekking) camps, tiger temples or petting zoos.



DO

your research! Only visit ethical rescue and rehab centers. Or even better see them in the wild!



DO

tell your tell family and friends Write a story for your local newspaper back home, describing your experience in Thailand.



RAISE

awareness, spread the word and share your experiences in social media.



REPORT

animal abuse or illegal wildlife trade to the relevant authorities and WFFT at



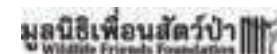
Department of National Parks

Calling 1362 (24 hours) or hotline1362@hotmail.com



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