

## Tigers: Endangered Species

“What will it do to our collective psyche to lose, by our own hand, one of our most vivid natural metaphors for power, beauty, stealth...wildness? What will it mean thereafter to be told, “You fight like a tiger,” or “She’s a real tigress,” or “Put a tiger in your tank?” Substitute the word “dinosaur” in each of those phrases and see what happens to the implications.”—Cory J Meacham, author of How the Tiger Lost It’s Stripes (“Programs”). Tigers are beautiful creatures, which, as a part of the biodiversity of the Earth, have an ethical right to survive. But currently they have been placed on the critically endangered list, in fact, out of the eight different subspecies of tigers, three are already extinct (“The Tiger Crisis”). So what has caused this drop in tiger population? Two main things contributed to the depletion: poaching and trading, and prey and habitat depletion. So, because of the endangerment of tigers in the wild, four major positions need to be taken to protect this species; these include: action against poaching and trading, action against prey and habitat depletion, involvement in campaigns, and positive education towards conservation.

Three things need to happen for action against poaching and trading to be effective: support of eco-tourism, involving man trackers, and de-snaring traps. First is eco-tourism, eco-tourism is defined as “responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, and the well-being of the local people.” (“Definition and Ecotourism Principles”). In a nut shell, eco-tourism is something that provides profit to both the endangered animal/habitat in question and to the native people that must live around them/it (Allman and Schrof). One of the problems that poaching solves, is providing money and a living to the native people that need it; eco-tourism is converting the poacher’s actions into something more positive for the tigers (“The Tiger Crisis”). For example, instead of making money from poaching, the people can instead make it from eco-

tourism with entrance fees, concession fees, donation funds, and much more (“Ecotourism and Conservation Finance”). This way, with eco-tourism, both the people and the tigers are causing no harm and profiting from each other, by co-existing together (Allman and Schrof). Next, man tracking has been proven useful. Poaching is an awful and disgusting profession, but combining it with illegally slaughtering animals on conservation grounds is horrible. A way to combat that problem is to employ man trackers. They have the skills to monitor the problem area(s) and keep away the fore mentioned threat. Also, they have the means to track down regular hunters on a conservation site and have them processed by the law (“Man Tracking Solutions”). These ‘guards’ are a resourceful solution to have at any conservation park. Third, de-snaring traps can help. Snares are trapping devices usually consisting of a noose, weapons that hunters use to capture a wild creature; these illegal objects unfairly slaughter hundreds or even thousands of wild animals, the tiger included. Snares affect every creature in the area; they do not spare any, causing many pointless deaths. De-snaring is an active solution for this problem, involving groups of people who travel in weeks-long trips where they search and remove harmful snares that target the creatures in the wild (“About Us”).

To secure a tiger’s habitat and prey, conservation parks, the idea of “hot-spots”, and restoration missions could prove helpful. Prey and habitat depletion is a serious issue, increasing the decline of tiger species. Unknown to most, it’s even a bigger problem than poaching and trading (“The Tiger Crisis”). A way to combat this problem is to set up conservation parks, protected areas reserved from the market and used for the tigers (Menon). These areas include the different types of tiger habitats: evergreen forests, monsoon forests, mixed coniferous-deciduous woodlands, and mangrove swamps (“Tigers”). Also found in these forests and swamps are the tigers’ different types of prey, who, like the tiger, are too declining because of

their loss of habitat. But prey depletion is also coming from competition, and in some areas, both tigers and humans fight over the same prey. In most cases there is not enough left over for the tigers (“The Tiger Crisis”). “For every fifty deer hunted in a year, there is room for one tiger fewer on the earth.” As quoted from: The Way of the Tiger: Natural History and Conservation of the Endangered Big Cat. (Menon). Habitat loss is closely connected to prey depletion, and conservation parks solve both these problems. By saving the tigers’ homes, people are also saving their food supply. Second, the “hot-spots” method might assist. The “hot-spots” idea was proposed by ecologist Norman Myers; he suggests that by protecting only 1.4% of Earth’s land surface, it will protect the bulk of life on Earth, 60% of animal and plant species live in that 1.4% area in twenty-five different places named “hot-spots”. And since most (16) of these “hot-spots” are located in tropical areas, this idea therefore benefits the tigers. Saving these areas would cost 5 billion dollars stretched out over the course of ten years. Luckily, 38% of these “hot spots” are already protected (Rogers). This “hot-spots” idea is a possible solution for the tigers’ problems of habitat and prey depletion. Third, restoration missions is a good solution to the tiger crisis. Like de-snaring missions, restoring missions can be taken to successfully help the tiger’s chance of survival. Restoring missions include tree planting, promoting habitat conservation; and forest clean up activities (“About Us”). This refurbishing of the tiger’s habitat helps support them and their prey.

The third main step to securing the survival of the tiger is through support of different funds and campaigns. There are many different types of campaigns to help and support in the fight to protect and increase tiger numbers. The EIA Tiger Campaign is one; over all, their goal is to bring changes to old laws and enforce the current ones (Species In Peril: Tigers Campaign). Next is the WWF; their plan is to set up seven tiger conservations (“Tigers”). Third is the STF

(Save the Tiger Fund), they gather supportive funds necessary for tigers' survival from such willing companies as: ExxonMobil, U.S. National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Critical Ecosystem Partner Fund, Disney Foundation, and US State Department. Then, they give out grants to other organizations located in the tigers' area ("Who We Are"). Another is the Tiger Foundation, which supports eight different programs involved in the fight to protect tigers. Two examples of the different projects the Tiger Foundation is involved with are the Caspian Tiger Project and the South-China Tiger Project. In the Caspian Tiger Project, they are holding an investigation. It is their goal of the investigation to create a record of the circumstances of the tiger's extinction to send a message in support of conservation and biodiversity; this is a reminder of the planet's vulnerability. The other project is the South-China Project, the South-China tiger is the subspecies of tigers that has the fewest numbers—fewer than twenty in the wild. This project photographs any South-China tiger found, and adds it to a database. This helps the Tiger Foundation and others to determine the probability of survival and what's necessary to protect the tiger's future ("Programs"). Supporting funds, campaigns and foundations help the tiger's chances of survival. In this way, normal people can also be a part of saving the tiger from extinction.

The fourth and final main step to helping the tiger population is through education. "In the end we conserve what we love, we love what we understand and we understand what we are taught." As quoted from Bab Dioum with the organization: Youth for Conservation. Education is the most important thing to human beings; it helps us decide where we stand on issues and topics, and informs us of the rights and wrongs of life. Education teaches the people of the Earth the importance of tigers to our society; it can also change a person's feelings towards conserving

wildlife (“About Us”). Education is the simplest and most powerful step to saving one of the world’s most beautiful species from total extinction.

The help and support of people who care, taking action against illegal poaching and trading, action against prey and habitat depletion, supporting campaigns, and providing education can help save the tigers’ already declining population. These four easy steps of prevention will help save a gorgeous and important creature from vanishing forever from the planet. Think of humanity standing at a huge museum filled with immobile stuffed animals of past and present creatures. Should the world be content to stare at the lifeless form of the tiger only behind a wall of glass? Or should humanity walk out the door and strive to correct their problems? (1,456).

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