

## Presence of Black Panther found in Pakke Wild Life Sanctuary of Arunachal Pradesh



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Arunachal Pradesh is one of the naturally beautiful states of India situated in the foothills of the Himalayas and there we have the Pakke Wild life sanctuary which is fast developing as a hot spot for Tourists. The River Bhareli (known as Kameng in Arunachal Pradesh) is on the northern and western sides of the sanctuary, to the east is the Pakke River and to the south lies the Nameri National Park of Assam. In this sanctuary the endangered Black Panther species is available.

The Wild Life Institute of India (W.I.I.), Dehradun and the forest department of Arunachal Pradesh detected the presence of the Black Panther through camera trapping. This collaborative programme that works for tiger conservation has been for the last several months using sophisticated camera to count and make a census on the number of Royal Bengal Tigers (*Panthera Tigris*) in the sanctuary. During the course of this survey, they were surprised when they came across a photograph of a Black Panther as well. The photograph shows that it has a small shaped round ear, comparatively long body and the tail is also long. Locally this animal is called Soni Nayohi (Creator of Black).

Previously this species was also found in Assam also but acute degradation of forest area has made this rare species extinct in Assam. In 1927 this Black Panther species was also found in the Lusai hill of Mizoram.

The Pakke Wild Life Sanctuary is located in the East Kameng district and was declared a sanctuary in 1977. The invertebrate diversity of the area is completely unexplored. Apart from some limited explorations the area has still remained virgin. A vast portion of the area especially in the central and northern parts of the sanctuary is relatively inaccessible due to the dense vegetation, hilly terrain and the lack of trails.

Consequently, hardly any people including the local tribals venture into the interior of the forest. Diversity of vegetation type, Herpetofauna, avifauna, mammals gives the sanctuary a rich biodiversity and has the potential to become a hotspot in the world. It is expected that there are around 1500 vascular plants, 600 species of orchids, 36 species of herpetofauna, 294 avifauna, large number of herbivore and carnivore fauna as well as many rare and endangered species in the park. This park was announced as the 26th Tiger Project by Govt. of India on 2002.

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