

Tigers population increases in the Manas Tiger Reserve



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The increase in tiger population in the Manas National Park is a milestone in country-wide tiger conservation efforts. Since peace returned to Manas after a prolonged insurgency, dedicated conservation intervention to secure the population of tigers was in place. The annual monitoring of tigers, co-predators, and prey animals is a prime mandate set by the Government of India to all tiger reserves designated as tigers" source population sites. With each passing year, Manas is adorning new feathers to its cap. This time „Manas Tiger Reserve“ has been successful in a three-fold increase in tiger number in the last ten years (2011-2021). It is worth mentioning that this is an outcome of the continuous efforts of the Manas Directorate, and the conservation organisations who have been working ardently.

The annual survey in Manas using camera-traps is led by the Field Director, MTR and supported by Aaranyak and WWF India and has been continuing since 2010 in Manas for monitoring the tigers, co-predators, and prey animals, with constant support from various donors and collaborators. This year Manas is celebrating the 12th year of collaboration with Aaranyak and WWF India for the annual camera trapping survey dedicated to assessing the population status of tigers in the area.



The extensive systematic camera trapping survey was carried out, for the first time in Manas Tiger Reserve covering the Manas National Park, First Addition to Manas National Park and Barnadi Wildlife Sanctuary, with a trapping effort of 8388 trap-days in approximately 876 sq. km area. The survey recorded the presence of 48 tigers in the Tiger Reserve, of which 38 were adult tigers, 3 sub-adults, and 7 cubs. Among the adult tigers, 21 are female, 16 male and sex of one adult tiger remained unidentified. The survey also recorded 37 leopards in Manas Tiger Reserve of which 31 were adults and six sub-adults. Besides, other elusive mammals such as the Himalayan Serow (*Capricornis sumatraensis*) and Goral (*Naemorhedus* sp.) were recorded for the first time from Manas Tiger Reserve during the survey.

Moreover, to ensure stringent protection a patrolling team, “Manas Tiger Teams” was formed and provided capacity building trainings to patrol in the eastern range of the park (Bhuyanpara Range). This included patrol observations recording training, GPS usage, Map reading, Compass reading and Navigation, First Aid training, Emergency Medical Situation Handling, Crime Scene Handling, Camera Trap Deployment training, Snake Bite management, Snare Combing Tactics, drawing of Wildlife Crime offences and Forensics by Aaranyak with support from other project partners, Forest Department BTC, Wildlife Conservation Trust, Panthera, IUCN-KfW and USFWS.

“Better management and protection measures have resulted in an increase in tigers in Manas, which is a positive sign. But in coming years, the focus should be given on the management of the prey base, so that deaths due to infighting don’t take place”, said Dr. Bibhab Kumar Talukdar, CEO, Aaranyak. Dr. M Firoz Ahmed, Scientist F and Head, Tiger Research and Conservation Division, said,

“Manas is a unique landscape that offers tremendous scope for conservation of Tigers and another biodiversity in a transboundary conservation landscape. The future of conservation of the landscape lies with both India and Bhutan as the forest on either side of the international boundary complements with each other, which was proved by new understandings how individual tigers share transboundary space.”

Dr. Dipankar Lahkar, Manager, Tiger Research and Conservation Division, Aaranyak said, “Tigers are potentially flourishing in Manas, and this significant recovery becomes a global example. Over time we have seen a potential increase of the breeding females and cubs signify that now Manas proved to be a healthy breeding ground for the booming tiger population.

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