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Tiger Census 2018: Guinness Book of World Records

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Why in News

India's 2018 Tiger Census has made it to the **Guinness Book of World Records** for being the **world's largest camera trapping wildlife survey**.

- India has also fulfilled its resolution to double the **Tiger** numbers made at St. Petersburg Tiger Summit in 2010, before the target year of 2022.
- The tiger numbers in India have increased from around 1500 in 2010 to 2976 in 2020.

Key Points

- **Comprehensive:** The **fourth cycle** of the **Tiger Census 2018**, conducted in 2018-19 is the most comprehensive in terms of both resource and data recorded.
 - It counted **2976 tigers** which is **75%** of the global tiger population.
 - The census is done quadrennially (every four years) by the **National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA)** with technical help from the **Wildlife Institute of India**.

It is done with cooperation from the state Forest Departments and partners.

- **Methods:**
 - **Camera traps** were placed at multiple locations across different sites and surveyed an effective area of 121,337 square kilometres.

Camera Traps are **outdoor photographic devices** fitted with motion sensors that start recording when an animal passes by.
 - It also conducted extensive **foot surveys** that sampled habitat plots for vegetation and prey dung.

- **Identification:** From these photographs 83% of the total tiger population were identified using **stripe-pattern-recognition software**.

The software helps to match a new image of a tiger already in the database, based on the pattern of stripes.

Project Tiger

- It was launched in **1973** with 9 tiger reserves for conserving our national animal, the tiger.
- It is an ongoing **Centrally Sponsored Scheme** of the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change.
- Currently, the Project Tiger coverage has increased to 50 Tiger reserves, spread out in 18 tiger range states which amounts to around 2.21% of the geographical area of our country.
- The tiger reserves are **constituted on a core/buffer strategy**. The core areas have the legal status of a national park or a sanctuary, whereas the buffer or peripheral areas are a mix of forest and non-forest land, managed as a multiple use area.
- The **NTCA** was **launched in 2005**, following the recommendations of the Tiger Task Force. It is a **statutory body of the Ministry**, with an overarching supervisory/coordination role, performing functions as provided in the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.
- **M-STripES** (Monitoring System for Tigers - Intensive Protection and Ecological Status) is an **app based monitoring system**, launched across Indian tiger reserves by the NTCA in 2010.

The system would enable field managers to assist intensity and spatial coverage of patrols in a geographic information system (GIS) domain.



Tiger

- **Scientific Name:** *Panthera tigris*
- **Indian Sub Species:** *Panthera tigris tigris*.
- **Habitat:** It stretches from Siberian temperate forests to **subtropical and tropical forests on the Indian subcontinent** and Sumatra.
- It is the largest cat species and a member of the genus Panthera.

- Traditionally **eight subspecies of tigers** have been recognized, out of which **three are extinct**.
 - **Bengal Tigers:** Indian Subcontinent
 - **Caspian tiger:** Turkey through central and west Asia (**extinct**).
 - **Amur tiger:** Amur Rivers region of Russia and China, and North Korea
 - **Javan tiger:** Java, Indonesia (**extinct**).
 - **South China tiger:** South central China.
 - **Bali tiger:** Bali, Indonesia (**extinct**).
 - **Sumatran tiger:** Sumatra, Indonesia.
 - **Indo-Chinese tiger:** Continental south-east Asia.
- Designated as the National Animal of India, Bengal Tiger is most recognisable for its dark vertical stripes on orange-brown fur with a lighter underside.
- **Importance:** Tigers are terminal consumers in the ecological food pyramid, and their conservation results in the conservation of all trophic levels in an ecosystem.
- **Threats:** Habitat destruction, habitat fragmentation and poaching.
- **Tiger Reserves in India**
 - **Total Number: 50**
 - **Largest: Nagarjunsagar Srisaïlam Tiger Reserve, Andhra Pradesh**
 - **Smallest: Orang National park, Assam**

Source: PIB