



Status of Conservation of Tigers

According to data released by the **National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA)**, poaching and electrocution were behind tiger deaths reported in the country.

Key highlights

- Around 40% of India's estimated 2,226 tigers (2014 census) lives outside the core areas of tiger habitats. These tigers are vulnerable to poaching and come into conflict with humans.
- The data shows a rise in tiger vulnerability with higher number of deaths reported in 2016 in comparison with previous years. According to the data, Madhya Pradesh (148) witnessed the highest number of deaths followed by Maharashtra (107), Karnataka (100) and Uttarakhand (82).
- Poaching cases for illegal wildlife trade is however less but death from electrocution (mostly through fences) has been a major concern from 2016 onwards.
- While 295 tigers died natural deaths (45% of the total), 36 were killed in road or rail accidents.
- Conflict outside sanctuaries, national parks and bio reserves in several places is likely to increase further in the coming years.

Tiger Census in India

- Every 4 years the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) conducts a tiger census across India.
- The first was conducted in 2006, followed by 2010 and in 2014.
- The Census (2014) had reported 2,226 tigers in the country, up from 1,706 in 2010.
- The fourth tiger census (All India Tiger Estimation 2018-19) estimated to be released in May 2019.

Importance of Fourth Tiger Census 2018

- This 2018 tiger census uses more technology including a mobile app named "**MSTripes**" for the very first time to store information of the counting.
- Another **primary focus of the tiger census 2018 is to cover the northeast India that was not included in the previous census.**
- For the very first time three neighbouring countries **Bhutan, Nepal and Bangladesh** are helping in **counting the number of tigers all across India**, especially in the region with mutual borders.

Note: 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.

Project Tiger and National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA)

- **Project Tiger was launched in 1973** with 9 tiger reserves for conserving our national animal, the tiger. Currently, the **Project Tiger coverage has increased to 50**, spread out in 18 tiger range states.
- 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.**
- It is an ongoing **Centrally Sponsored Scheme of the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change providing central assistance to the tiger States** for tiger conservation in designated tiger reserves.
- The **National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) is a statutory body** of the Ministry, with an overarching supervisory/coordination role, performing functions as provided in the **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.**
- The NTCA was launched in 2005, following the recommendations of the Tiger Task Force. It was given statutory status by 2006 amendment of **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.**

Buffer Area

- Buffer area is the **area peripheral to the critical tiger habitat or core area** providing supplementary habitat for dispersing tigers, besides offering scope for co-existence of human activity.
- The limits of the buffer/ peripheral areas are determined on the basis of scientific and objective criteria in consultation with the Gram Sabha and an Expert Committee constituted for the purpose.

Ex-situ and In-situ conservation methods

- **Ex situ conservation** is the conservation and maintenance of samples of living organisms **outside their natural habitat**. Maintenance of Gene Banks, Seed Banks etc. comes under this method of conservation.
- **In situ conservation** is conservation of species **in their natural habitats**. Maintenance of natural habitats in the form of wildlife sanctuaries, national parks etc. comes under this method of conservation.