



Black Tigers

Why in News?

Recently, the death of a **Rare Black Tiger** was reported in the [Similipal Tiger Reserve](#) in Odisha.

- Similipal has the world's highest rate of black tiger sightings in the world.

Note:

- The death can have a big impact on the [Population of Tiger](#). The population of black tigers is very limited, and the death of a male tiger will affect the breeding of tigers in the region.

What are the Key Points Related to Black Tigers?

- **About:**
 - Black Tigers are a rare colour variant of the **Bengal tiger** and are **not a distinct species** or geographic subspecies.
 - The coat colouration and patterning that make the wild cats appear dark boil down to a **single [mutation](#) in the Transmembrane Aminopeptidase Q (Taqppe) gene**.
- **Pseudo Melanistic:**
 - The abnormally dark or black coat in such tigers is termed **pseudo melanistic or false coloured**.
 - Melanistic refers to having very dark skin/hair due to higher-than-normal level of the pigment (**substance that gives pigmentation to skin/hair is called melanin**).
 - There is a **high probability (about 60%) that the tiger will have the mutant gene**, if randomly selected from Similipal.



▪ Causes for Black Colour:

- The tigers in the Similipal Tiger Reserve are an isolated population in eastern India and **gene flow between them and other tiger populations** is very restricted.
- Due to Geographic Isolation, **genetically related individuals have been mating with each other for many generations**, leading to inbreeding.
 - This has important implications for tiger conservation as such isolated and inbred populations are prone to extinction over even short periods of time.

What are the Key Points of Similipal Tiger Reserve?

▪ About:

- It was formally designated a tiger reserve in **1956** and brought under [Project Tiger](#) in the year 1973. It was declared a [biosphere reserve](#) by the Government of India in June, 1994.
 - It has been part of the [UNESCO World Network of Biosphere Reserve](#) since 2009.
- It is part of the **Similipal-Kuldiha-Hadagarh Elephant Reserve** popularly known as [Mayurbhanj Elephant Reserve](#), which includes 3 protected areas i.e., Similipal Tiger Reserve, Hadagarh Wildlife sanctuary and Kuldiha wildlife sanctuary.

▪ Location:

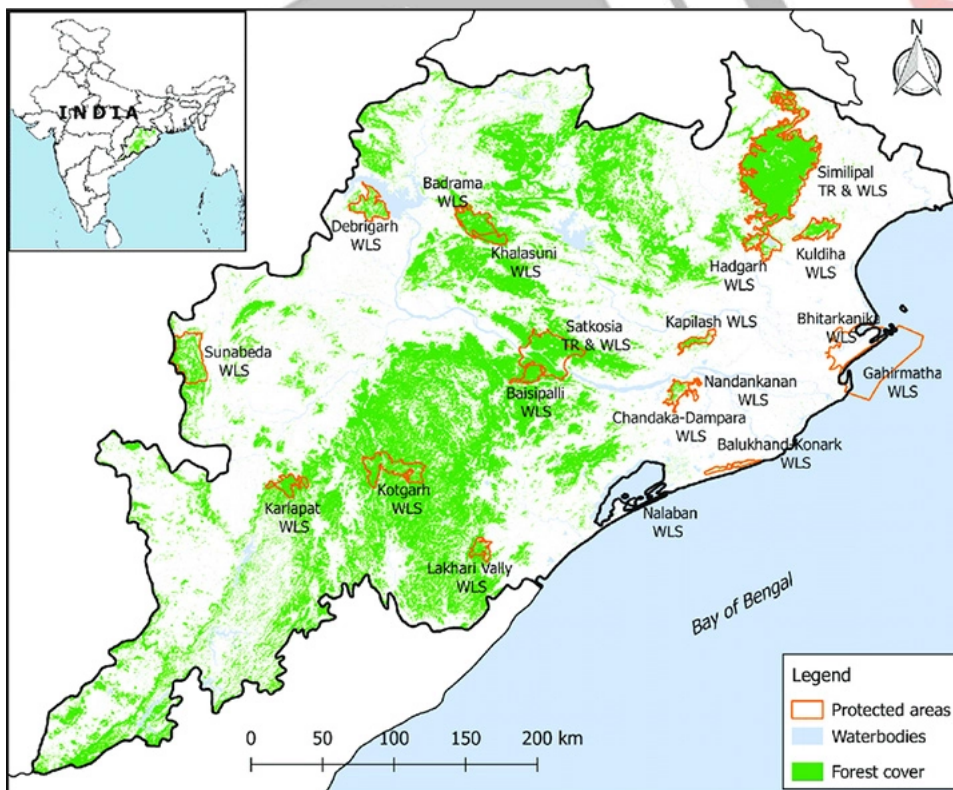
- It is situated in the **northern part of Odisha's Mayurbhanj district**. Geographically, it lies in the **eastern end of the eastern ghat**.

▪ Wildlife:

- Similipal is home to a wide range of wild animals including tigers and [elephants](#), besides 304 species of birds, 20 species of amphibians and 62 species of reptiles.

▪ Other Major Protected Areas in Odisha:

- [Bhitarkanika National Park](#).
- [Chilika](#) (Nalaban island) WLS.
- [Baisipalli WLS](#).
- [Nandankanan WLS](#).
- [Gahirmatha \(Marine\) WLS](#).



What are the Tiger Conservation Efforts in India?

- [Project Tiger 1973](#): Project Tiger is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme of the Ministry of

Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC) launched in 1973. It provides havens for tigers in the country's national parks.

- **National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA):** It is a statutory body under the MoEFCC and was established in 2005 following the recommendations of the Tiger Task Force. NTCA has been constituted under section 38 L (1) of **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972**.
- **Conservation Assured | Tiger Standards:** CATS is a set of criteria which allows tiger sites to check if their management will lead to successful tiger conservation.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

Prelims:

Q1. Two important rivers - one with its source in Jharkhand (and known by a different name in Odisha), and another, with its source in Odisha - merge at a place only a short distance from the coast of Bay of Bengal before flowing into the sea. This is an important site of wildlife and biodiversity and a protected area. Which one of the following could be this? (2011)

- (a) Bhitarkanika
- (b) Chandipur-on-sea
- (c) Gopalpur-on-sea
- (d) Simlipal

Ans: (a)

Q2. Among the following Tiger Reserves, which one has the largest area under "Critical Tiger Habitat"? (2020)

- (a) Corbett
- (b) Ranthambore
- (c) Nagarjunasagar-Srisailem
- (d) Sundarbans

Ans: (c)

Q3. Consider the following protected areas: (2012)

1. Bandipur
2. Bhitarkanika
3. Manas
4. Sunderbans

Which of the above are declared Tiger Reserves?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 1, 3 and 4 only
- (c) 2, 3 and 4 only
- (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Ans: (b)

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