



Tiger Deaths Raise Concerns in Nilgiris Biodiversity

For Prelims: [Biosphere Reserve](#), [Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve](#), [Tiger](#)

For Mains: Significance of Tiger Conservation, Related initiatives

Source: [TH](#)

Why in News?

The Nilgiris District in Tamil Nadu is home to a rich biodiversity and a large population of [tigers](#). However, in the past two months, **10 tigers have died** in the district due to various reasons.

- This has raised concerns among conservationists and officials about the welfare and survival of the big cats.

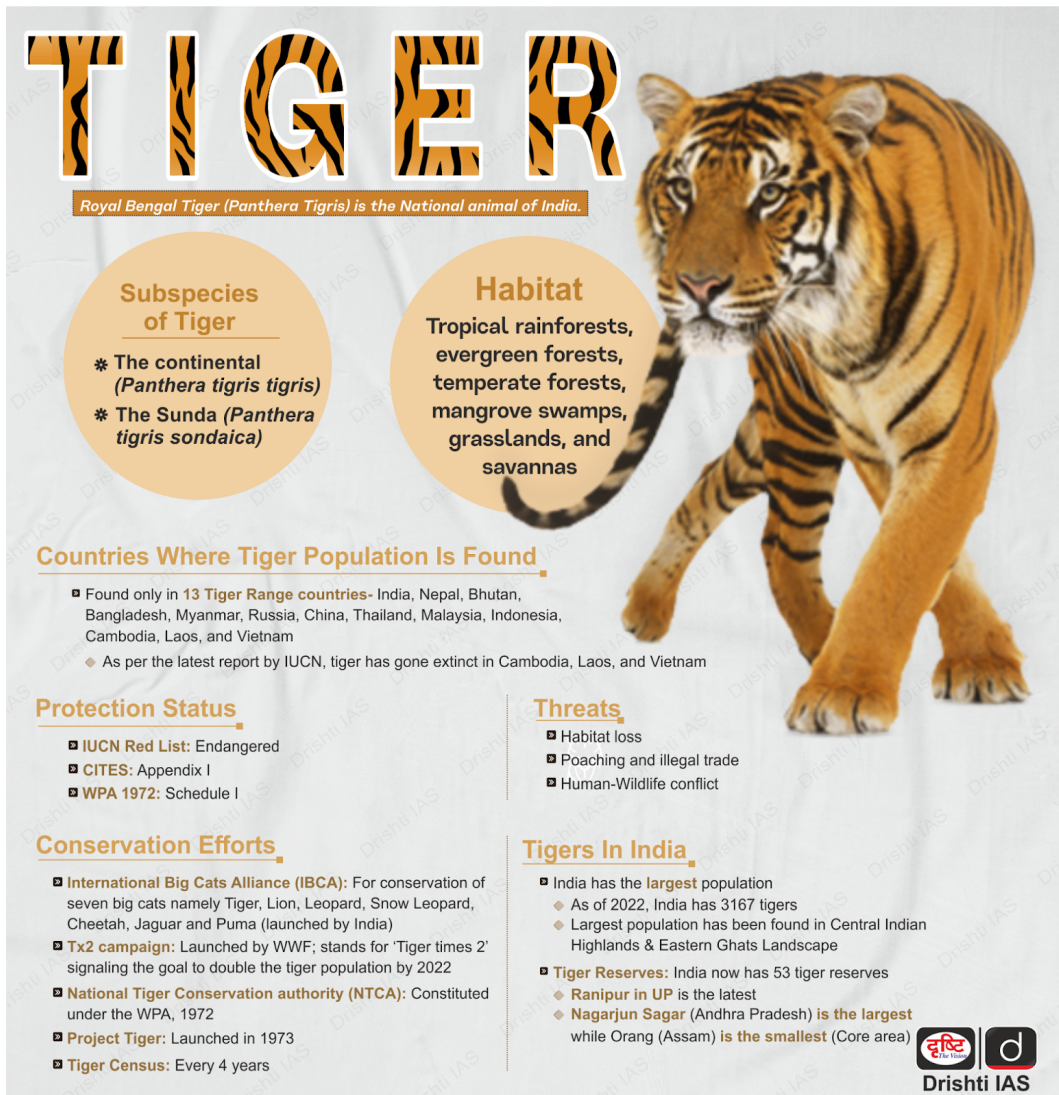
What are the Reasons for Tiger Deaths in Nilgiris?

- **High Density of Tigers:**
 - The **high density of tigers in the [Mudumalai-Bandipur-Nagarhole](#) complex** of the [Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve](#) is pushing populations into the surrounding habitats in the **Mukurthi National Park, Nilgiris and Gudalur forest divisions** leading to more **negative human-animal interactions**.
 - The rise in tiger numbers puts pressure on prey species like **spotted deer, and [Indian gaur](#)**.
 - Scarcity of natural prey could lead tigers to **target livestock, exacerbating conflicts and resulting in more deaths**.
- **Starvation and Infection:**
 - Tiger cubs, believed to be two weeks old, found dead in the Mudumalai Tiger Reserve's buffer zone.
 - Postmortem suggested possible causes as **starvation or umbilical infection**.

Why are Conservationists Concerned About Tiger Population Threats?

- **Poaching Threat:** Recent poaching incidents in the Nilgiris district, underscore the persistent threat to tigers.
 - Poachers target tigers for their valuable body parts, **such as skins, bones, and organs**, posing a grave risk to the population.
- **Lack of Tracking and Protection:** Concerns arise from the apparent challenges in **tracking and protecting tiger populations effectively**.
 - The inability to **monitor and safeguard** these majestic animals contributes to conservationists' worries.
- **Lack of Prey Management:** Inadequate **prey population management** in protected areas may lead to imbalances.
 - Ensuring sufficient prey for tigers is essential for their survival.

- **Habitat Degradation:** Degraded habitats offer limited resources, forcing tigers to roam in search of food.
 - Human activities, deforestation, and encroachments contribute to habitat loss.



TIGER

Royal Bengal Tiger (*Panthera tigris*) is the National animal of India.

Subspecies of Tiger

- * The continental (*Panthera tigris tigris*)
- * The Sunda (*Panthera tigris sondaica*)

Habitat

Tropical rainforests, evergreen forests, temperate forests, mangrove swamps, grasslands, and savannas

Countries Where Tiger Population Is Found

- Found only in 13 Tiger Range countries- India, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Russia, China, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam
- ◊ As per the latest report by IUCN, tiger has gone extinct in Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam

Protection Status

- IUCN Red List: Endangered
- CITES: Appendix I
- WPA 1972: Schedule I

Conservation Efforts


- International Big Cats Alliance (IBCA): For conservation of seven big cats namely Tiger, Lion, Leopard, Snow Leopard, Cheetah, Jaguar and Puma (launched by India)
- Tx2 campaign: Launched by WWF; stands for 'Tiger times 2' signaling the goal to double the tiger population by 2022
- National Tiger Conservation authority (NTCA): Constituted under the WPA, 1972
- Project Tiger: Launched in 1973
- Tiger Census: Every 4 years

Threats

- Habitat loss
- Poaching and illegal trade
- Human-Wildlife conflict

Tigers In India

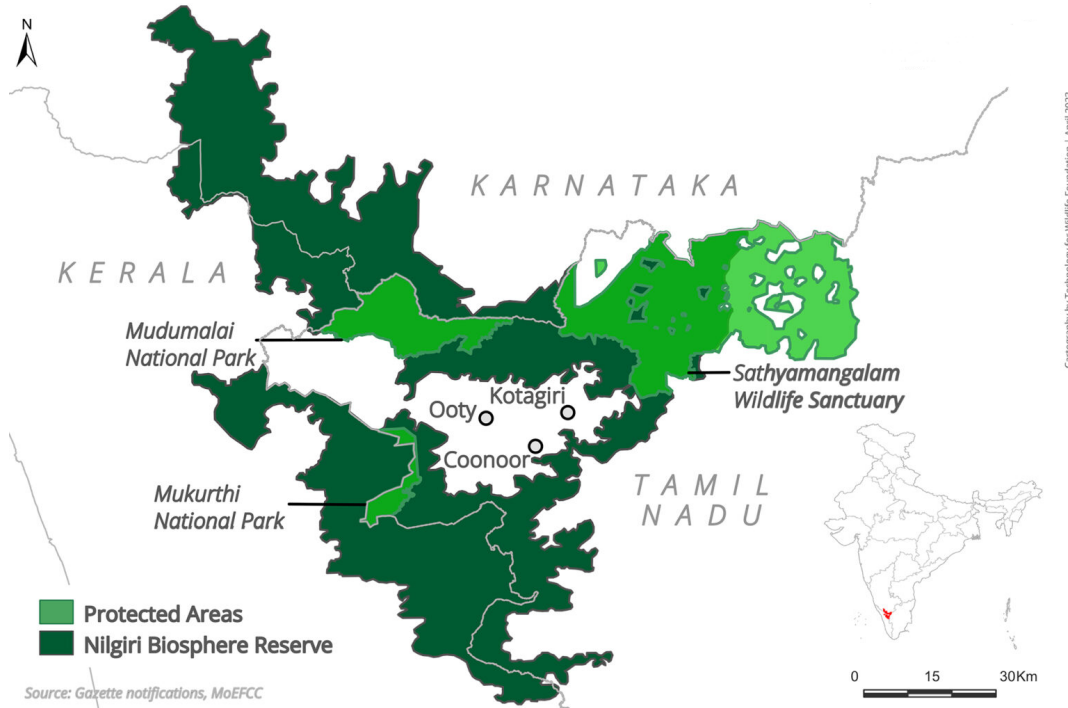
- India has the largest population
 - ◊ As of 2022, India has 3167 tigers
 - ◊ Largest population has been found in Central Indian Highlands & Eastern Ghats Landscape
- Tiger Reserves: India now has 53 tiger reserves
 - ◊ Ranipur in UP is the latest
 - ◊ Nagarjun Sagar (Andhra Pradesh) is the largest while Orang (Assam) is the smallest (Core area)



Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve

- **About:**
 - The very name **Nilgiris'** with literary meaning **'blue mountains'** has originated from the appearance of **blue flower clad mountains (Neelakurinji flowers)** of the Nilgiris plateau within the State of Tamil Nadu.
 - The reserve spans across three Indian states: **Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Kerala.**
 - It was the **first biosphere reserve in India established in 1986.**
 - It is the **India's first biosphere reserve under UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Programme.**
 - Home to several tribal groups such as the **Adiyan, Aranadan, Kader, Kurichian, Kuruman, and Kurumbas.**
 - It portray the confluence of **Afro-tropical and Indo-Malayan biotic zones** of the world.
- **Fauna:**
 - Animals like **Nilgiri tahr, Nilgiri langur, slender loris, blackbuck, tiger, gaur, Indian elephant and marten** are found here.
 - Freshwater fishes such as **Nilgiri danio (Devario neilgherriensis), Nilgiri barb (Hypselobarbus dubuis)** and **Bowany barb (Puntius bovanicus)** are endemic to this Biosphere Reserve.
- **Protected Areas in NBR:**

- The **Mudumalai Wildlife Sanctuary, Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary, Bandipur National Park, Nagarhole National Park, Mukurthi National Park** and [Silent Valley](#) are the protected areas present within this reserve.



UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims

Q. Among the following Tiger Reserves, which one has the largest area under “Critical Tiger Habitat”? (2020)

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

Ans: (c)

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