



Black Tigers

Why in News

Recently, scientists have unraveled the mystery behind Odisha's 'Black Tigers' in [Similipal Tiger Reserve](#) (STR)

- The STR is the **only tiger habitat in the world with melanistic tigers**, which have broad black stripes running across their bodies and thicker than those seen on normal tigers.

Key Points

- **About:**



- Black Tigers are a **rare colour variant of the 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 (Taqppep) gene**.
- The abnormally **dark or black coat** in such tigers is **termed pseudo melanistic** or false coloured.
- If you pick any tiger from Similipal, the **chance that it carries the mutant gene is almost 60%**.

- **Factors for Occuring Black Colour:**

- Due to **Geographic Isolation**, genetically related individuals have been mating with each other for many generations in Similipal, leading to inbreeding.
- It should be noted that this has important implications for tiger conservation as such **isolated and inbred populations are prone to extinction** over even short periods of time.

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-Hadgarh 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**.

▪ **Tribes:**

- Two tribes, the **Erenga Kharias** and the **Mankirdias**, inhabit the reserve's forests and practise traditional agricultural activities (the collection of seeds and timber).

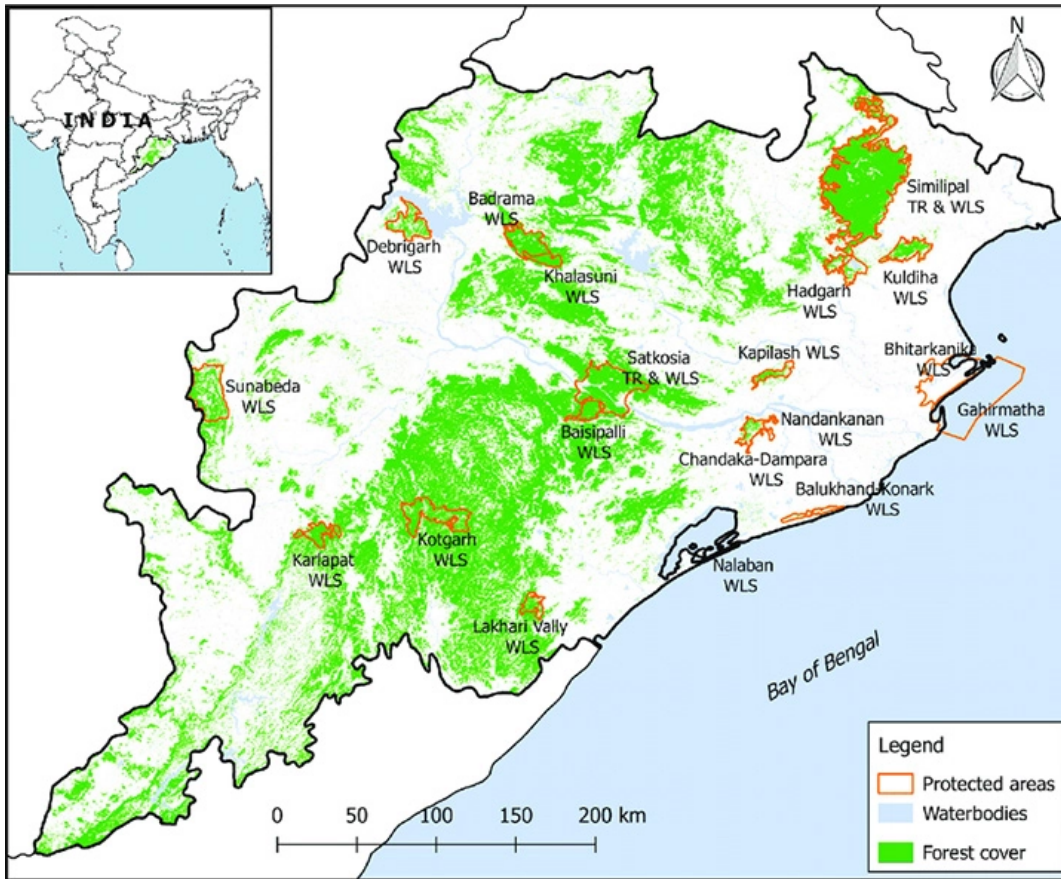
▪ **Vulnerability to Forest Fires:**

- **Natural:** Natural causes such as lightning or even soaring temperatures can sometimes result in [forest fires](#) here.
- **Man Made Factors:** Instances of poaching and hunting wherein the poachers set a small patch of forest on fire to divert the wild animals, can lead to forest fires.

▪ **Other Major Protected Areas in Odisha:**

- [Bhitarkanika National Park](#).
- **Badrama WLS.**
- [Chilika](#) (Nalaban island) **WLS.**
- **Hadgarh WLS**
- [Baisipalli WLS.](#)
- **Kotagarh WLS.**
- [Nandankanan WLS.](#)
- **Lakhari Valley WLS.**
- [Gahirmatha \(Marine\) WLS.](#)





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