



WWF

TIGERS

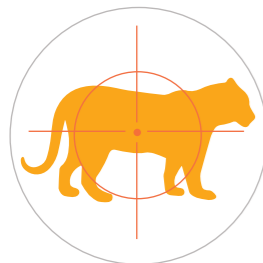
2016



Bringing Back Cambodia's Roar:  
**REINTRODUCING TIGERS  
TO THE EASTERN PLAINS**

3 / 13

TIGERS ARE FUNCTIONALLY EXTINCT IN 3 OF THE 13 TIGER RANGE COUNTRIES



IN THE MID 1990s, IT WAS ESTIMATED 100-200 TIGERS WERE POACHED IN CAMBODIA ANNUALLY AND EXPORTED TO THAILAND AND VIETNAM

There are less than 220 tigers left in the Greater Mekong and as few as 3,200 wild tigers globally. Innovative and transformational initiatives are needed to secure Asia's most iconic species. Within the span of a century, the global tiger range is estimated to have declined by 93%, making the seven percent of remaining wild tiger landscapes an urgent priority for protection.

Cambodia plays a critical role as one of the 13 tiger range countries essential for global tiger conservation. Historically Cambodia's dry forests in the Eastern Plains and tropical rainforests in the Cardamom Mountains supported diverse and abundant wildlife. Throughout the 1960's, Cambodia was even compared to the game lands of East Africa, becoming internationally known for its wildlife, including large numbers of tigers.

By the 1990's Cambodia's stories of well-kept wilderness and scenes of roaming wildlife had taken a tragic turn. Following decades of civil unrest and insecurity, the tiger population in Cambodia declined so drastically that resident breeding wild tigers are no longer recorded and the species is functionally extinct.

Tiger reintroduction and translocations have successfully been used to recover tiger populations in India and WWF supports tiger reintroduction into Cambodia's Eastern Plains Landscape as a technically and ecologically feasible solution to recovering the regions tiger population and securing the political momentum for effective conservation in the landscape.

As part of the global TX2 campaign, which aims to double global tiger numbers by 2022, WWF is focusing on the need to restore, recover and reconnect tiger conservation areas. This requires global and national commitments to stop habitat loss due to deforestation and illegal timber trade, and to ensure "zero" poaching of tigers and their prey species.

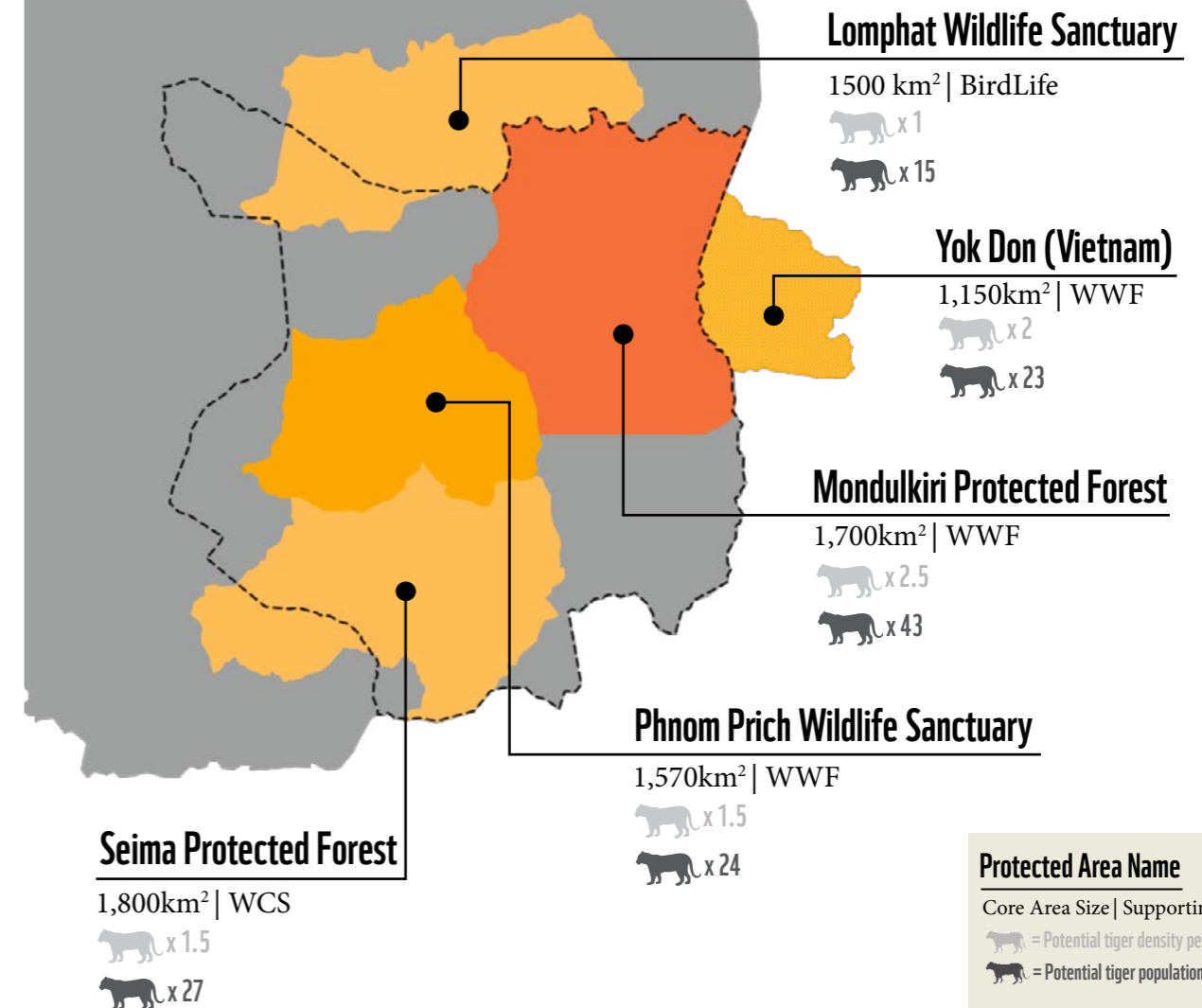
WWF GREATER MEKONG IMPLEMENTS A LANDSCAPE APPROACH ACROSS THE TRANSBOUNDARY EASTERN PLAINS LANDSCAPE; WORKING WITH GOVERNMENT AND CIVIL SOCIETY PARTNERS TO SECURE BIODIVERSITY AND HUMAN LIVELIHOODS.



# PROTECTED AREAS IN THE EASTERN PLAINS LANDSCAPE

The Eastern Plains Landscape spans more than 30,000km<sup>2</sup> and includes four key protected areas in Cambodia and one in Vietnam.

This map shows the potential tiger densities and populations in the core zone of each area, based on a WWF and IUCN tiger reintroduction feasibility study.



## SUCCESSFUL TIGER REINTRODUCTION IN INDIA

Successful tiger reintroduction is possible as demonstrated in Panna Tiger Reserve, central India. The last tigers from Panna were poached in 2006, leaving no tigers in this flagship reserve. However translocation of four females, two of which were re-wilded orphans, and three males between 2008 and 2014 has led to spectacular recovery - there are now 32 tigers in Panna.

© Ramesh / Wildlife Institute of India

A reintroduced tigress with two cubs in Panna Tiger Reserve, India.

## Hun Vanne

Ranger in Mondulkiri

"Wildlife keeps the forest ecosystem balanced. I do feel regret if we cannot protect the forest and the wildlife for the next generation. I hope that we can protect the forest and wildlife so that it can benefit eco-tourism and support villagers' livelihoods."



## The Last Tiger

This camera trap image is of the last known wild tiger in Cambodia - photographed in the east of Mondulkiri Protected Forest in November 2007. It is one of three images taken of two wild tigers in Mondulkiri Protected Forest between 2005 - 2007.



© FA / WWF - Cambodia

To reach potential tiger densities, law enforcement in Mondulkiri Protected Forest needs to be improved. Currently there are 0.5 rangers per 100km<sup>2</sup>. Published guidelines recommend >3.0 per 100km<sup>2</sup>.

## SAME, SAME: NOT DIFFERENT

A 2015 study published in the journal *Current Science* demonstrated that all mainland tigers are genetically and morphologically similar and thus belong to the **same subspecies**. This makes wild-to-wild translocation of tigers from India to Cambodia the best option for sourcing tigers for the reintroduction.



© R. Isdell, A. Cambone / Homo Aethiops / WWF

## Safeguarding Cambodia's Eastern Plains for Tiger Recovery

THE TIGER REINTRODUCTION CANNOT HAPPEN WITHOUT THE SUPPORT OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES

83%

TIGERS ARE A CULTURALLY IMPORTANT ICON FOR INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES IN MONDULKIRI AND 83% OF VILLAGERS SURROUNDING THE PROTECTED AREAS SUPPORT REINTRODUCTION

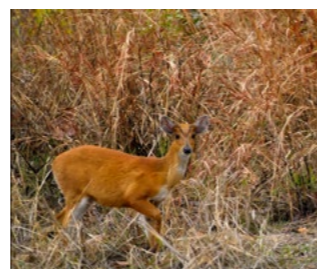
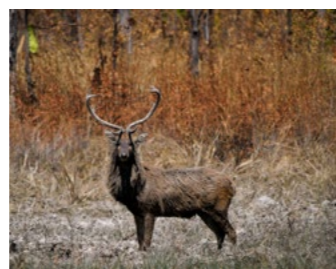
**Cambodia's Eastern Plains Landscape is one of the best potential areas for tiger recovery in Asia due to the extensive forests and availability of prey populations.**

The Royal Government of Cambodia recognises this and has prioritised the Eastern Plains for reintroduction of tigers under the Cambodian Tiger Action Plan 2011-2022, developed by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries.

The Eastern Plains Landscape covers more than 30,000 km<sup>2</sup> and contains key protected areas including **Phnom Prich Wildlife Sanctuary** and **Mondulkiri Protected Forest**. As part of the most expansive and intact tropical dry forest in South-East Asia, it boasts one of the largest areas of high-quality tiger habitat and has amongst the best potential carrying capacities for tigers and their prey in the region. The rich landscape also serves as essential habitat for populations of many globally endangered species such as the Asian elephant, banteng, wild water buffalo, gaur, sun bear, Siamese crocodile, and Eld's deer, as well as several large waterbirds and vultures.

**To safeguard this precious landscape and its threatened wildlife species, WWF supports the Cambodian government in implementing a landscape conservation approach - ensuring that the exceptional wilderness areas and forests remain intact.** Over the last decade, we have strengthened enforcement efforts helping the recovery of tiger prey species and ensuring safety for reintroduced tigers.

WWF continues to conduct research and monitoring of wildlife throughout the protected areas, especially on tiger prey species. Assisting the government with enforcing wildlife and forest protection laws, WWF supports regular patrols and enforcement activities, while providing necessary equipment and training for the rangers to conduct effective law enforcement. By developing livelihood improvement initiatives and awareness campaigns, WWF engages local communities with tiger conservation.



Key tiger prey species (l - r); Banteng, Sambar and Red Muntjac.

© Fleischer & Baylis / WWF-Cambodia

THE FOUNDING TIGER POPULATION COULD REACH

>25

INDIVIDUALS WITHIN 10 YEARS

“TODAY INDIA HAS GREAT CAPABILITIES AND WE CAN HELP THOSE COUNTRIES WHICH EARLIER HAD TIGER POPULATION BUT NOW DO NOT HAVE TIGERS. WE CAN GIVE TIGERS TO THE WORLD COMMUNITY WHO WANT TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF TIGER IN THEIR RESERVES. WE ARE READY FOR WORLD COOPERATION”

Prakash Javadekhar  
Indian Union Minister of Environment, Forests and Climate Change  
January 2015

## Reintroducing the Tiger to Cambodia

In 2013 WWF and the IUCN Species Survival Commission undertook a preliminary feasibility study into reintroducing tigers into Cambodia's Eastern Plains Landscape. The study concluded that reintroduction was technically, ecologically, and socially feasible provided ungulate tiger prey populations continued recovering due to strong law enforcement.

The study recommended wild-to-wild translocation of tigers from the Indian subcontinent (India or Nepal). Such tigers occur in ecologically similar habitat to the dry forests of eastern Cambodia. Tigers for translocation should be young individuals who have yet to establish territories: such tigers are frequently captured in India to mitigate against conflict and for translocation within Indian tiger reserves.

A founder tiger population of eight individuals – six females and two males – was recommended. Population Viability Analysis modelling demonstrated such a founder population could grow at ~15% per year and could reach >25 individuals within 10 years. It is likely a semi-soft release process would be used for the translocated tigers.



## Roaring forward

WWF-Cambodia is a proud champion of the Tx2 campaign, safeguarding tiger habitats, tiger prey, and preserving biodiversity in the Eastern Plains of Cambodia. Support from the Cambodian Government and transboundary cooperation with Vietnam are positive signs demonstrating a shared commitment to ensuring the future of Cambodia's tigers.

With successful active protection measures, a founding population of eight individual tigers could help Cambodia's tiger population recover. As a result in the future Cambodia could see tiger densities that are as high as in some parts of India today - a major success for conservation and a fantastic opportunity for sustainable ecotourism development.

This goal is still a long way from being achieved, however. To continue breaking ground in tiger conservation, the full commitment of the Royal Government of Cambodia and its development partners remains crucial. With united support, Cambodia is well-poised on its path to tiger recovery.





# WWF - Cambodia & Tigers

1998

WWF began its first conservation programme in Cambodia and established an office to support two protected National Parks.

1,600 - 3,000

The Eastern Plains Landscape is home to the world's largest Banteng population; a globally endangered species and important prey source for tigers.



4

The number of TAI staff based in the WWF-Cambodia office supporting reintroduction efforts.

2022

Cambodia is one of the 13 tiger range countries committed to Tx2 - the global goal to double wild tiger numbers by the year 2022.

120

By 2050, Cambodia could host up to 120 wild tigers - originating from translocated tigers from India.



**Why we are here**

To stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.

[www.panda.org](http://www.panda.org)

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