



Sumatran Tiger

(Panthera tigris sumatrae)



www.savesumatra.org

The Sumatran tiger is one of six subspecies of tiger that survives today; they are classified as critically endangered, with about 400 individuals in the wild. As top predators, they keep populations of wild prey in check, thereby maintaining the balance between prey and the vegetation upon which they feed.

Tigers face a two-fold threat: they are rapidly losing their habitat to massive deforestation and their body parts are highly valued on the black market for traditional Asian medicines, jewelry, charms and decoration. Sumatran tigers are found only on the island of Sumatra in Indonesia.

Physical description

The Sumatran tiger is the smallest of all the tiger subspecies alive today. Adult males can measure up to a height of 60 centimeters and have a head-to-toe length of 250 centimeters and can weigh up to 140 kilograms. Females average a length of 198 centimeters and can weigh up to 91 kilograms. The Sumatran has the darkest coat of all the tigers, ranging from reddish-yellow through to deep orange.



Threats

The Sumatran tiger is on the verge of extinction due to poaching, loss of prey species and rampant habitat loss. A 2008 report by TRAFFIC, the wildlife trade monitoring programme of WWF and IUCN-the World Conservation Union, found a thriving illegal but open domestic market in Sumatra for tiger body parts; an earlier undercover study by TRAFFIC revealed that at least 50 Sumatran tigers were poached annually between 1998 and 2002. Strict enforcement must take place in Sumatra to stop the poaching of tigers and the trade.

Now, the remaining 400 tigers are confined in the remaining blocks of lowland, peatland, and montane rainforests, many of which are threatened by conversion to agriculture and commercial plantation, as well as encroachment by logging and road construction. As their forests disappear, tigers are forced into closer contact with people and are frequently killed or placed in captivity after straying into communities.

Riau Province is home to at least a third of the Sumatran tiger population, but even in this stronghold, the tiger population has dropped 70 percent in the past quarter-century. There are an estimated 192 left in Riau.

What WWF is Doing

WWF is working with the Indonesian government, industries threatening tiger habitat, other conservation organizations and local people to save the Sumatran tiger from extinction. The Indonesian government in 2004 declared an important area, Tesso Nilo, as a national park to ensure a secure future for the Sumatran tiger.

WWF is undertaking groundbreaking research on tigers in central Sumatra, using camera traps to estimate population size, habitat and distribution to identify wildlife corridors that require protection. WWF also fields an antipoaching patrol team and a unit that works to reduce human-tiger conflict in local communities.

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