



# ROARING SUCCESS EVALUATING INDIA'S CONSERVATION EFFORTS

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India proudly holds the title of having the largest tiger population in the world, a testament to its everlasting dedication to wildlife conservation. In 1973, the government of India launched "Project Tiger", marking the beginning of an innovative approach to preserving tigers. By this initiative, India leads the global charge in protecting these magnificent species with over 70% of the world's tiger population. The National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), established under the Wildlife (Protection) Act of 1972, plays a pivotal role in strengthening tiger conservation efforts in India. Operating under the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC), NTCA provides oversight and guidance through advisories and normative guidelines, informed by assessments of tiger population and ongoing conservation initiatives. Initially comprising 9 reserves, this project has grown to include 55 reserves in 18 states that are part of the tiger range. Over ~79,000 square kilometres of pristine forests make up these reserves. The project operates on a core/buffer strategy, with core zones designated as national parks or sanctuaries,

and buffer areas comprising a mix of forest and non-forest land managed for multiple purposes. Project Tiger places emphasis on the protection of tigers only in the core zones, while in the buffer zones, it employs a people-centred strategy to promote inclusion. Ecotourism is welcomed in 36 of these beautiful reserves. Destinations like Ranthambore and Jim Corbett national park provide more than just a peek into tiger's realm.

India's commitment to monitoring tigers, co-predators, prey and their habitats is unparalleled representing the largest biodiversity survey worldwide. Innovations such as M-STrIPES mobile phone application, which digitally records field data with GPS geotagging, significantly enhanced accuracy and reduced human error. Additionally, advancements like the CaTRAT software, employing artificial intelligence for automated segregation of camera trap photographs, and the ExtractCompare program for fingerprinting tigers from their stripe patterns, revolutionized data analysis, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of tiger populations and their ecosystems.

The NTCA has embarked on significant initiatives to strengthen tiger conservation in India, including "active managerial interventions" aimed at reintroducing tigers in areas where they have locally disappeared. Successful collaborations between the MoEFCC, State Governments, and the Wildlife Institute of India have led to the reintroduction of tigers in Sariska (Rajasthan) and Panna (Madhya Pradesh) Tiger Reserves since June 2008. The NTCA's rigorous monitoring efforts, including radio collaring, have provided valuable insights into the behaviour and spatial use of reintroduced tigers, highlighting the success of such endeavours in reinforcing tiger conservation efforts. This pioneering scientific undertaking, the first of its kind globally, underscores the efficacy of collaborative efforts and state-of-the-art technology in safeguarding endangered species.

Assessing tiger reserve management is vital for their survival. After tigers vanished from Sariska Tiger Reserve, India mandated an independent audit by the C&AG and MoEFCC, with the report to be presented in the Parliament.

The Wildlife Institute of India, in collaboration with global experts and NTCA, developed the Management Effectiveness Evaluation (MEE) Framework for evaluating Tiger Reserves, covering design issues, management systems, and conservation efforts. India is among the few countries institutionalizing the MEE Process, starting evaluations in 2006, with four repeat cycles conducted every four years until 2018. This process stands as a significant approach for tiger and landscape connectivity conservation and management.

The journey doesn't end with tiger conservation. It extends to the protection of all species that call these reserves home. By adopting a holistic approach to conservation and implementing targeted strategies tailored to the specific needs of each endangered species, we can replicate the success achieved with India's tiger population and secure a brighter future for biodiversity worldwide.

Name	Established	Area (in km <sup>2</sup> )	State
Mudumalai wildlife sanctuary	1940	321.55	Tamil Nadu
Hazaribagh wildlife sanctuary	1954	183.89	Jharkhand
Mount Abu wildlife sanctuary	1960	288.84	Rajasthan
Ghana bird sanctuary	1982	28.73	Rajasthan
Anamalai wildlife sanctuary (Indira Gandhi wildlife sanctuary and National Park)	1989	117.10	Tamil Nadu
Jaldapara wildlife sanctuary	2012	216	West Bengal

SOURCE:-

[HTTPS://WWW.RESEARCHGATE.NET/FIGURE/LIST-OF-SOME-MAJOR-WILDLIFE-SANCTUARIES-IN-INDIA\\_TBL2\\_350445788](https://www.researchgate.net/figure/LIST-OF-SOME-MAJOR-WILDLIFE-SANCTUARIES-IN-INDIA_TBL2_350445788)