

## THREATS TO SURVIVAL AND CONSERVATION STRATEGIES FOR TIGER

### (a) Tiger trade:

Poaching is the most serious threat to tigers. Every part of the tiger is traded in illegal wildlife markets. Parts of just one tiger can fetch up to \$50,000 on the black markets. Body parts are often used in traditional Asian medicine and their pelts are viewed as status symbols. It's a vicious cycle: as more tigers are poached, more parts end up on the black market, which creates and increases demand, which in turn increases poaching. According to the wildlife trade network, TRAFFIC, about 1,000 tigers have been killed in the past 10 years for illegal trade to meet consumer demand in Asia.

i) The legalities of tiger trade are intermittent at best and although world governments have voiced concern, tiger trade from captive breeding facilities still remains legal in China.

From 1990 to 1993, Chinese consumer demand for tiger bone led to a rapid increase in poaching in India and Nepal.

ii) As a result, China banned the domestic trade of tiger bone in 1994 with the support of world governments who agreed to ban the domestic trade the following year.

iii) However, in 2004 a note from the Chinese State Forestry Commission allowed a tiger farm to sell 'bone strengthening wine', contradicting China's ban.

iv) In 2007, 5,000 tigers in captive breeding farms were recorded in China, more than the total world population of wild tigers.

v) Later that year, world governments agreed to phase out tiger farms as a result of the negative impact they have on wild tiger populations.

vi) Nonetheless, China's State Forestry Administration allowed the trade of tiger skins and tiger bones from captive breeding facilities to continue.

vii) From 2012-2019, the DSWF-supported organisation Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA) revealed the commercial trade of tiger skins in China, which were being sold without authorisation from the State Forestry Administration. Chinese law continues to allow commercial trade in tiger parts today, which is exacerbating their trajectory towards extinction.

### Other major threats to tigers

#### Habitat Loss:

Since 1950, the world's population has tripled, and agricultural and settlement expansion is rising at an unsustainable rate.

This rapid expansion has drastically reduced tiger habitats and, according to the IUCN's Red List, habitat loss is now the main threat to 85% of all species.

Around half the world's original forests have now disappeared and without a sufficient plan in place to minimise the loss of tiger habitats, it is more than likely that we will see the loss of this iconic species within our lifetime.

#### Climate change

In the last few decades we have already begun to witness an increase in extreme weather events such as droughts, flooding, heatwaves and storms as human-induced carbon emissions continue to grow at alarming rates and natural carbon sinks are destroyed. Climate change is a very real environmental problem with the scale and scope to affect various ecosystems causing famine, reductions in prey species, access to water, changes in migratory patterns and increases in human wildlife conflict.

Climate change poses one of the largest threats to tiger populations in the 21st Century and, if left unchecked, could have serious implications to the survival of this iconic species.

#### Human-wildlife conflict:

The growth of human populations and land use has inevitably forced humans and tigers into closer proximity, competing for shrinking habitats.

Tigers have fewer prey available and are forced to kill livestock in order to survive, resulting in retaliatory killings from farmers and communities.