

Revival of the tiger: A joint effort, a cultural renaissance

24 January, 2024 / GS-III /

Context: Its near extinction in 1973 was a pivotal moment in India's conservation history. Now, Corbett has the highest density of wild tigers in the world

Corbett Tiger Reserve:

Corbett Tiger Reserve (CTR) manages tiger reserves based on a comprehensive Tiger Conservation Plan, covering core and buffer zones across three districts in Uttarakhand. Over the past four years, the reserve has witnessed a substantial increase in tiger population, reaching 260 tigers in 2022, making it the world's highest-density tiger habitat.

Biodiversity and Eco-Tourism:

- CTR boasts a richly-forested, highly-biodiverse landscape attracting various enthusiasts, researchers, and tourists.*
- The reserve offers an eco-spiritual experience, and witnessing the majestic tigers contributes to the wilderness allure.*

Forest Staff and Conservation Efforts:

- The dedicated forest staff plays a crucial role in protecting, improving, and maintaining the reserve's ecosystem.*
- Recent measures include timely payments, regular rations, provision of weapons for defense, and emergency medical support for the forest staff.*
- Engaging with senior forest officials facilitates experience-sharing and addresses on-field challenges for effective conservation.*

Grassland and Water Management:

- CTR adopts a multi-pronged approach to grassland and water management, essential for the breeding and sustenance of various wildlife species, including the apex predator, the tiger.*
- Palatable grasses are developed, invasive weed species are eradicated, and water requirements are met through strategic landscape management practices.*

Wildlife Corridors and Habitat Connectivity:

- Strategic wildlife corridors are vital for gene pool exchange among tigers and elephants, addressing the challenge of habitat fragmentation.*

- *Ensuring unhindered movement through underpasses, overbridges, elevated roads, and proper urban planning is essential.*

Community Engagement and Initiatives:

- *Collaborative efforts involve initiatives like beehive fencing to guard crops, generating economic opportunities for local stakeholders.*
- *"Living with Tigers" initiatives in villages and schools aim to raise awareness and cultivate safe behavioral practices in the context of human-wildlife conflicts.*

Human-Wildlife Conflict:

- *Rising human-elephant and tiger-human conflicts pose challenges, with the forest department implementing robust measures for wildlife protection.*
- *Poaching activities have been eradicated, and digital patrolling, under the E-eye project, enhances surveillance.*

Cultural and Conservation Significance:

- *Cultural Significance: Tigers are considered the country's brother in many tribes, and India has thousands of years of history related to tigers. The tiger is also a significant part of religious and mythological iconography, and its conservation is seen as a way to protect the country's cultural heritage*
- *Ecosystem Balance: Tigers are apex predators, and their presence in ecosystems is crucial for maintaining the balance between predators and prey, as well as the overall health of the ecosystem. The revival of the tiger population in India has contributed to numerous environmental benefits, including improved water quality and the protection of other species*
- *Community Involvement: The future of tiger reserves, their wildlife, and their people are inextricably interlinked, and the conservation efforts in India emphasize the need for continued community involvement and cultural renaissance. The "Living with Tigers" initiative is an example of such efforts, aiming to foster behavioral and response awareness among school children and local communities*

Reducing human wildlife conflict:

The measures to deal with human-tiger conflict in India include a range of strategies aimed at minimizing contact between wild tigers and humans, as well as mitigating the negative impacts of such interactions. Some of the key measures and solutions proposed to address human-tiger conflict in India are:

Relocation of Human Settlements: Relocating human settlements from areas with high tiger activity is a preventive measure aimed at altering the ecological setting to reduce conflict instances.

Compensation Schemes: Implementing successful compensation schemes for human-tiger conflicts, such as providing interim relief to victims, is an important measure to address the economic impact of wildlife-related incidents

Wildlife Corridors: Establishing and rehabilitating wildlife corridors to promote genetic diversity and enable tiger movement, thereby reducing the likelihood of tigers venturing into human-occupied areas

Reducing Tiger Injuries: Efforts to minimize tiger injuries, often caused by snares, traps, or gunshot, can help reduce instances of tigers attacking people and livestock

Awareness and Education: Improving communication and interaction between the forest department and local communities, as well as raising awareness about human-wildlife conflict, is crucial to sensitizing people about the issue and fostering coexistence

The future of CTR, its wildlife, and its people are interconnected, emphasizing the importance of sustained conservation efforts for the well-being of the entire ecosystem.