

Project Tiger

[UPSC Notes]

What is Project Tiger?

Project Tiger is a centrally sponsored scheme that offers support to the tiger states for the conservation of the species of tiger in recognized tiger reserves. On April 1, 1973, the Indian government introduced Project Tiger to encourage tiger conservation. The project is the largest species conservation programme of its kind. This was created using Core-Buffer Strategy:

- The buffer or periphery regions are a mixture of forest and non-forest land that is administered as a multiple-use area. It provides habitat supplement to wild animals and site-specific development to surrounding villages so that they don't impact the core areas.
- The core portions have the legal status of a national park or a wildlife century for the conservation of tigers.

History of Tiger Conservation

Around 1970, a team of scientists and conservationists put tension on the Indian government concerning the constant decline in the tiger population. As a result, the wildlife protection act was created in 1972, ending all hunting in India legally and establishing legal protection for targeted species.

- Later, in 1973 Project Tiger was started, with Dr. Kailash Sankhala serving as its first director.
- The first tiger reserve in India was the Jim Corbett Tiger Reserve in Uttarakhand.
- Eight additional tiger reserves were created totaling over 9115 square kilometres of forest area. This area has increased to 71,000 square kilometres to date, a significant improvement from its early days but still not nearly enough forest cover for a developing nation like India with a stunning and extensive natural heritage.
- In India, there are currently 53 tiger reserves.

Objectives of Project Tiger

The important objectives of Project Tiger are listed below:

- To make sure that anything limiting the habitats for tigers is avoided.
- In order to maintain the equilibrium of the ecosystem, any harm done to these habitats should be rectified.

- Continue to have a healthy Tiger population.

Tiger Task Force

A need for increased surveillance and an additional layer of protection was added in the year 2005. This was a result of widespread poaching and the development of powerful poaching networks by traffickers within India. The sudden disappearance of the tiger population in the famously endangered Sariska Tiger reserve in Rajasthan came to the attention of media and local conservationists. As a result, Indian Prime Minister Mr. Manmohan Singh established the Tiger Task Force to strengthen the conservation of the country's national animal. The Tiger Task Force established the following criteria as the benchmark for all national tiger reserves:

- Examining the numerous issues relating to the conservation of tigers and making recommendations for solutions.
- Improving techniques for stopping the hunting of tigers and unlawful behavior in wildlife reserves.
- Improve the mechanism for accounting and predicting the tiger population.
- Educating the indigenous locals who live in the reserves regarding tiger conservation and environmental protection.

Challenges in Conservation of Tigers

The following are our challenges faced in the conservation of tigers in our country:

- Ecosystem fragmentation
- Providing tiger-exclusive territory to support its social dynamics
- Safeguarding tigers against poaching and hunting
- Resolving the tiger-human interface
- Rehabilitating corridors, and winning the public's support
- Offering environmentally sustainable solutions to the locals.

Tiger Census in India

- The procedure for calculating the population of tigers in a selected area is called tiger census.
- It takes place at regular intervals of time to understand how the tiger populations have improved and their population trends.
- The readily used technique is referred to as the pugmarks census technique. Through this technique, the pugmark imprints of the tiger are taken into consideration and the tigers are identified on the basis of it.
- The latest techniques include camera trapping and DNA fingerprinting. In the process of camera trapping, the photographers capture the different tigers which are then identified on the basis of the patterns of stripes on their bodies.
- The advanced technique of DNA fingerprinting helps in the identification of tigers using their faecal matter.

- M-STriPES (Monitoring system for tigers-intensive protection and ecological status) stripes is an advanced application-based monitoring approach that was launched in the year 2010.

