

the wild today. Many were killed by settlers in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. In the desperate economic times of the post-Soviet years, poaching is a serious threat to tiger survival. A tiger can fetch as much as 200,000 roubles - 4 years salary for some people.

#### STATUS

Despite 20 years of conservation efforts, we are losing ground in the battle to save the tiger. Three tiger subspecies have become extinct in the last 60 years:

- Bali tiger - extinct in the 1930's
- Caspian tiger - extinct in the 1970's
- Javan tiger - extinct in the 1980's

The total of all the wild populations of the remaining subspecies is an estimated 4,600 to 7,700 tigers. The numbers are largely "guesstimates" because the animals are secretive and hard to count. It is known, however, that all remaining tigers live in small, isolated populations in widely scattered reserves.

The most critically endangered is the South China tiger, with fewer than 50 in the wild.

The Siberian tiger is also severely threatened (200-300 left). Little is known about the status of the Indo-Chinese tiger. It is estimated that 900 - 1200 are left in 75 isolated reserves.

The Sumatran tiger population is estimated at 400 - 500, most of which are found in national parks.

Up to two-thirds of remaining tigers in the world are of the Bengal species, found in India and surrounding countries.

#### CAPTIVE BREEDING



wild.

There are Species Survival Plans for both the Siberian tiger (Minnesota Zoological Garden) and the Sumatran tiger (Porter Park Zoological Garden). Some captive-bred tigers have been released into the

#### WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Learn all you can about the plight of the tiger. There are many excellent Web sites where you can find out about activities and fund raising to help the tiger. One good place to start is:

<http://www.5tigers.org>



#### Endangered Species Series

## TIGERS



*Lives on  
the  
Brink*

Furry Beast Foundation

#### INTRODUCTION



The tiger is one of the most magnificent animals in the world. A cat of beauty, strength and majesty, the tiger is master of all and subject to none - except

humans. Of the eight original subspecies of tigers, three have become extinct in the last 60 years, and there are less than 50 South China tigers left on the planet - fewer than 20 in the wild. Tigers compete with expanding populations and industry for land and food, and are killed by poachers who sell their skins and body parts as ingredients for traditional Chinese medicines. If these trends continue, despite many laws and conservation efforts, the wild tiger will soon be doomed to extinction.

#### THE TIGER PROFILE

Largest of all cats, tigers are formidable predators. The male Siberian tiger, the largest subspecies, can grow to 13 feet in length and weigh 700 pounds! With razor sharp, retractable claws, long canine teeth and powerful jaws and legs, they can bring down animals far heavier than themselves, including large chital deer (from India) and wild boar. They also hunt smaller animals. Tigers can eat 40 to 100 pounds of meat every day.

From the snow-covered mountains of Manchuria to the evergreen forests of Siberia, and the jungles of Indonesia, tigers have adapted to a wide range of terrain. Unlike lions, who favor an open habitat, tigers and leopards prefer to live in moderately dense cover. All tigers are striped. Although the stripes make tigers highly visible in the open, they are almost invisible in tall grass.

Like human faces, each tiger's striped face-markings are unique. They are solitary, territorial cats, who create their territories by marking their area with their scent. They avoid each other, or invite conflict. Adult tigers come together only to mate.



#### THREATS TO SURVIVAL

##### Habitat Loss

The mountains, jungles, forests and long grasses that have been home to tigers are disappearing. Timber cutting, human settlement, industrial expansion and hydroelectric dams push the tiger into smaller areas. Asia's explosive growth demands more and more land be converted to agriculture. Almost all of Indonesia's lowland forest has been cleared for rice cultivation.

A big threat to the survival of the tiger is the use of tiger parts in traditional Chinese medicine. Their eyes, teeth, whiskers and penises bring large sums of money on the Asian black market. Many also believe these parts have potent medicinal and spiritual properties for treatment of such ailments as rheumatism, toothaches, rat bites, typhoid fever and dysentery.

Tiger parts are used for medicine and potions in Taiwan, Hong Kong, Korea, Japan, and both U.S. and European Chinese communities. China, however, has one of the largest markets in the world. Although China banned the hunting of its own tigers in the 1960's, the ban was poorly enforced. In 1993, China set forth another ban on tiger parts. This too has proved to be ineffective due to the difficulty of enforcing the laws and altering traditional customs and beliefs.



Some farms in Asia are breeding tigers in captivity specifically for their body parts. This is a controversial approach to reducing pressures on wild tigers, and on its own will not abate the poaching of tigers in the wild.

Poaching is a serious threat to tigers in the former Soviet Union as well as China. Only about 100 - 300 Siberian tigers survive in