



## Man-Animal Conflict (MAC)

This article based on [“The big picture on tigers”](#) which appeared in The Hindu on 8 August 2019. It talks about increasing incidents of Man-Animal Conflict and way forward.

According to [4<sup>th</sup> Tiger Census](#), there are approximately 2,967 tigers in India. Tigers count in India has increased from 1,411 in 2006 to 1,706 in 2010 and to 2,226 in 2014, marking the success of [Project Tiger](#).

India has achieved the goal of doubling the number of tigers as highlighted by the **St Petersburg declaration 2010**. However, according to the [National Tiger Conservation Authority \(NTCA\)](#), India can have a maximum of 3,000 tigers with respect to the available area of tiger reserves.

### St Petersburg declaration

- **The governments of 13 tiger home range countries agreed to a Global Tiger Recovery Program**
- **The declaration seeks to double the global tiger population by 2022**
- **The tiger range countries that are part of the Global Tiger Recovery Program are Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Russia, Thailand, and Vietnam.**

Increased Tiger population has resulted in **Man-Animal Conflict (MAC)**, as the human population expands and natural habitats shrink, people and animals are increasingly coming into conflict over living space and food.

- MAC has become the main threats to the continued survival of many species in different parts of the world and is also a significant threat to local human populations.
- According to data from the Union environment ministry, **more than 1,608 humans were killed** in conflict cases involving tigers, leopards, bears and elephants between 2013 and 2017.

### What are the reasons for increased MAC?

- **Habitat Loss: Only 5% of India’s geographical area is in the protected area category.**  
This space is **not enough** to have a full-fledged habitat for wild animals.
  - A territorial animal like a male tiger needs an area of 60-100 sq km. But the area allocated to an entire tiger reserve, like the Bor Tiger Reserve in Maharashtra, is around 140 sq km.
  - The territorial animals do not have enough space within reserves and their prey does not have enough fodder to thrive on.
  - **This has forced the wild animals to move out and venture close to human habitation in search of food, resulting in MAC.**
- **Increasing Infrastructure Development: Recent relaxations in norms** to allow for a

widening of highway and railway networks near these protected areas are the new threats, adding to the old ones of retaliatory poisoning and poaching.

- Apart from highways, railway and irrigation projects are coming up in tiger reserves. For example- the Ken-Betwa **river interlinking project** will submerge 100 sq. km of Panna Tiger Reserve.
- Also, wildlife experts estimate that **29% of the tigers in India are outside the protected areas.**

## Way Forward

- According to the Wildlife experts, if wildlife protection is confined to reserves and parks alone, several species will stand at the brink of extinction.
  - For example **Great Indian Bustard, which is a Schedule-I animal. Despite having sanctuaries to itself, the bird has been driven to the brink of extinction.**
  - **Co-occurrence approach: Building community participation** in conservation is a

better idea than just having protected areas.

- Events of MAC can be reduced by **integrating early warning systems with simpler damage-prevention practices** (such as improving fencing of crops or better livestock husbandry).
- Hunting of prey animals, such as deer and pig, needs to stop as they form the base for growth of tiger and other carnivore populations.
- Efforts can be taken to better wildlife management practices and **understanding of animal behaviour**. So that people don't kill an animal out of panic.
- **Crop insurance** should be provided in the event of destruction by wild animals.
- Safeguarding Tiger corridors, building eco-bridges and such conservation measures can be part of **corporate social responsibility**.

The tiger is a unique animal which plays a pivotal role in the health and diversity of an ecosystem. The presence of tigers in the forest is an indicator of the well being of the ecosystem.

#### ***Drishti input***

Sustaining the country's tiger population will require a deft balancing of the imperative of conservation with the needs of local people and the demands of infrastructure development. Comment.

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