
***Tiger - Panthera Tigris* (1/1/98)**

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Description: The AZA Tiger SSP encompasses three subspecies of tiger: Siberian, Sumatran, and Indochinese. Two additional subspecies, the South China tiger and Bengal tiger, are not included in the SSP. Tiger subspecies are primarily distinguished by where they live, though there are physical differences among them. The Siberian is the largest and lightest-colored tiger, in comparison to the Sumatran, the smallest and darkest tiger. The tiger is the largest member of the cat family. It measures seven to ten feet long, nose to tail, stand three feet tall at the shoulder and weighs from 250 to over 500 pounds, depending on the subspecies.

Range: The Siberian tiger is found in the Amur region of the Russian Far East, North Korea and northeast China; the Sumatran tiger is found only on the island of Sumatra in Indonesia. The Bengal tiger is the most common and is found scattered in forests throughout India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan and Myanmar. The Indochinese tiger is found in Myanmar, Thailand, Malaysia, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam and southern most China. The South China tiger is found only in south central China.

Habitat: Tigers live in a great range of habitats, essentially requiring sufficient prey populations, adequate cover to stalk or ambush, and access to water. Tigers may live in northern latitudes in snowy mountain hardwood forests, monsoon or seasonally deciduous forests, or in tropical rainforests.

Diet: Tigers in general hunt and eat wild deer, cattle and pigs. There are reports of tigers attacking bears, wolves and even elephants and rhinos. They occasionally kill domestic livestock and, in rare instances, become man-eaters.

Social Organization: Tigers are generally solitary, territorial animals, with the range of one male overlapping that of several females. Females in estrus spray pheromone-rich urine on trees and others natural "signposts", alerting nearby males to their reproductive status. Through loud moaning calls, the prospective mates find each other. Females give birth on average to two to three cubs (only one or two survive to maturity), and over the next several years teach them the hunting skills they will need to

survive. At two to three years of age, the cubs establish their own territories. Daughters tend to settle near their mother, sons disperse greater distances.

Threats to Survival: Depending on where tigers live, threats are the loss of habitat and prey, poaching and poisoning. While protected by law, poaching of the tiger still occurs, and confirmed man-eaters must be captured or shot. Most tiger populations are small and isolated, and it is likely that many of these populations are losing genetic diversity. Three subspecies; the Caspian, Bali and Javan tigers-are extinct, while the South China tiger is near extinction.

Conservation Status: The tiger is listed as an endangered species by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the IUCN Red Book and is an Appendix I species under CITES. From an estimated 100,000 tigers a century ago, fewer than 5,000 remain in the wild. About 3,000-4,000 Bengal tigers, 400-500 Siberian tigers, 400-500 Sumatran tigers and 1,000-1,800 Indochinese tigers remain in the wild. Fewer than 20 wild South China tigers are thought to survive.

Zoo Programs (SSP): The Tiger Species Survival Plan is organized under a single masterplan that includes management, breeding and surplus recommendations for three of the subspecies (Siberian, Sumatran and Indochinese) and a program to phase out the generic or hybrid tigers through natural attrition. The Siberian tiger managed population includes about 100 tigers in North America, with another 50 or so designated as surplus to the breeding population. There are about 60 Sumatran tigers being managed in North America. The Indochinese tiger program is just beginning to and includes about 10 tigers. White tigers are not managed by the SSP for the following reasons: 1) the Indian Zoo Association is responsible for managing the Bengal tiger along with the European EEP; 2) most white tigers are of unknown lineage; and 3) because the SSP is based upon maximizing genetic diversity, selective breeding of an extremely rare allele for white coloration is not appropriate.

Two tigers have been produced using assisted reproduction techniques, one via artificial insemination and one through *in vitro* fertilization. Assisted reproductive techniques and genome resource banks that have already been established in North America, Indonesia, China and Europe are being refined for future transference of genetic material among captive regional programs and between captive and wild populations.

In 1992 an international tiger management committee and plan were formed under the umbrella of the IUCN/SSC Conservation Breeding Specialist Group. This plan, called the Tiger Global Conservation Strategy

(Tiger GCS) integrates on a global level all regional programs for captive tigers. Members of the Tiger SSP have assisted tiger range countries to:

1. Develop a Sumatran Tiger Masterplan for the Indonesian Zoological Parks Association and train zoo staff in tiger veterinary medicine, husbandry, reproduction, and data management in Indonesia.
2. Initiate an Indochinese Tiger Masterplan for the Zoological Parks Organization of Thailand.
3. Develop a South China Tiger Masterplan for the Chinese Association of Zoological Gardens and train zoo staff in tiger veterinary medicine, husbandry, reproduction, and data management in China.

Conservation: Members of the Tiger SSP are involved with the Sumatran Tiger Project, an *in situ* field study of wild Sumatran tigers that includes tiger ecology, human-tiger conservation education issues, and assessment of tiger populations and threats across Sumatra. This project began with AZA-sponsored Sumatran Tiger Population and Habitat Viability Analysis (PHVA) workshop and eventual publication of the *Indonesian Sumatran Tiger Conservation Strategy* by the Indonesian Ministry of Forestry.

Education: Education is a key component of tiger conservation programs. Members of the tiger SSP are involved with the daily operations of the Tiger Information Center web site (www.5tigers.org), development of the AZA tiger travelling exhibit sponsored by the Save the Tiger Fund, and conservation education programs of the Sumatran Tiger Project in Indonesia.

Contacts:

Tiger SSP Coordinator: Ronald Tilson

Minnesota Zoo

13000 Zoo Blvd.

Apple Valley, MN 55124

Tel: (612) 431-9267

Fax: (612) 431-9452

E-mail: r-tilson@mtn.org

Subspecies Coordinator: Gerald Brady

(Sumatran) Potter Park Zoological Gardens

1301 South Pennsylvania Ave.

Lansing, MI 48912

Tel: (517) 483-4221

Fax: (517) 483-6065

E-mail: tiger@voyager.net

Subspecies Coordinator: Edward Maruska

(Indochinese) Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Gardens

3400 Vine St.

Cincinnati, OH 45220

Tel: (513) 281-6909

Fax: (513) 559-7791

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