

Tiger, tiger not burning bright



**Noodling in
Nepal**

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FEAR, AWE, respect, love and even hate — no other animal evokes such diverse range of emotions as the tiger. But this majestic animal could soon be gone from the forests of Nepal — one of the 13 remaining countries where tigers still roam.

Found in abundance till the beginning of the 20th century, tigers became a rarity in Nepal in the next few decades. The elaborate hunting expeditions during the Rana regime led to their systematic elimination. Poaching, loss of habitat and decrease in natural prey were other reasons.

Only 120 adult tigers survive in Nepal's forests — and they too could disappear in the coming years if steps are not taken immediately.

Estimates based on seizure of tiger carcasses and parts suggest that nearly 60 tigers have been killed in Nepal since 1998. Each month around 70 traps meant for tigers are found. Experts say that poachers now kill tigers by poisoning carcasses of deer and goats.

But apart from making the

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usual noises, those in power have not done much to ensure that future generations manage to get a glimpse of tiger in their natural habitats in Nepal.

“Announcements on setting up a National Tiger Conservation Authority and a Wildlife Crime Control Bureau if implemented soon will go a long way in saving the tiger in Nepal,” says Anil Manandhar, country representative, WWF Nepal.

Coinciding with the beginning of the Chinese year of the tiger, WWF-Nepal launched a campaign last month to double the number of tigers in that country to 240 by 2022 — the next year of the tiger.

Besides being one of the tiger poaching hotspots, Nepal is also a major transit point for the illegal trade in tiger parts from South Asia. Tigers poached mainly in India and its neighbours are smuggled through Nepal to Tibet and other parts of China — the biggest markets for tiger parts by a well-oiled network.