

Now, a docu that helps you know the big cat better

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Ramki Sreenivasan

Chennai: What can you do to help the tiger? The answer to that seemingly complicated question is in wildlife filmmaker Shekar Dattatri's new film 'The Truth About Tigers' and the accompanying website.

"A lot of people are deeply concerned about wildlife but don't know what to do. This film puts all the basic information about tigers in the hands of people, makes them understand the problems, and also gives them specific action they can take to really make a difference," said Dattatri, who held a screening for the press on Friday. The film, which will be distributed for free to anyone who wants a copy through the website www.truthabouttigers.org, is also in the process of being translated into Tamil, Hindi, Marathi, Malayalam, Kannada and Bengali. "I want this film to reach as many people as possible. If there is demand and the funds, I'll translate it into other languages as well," he said. The 40-minute film, which took him two years to make, draws on some of the best natural history footage shot by organisations such as the BBC. "This is an educational film that also has the entertainment aspect of nature with all its drama," he said. The film clearly explains the ecology of the tiger — its life-cycle, habitat and other basic details, moves on to lay the blame for the reduction in tiger numbers, and then makes an appeal to the public to help and even tells them how.

"Forest protection is a state subject. There is no point writing to the poor Prime Minister asking him to save the tiger; he's set up as many task forces and allotted all the funds he can. You need to write to your chief minister and ask him some pointed questions about what he's doing for the environment," said Dattatri. And if you're not sure what exactly to ask, there's even a sample



SPOTLIGHT ON TIGERS: Wildlife filmmaker Shekar Dattatri's new film 'The Truth About Tigers' and the accompanying website will provide basic information on tigers

letter, complete with those pointed questions to ask the government on the website.

Dattatri said tigers are disappearing because of habitat fragmentation, poaching, depletion of prey and forest mismanagement. "The breakdown in protection is the biggest threat to the tiger. The forest department is still functioning as the 150-year-old service that was set up by the British with the sole objective of exploiting the forest's wealth. There has been no effort to modernise the department and create a wildlife protection force," he said.

But he's not pessimistic. "The tiger is an extremely hardy species. All you need to do is improve protection; nature will take care of the rest and the tiger will bounce back," he said.