



THE LAW AND THE JUNGLE

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Tracy McVeigh, writes in the *Observer* on May 2 about the Indian government's recent decision to phase out tourism in many of its wildlife sanctuaries. Her article 'As tiger tours in India are curbed, what's the best way to travel?' emphasises that the danger to the tiger's habitat needs to be weighed against the benefits that tourist money brings to the animals.

Indian conservation authorities have decided to keep tourists out of many of its reserves on the grounds that the endangered species was being "loved to death" by visitors. "Attacked as a draconian measure that could have the reverse effect by giving the tigers a lower public profile, it unleashed a storm of debate over the pros and cons of 'wildlife tourism'," she writes.

McVeigh goes on to say that Indian officials claim that damage to tiger habitats has reached critical levels whereas in reality the decline in their numbers is mainly due to the menace of poaching. "Visitors in open-sided cars or atop elephants in India's 37 tiger reserves are damaging grasslands and scaring off the big cats' prey," Mc Veigh quotes M K Ranjitsinh, chairman of the Wildlife Trust of India, as saying.

She is of the view that the economics of wildlife tourism is growing and the tourist dollar can be used to enhance these habitats, and that governments need to understand the need for regulations and keeping animal attractions alive. ■

Compiled by Prakriti Singhania