

ADVICE FOR INDIA

Improved habitat can double tiger count

Chetan Chauhan *55-6*
■ chetan@hindustantimes.com *WCS*

NEW DELHI: Eighteen sites in India can support up to 1,500 tigers more than the country's present big cat's population, provided resources are utilised for rejuvenating these sites, a global study on tigers has found.

There are less than 3,500 tigers in wild around the world of which 1,411 are in India with its habitat falling by over 50 per cent in last 30 years. Globally, tigers now occupy less than seven per cent of their historical geographical landscape.

"India provides powerful, contrasting examples of what works and what does not for saving tigers," said the report, *Bringing the Tiger Back from Extinction*. It described India's bid to save tigers as "confused".

"Instead of announcing new tiger reserves (which increased from 27 to 39 in two years) the government should focus on providing on

WHERE THE BIG CATS LIVE

Study identifies habitats in India, which can be safe homes for tigers, with infrastructure



best habitats where tigers can survive," said an expert.

The study by 23 global wildlife experts under the aegis of Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) pro-

	Current	Projected
Annamalai	78	98
Bandhavgarh	54	54
Badra	17	59
BR Temple	35	70
Corbett	115	83
Dudhwa-Katernia Ghat	45	120
Kaikad Mundanthurai	14	36
Kanha plus Supkhar	84	126
Kaziranga	82	88
Melghat	53	79
Nagargole-Bandipur	203	226
Pench	41	80
Periyar	21	56
Rajaji	21	98
Ranthambore	45	39
Simlipal	19	101
Sunderbans	22	181
Tadoba Andhari	21	75

vides solutions and will be released by Russian president Vladimir Putin in November as part of Global Tiger Initiative, to which India is a signatory.

For India, the recommendation is clear: concentrate on 16 source sites, which have 1,000 tigers over one year of age and can support up to 1,500 tigers, rather than "over wider landscapes".

The study has identified 42 "source sites", each with over 25 breeding tigresses, of which 18 are in India.

The best sites in India (*see graphic*) are Kaziranga tiger reserve in Assam with density of 16.8, where the density can increase to 18 and three sites in Central India and two in Western Ghats, where the density can increase by 60-70 percent.

"These sites have potential for providing safe homes to tigers but we need specific policy framework for this," said Ravi Chellam, Director of WCS India, whose research contributed to the study.

Protecting and conserving these habitats could mean that number of tigers increases to 3,000 tigers in only 10 per cent of suitable habitat.