

PROTECT THE MALAYAN TIGER AND RESTORE ITS HABITAT

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by Wildlife Society of Selangor

CHALLENGE

The tiger is the most endangered big cat in the world today with fewer than 4,000 animals living in the wild across a dozen countries.

Among the five-tiger subspecies, the Malayan tiger is most threatened and faces imminent extinction if urgent action is not taken. Listed as critically endangered in 2015, the Malayan tiger population has drastically declined from an estimated 3,000 in the 1950s to fewer than 200 today. Malaysia's large forest reserves and protected areas that cover about 35% of her land area are rapidly becoming empty forests due to poaching and habitat fragmentation and degradation.

Despite efforts by enforcement agencies and conservation NGOs, the Malayan tiger population continues to decline, even in protected areas. This project will address the biggest challenges that are hindering progress: 1) manpower, 2) global awareness, and 3) local community participation. First, although various legislations are in place to safeguard wildlife and forests in Malaysia, effective protection is lacking due to a chronic shortage of human resource in nature protection. Secondly, unlike its Bengal, Siberian and Sumatran cousins, the Malayan tiger is the least known tiger subspecies in the world; as a result, there is little financial support for its conservation. And finally, the disengagement of local communities, whose livelihood is directly tied to the health of the ecosystem they live in, is another challenge.

By protecting biodiversity-rich forests connected by functional corridors, we are providing an opportunity for tigers to survive in the wild. Otherwise, the future for this iconic big cat will be confined to backyard zoos and fenced "sanctuaries".

SOLUTION

For nature conservation to be sustainable, building local stewardship is essential. In developing countries, NGOs and governments often face a shortage of manpower skilled in nature conservation. One solution is to engage local communities, such as indigenous peoples who have superior knowledge of the land and who desperately need income that is not based on extraction of protected species or in protected areas. Such income opportunities for the mostly illiterate aborigines in rural Malaysia are scarce. While men engage in some seasonal farm or construction work, similar income opportunity is non-existent for women who are confined to the village to care for their children and elderly.

More tragically, large tracts of the ancestral forests that these aborigines relied on for their livelihoods have either been turned into plantations or degraded by poaching, logging, and mining.

Using the tiger as the flagship species, we have worked with the indigenous community for the past decade toward the mutual goal of recovering a healthy forest ecosystem.

This project will:

- *empower 20 indigenous men to patrol the forest and document wildlife recovery using standard operating procedures. The information collected by them will help support enforcement action by Malaysia's wildlife and forestry authorities*
- *empower 10 indigenous women to collect and nurture rainforest seedlings in a community-based tree nursery for habitat restoration*
- *engage 20 indigenous men to plant the saplings, and monitor, weed and water them to maturity.*

In total, this project will engage more than 90% of the households in the only indigenous village at the critical wildlife corridor. As indigenous people are highly communal in resource management, the entire community will benefit.

Having this project on the Global Giving platform will help raise awareness among the global conservation community on the dire state of the Malayan tiger and the funds needed for its conservation.

LONG-TERM IMPACT

The Malayan tiger does not have time on its side. Urgent actions are needed immediately to protect the remaining 200 individuals from deadly snares and to restore and preserve their diminishing habitats.

As a debut on the Global Giving platform, this project addresses the immediate threat to tigers, poaching and habitat loss where the efforts and outputs in terms of rainforest patrolled, snares removed, enforcement action taken, or seedlings established, are measurable in the short-term. In the mid-term of five to 10 years, the conservation outcomes, for example, wildlife recovered and forest restored, can be documented.

The project is nested in the greater initiative to restore people's relationship with wild nature, using the recovery of the tiger population as one of the indicators of success. Due to recent political unrest in Malaysia and COVID-19, none of the sources of financial support promised by the government in 2019 has materialized. We desperately need your support to get through this difficult time without compromising the wildlife recovery achieved in the past five years.