

Press Release: April 29, 2010

## Kaziranga: The best tiger habitat in the world

### \*Kaziranga National Park found to have highest tiger density on Earth

A joint study carried out by Aaranyak, a society for biodiversity conservation in Northeast India, and the Assam Forest Department, has shown that Kaziranga National Park has the highest density of wild tigers in the world.

The report, officially released by Mr Rockybul Hussain, Minister of Environment and Forest, Assam on April 29, is the result of a study carried out during January-March 2009.

"It reveals that Kaziranga National Park has the highest density of tigers compared to any known tiger habitats anywhere in the world," confirmed the Minister.

According to the study, which was conducted using the 'camera trap' method of tiger estimation and covered an area of 144 sq km of the central and western part of the park, there are 32 tigers per 100 sq km of park area. It also revealed that 39 individual tigers, including a one-year-old cub, were photographed in the study area during the 50 day photo-trapping exercise.

However, all tigers are unlikely to be photo-trapped in the study area and using scientific method called capture recapture, as many as 47 of tigers were estimated in the study area (144 km sq). The cubs below one year of age were eliminated in density analysis.

Tiger Habitats	Country	Tiger Density/100 km <sup>2</sup>	Data Source
<b>Kaziranga*</b>	<b>India</b>	<b>32.64</b>	<b>Present study</b>
Corbett	India	19.6	Jhala <i>et al.</i> , 2008
Bandipur	India	11.97	Karanth <i>et al.</i> , 2004
Nagarhole	India	11.92	Karanth <i>et al.</i> , 2004
Kanha	India	11.70	Karanth <i>et al.</i> , 2004
Ranthambore	India	11.46	Karanth <i>et al.</i> , 2004
Chitwan	Nepal	8.70	Sunquist, 1981
Pench-MR	India	7.29	Karanth <i>et al.</i> , 2004
Panna	India	6.94	Karanth <i>et al.</i> , 2004
Melghat	India	6.67	Karanth <i>et al.</i> , 2004
Rajaji	India	5.12	Harihar <i>et al.</i> , 2008
Pench-MP	India	4.94	Karanth <i>et al.</i> , 2004
Bhadra	India	3.42	Karanth <i>et al.</i> , 2004
Tadoba	India	3.27	Karanth <i>et al.</i> , 2004
*This study			

**Table: Comparison of tiger density amongst different tiger habitats in India and Nepal (estimated using Half MMDM approach).**

The previously highest recorded density of tiger in a wildlife park was 19.6 tigers /100 sq km recorded in the Corbett Tiger Reserve in northern India. The usual density of tiger varies from 3-12 tigers/100 sq km in different tiger reserves throughout India.

The study team comprised members of Aaranyak and officials and staff of Kaziranga National Park. The Aaranyak's team worked under the supervision of Dr Bibhab Kumar Talukdar with park staff coordinated by director S N Buragohain. Aaranyak's Biologist M Firoz Ahmed led the Aaranyak team in the field.

The study was made possible by funding to Aaranyak from the UK's David Shepherd Wildlife Foundation and The Rufford Small Grants Foundation.

The latest study confirms the belief that Kaziranga's alluvial grassland provides optimal habitats for tigers. Earlier, Karanth and Nichols (1998) had indicated that tigers attained their highest possible density in Kaziranga. The present study, however, recorded almost twice the density of tigers in the park compared to the last estimation made by Karanth and Nichols.

**Prey animals:** One of the key reasons for the high tiger density in Kaziranga is an abundance of prey animals including hog deer, sambar, swamp deer and wild buffalo.

### **Research Team Recommendations**

1. Regular monitoring of tigers and prey populations in Kaziranga NP to understand population dynamics and ecology in such a high-density tiger habitat.
2. Considering the high density of tigers, human-tiger conflict on the fringe areas of the park may increase. Park management needs to take the necessary short-term and long-term steps to mitigate such conflicts.
3. Train more frontline staff in the park in regular monitoring of camera traps and also in recording sighting data of tigers and other animals on a regular basis. The same data could be used to determine the trend of tiger sighting over time and space in the park.

### **What Next?**

1. Estimate prey density in the Kaziranga NP while we continue to monitor the tiger population for second consecutive year.
2. Sample eastern range of the park to understand pattern of tiger density in the park.
3. Understand the population dynamics of prey and predators in the Kaziranga NP in the long run.

"We believe that this study has rekindled the hope for the protection of the tiger which is fast disappearing from its range states throughout the world. It has also thrown up an opportunity to carry out an extensive tiger monitoring study covering the entire area of Kaziranga National Park. The outcome of the study has proved that joint effort by dedicated forest officials and a scientifically credible NGO with the technical input from the Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun can make a difference." Said Mr Rockybul Hussain, Minister of Environment and Forest.

**ENDS**

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Aaranyak [www.aaranyak.org](http://www.aaranyak.org)

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Kaziranga NP <http://www.worldheritagekaziranga.com>

Wildlife Institute of India <http://wii.gov.in/>

David Shepherd Wildlife Foundation <http://www.davidsshepherd.org/>

Rufford Small Grants Foundation [www.ruffordsmallgrants.org](http://www.ruffordsmallgrants.org)

Project Tiger or National Tiger Conservation Authority <http://projecttiger.nic.in/>

Why tigers matter?

<http://www.savethetigerfund.org/Content/NavigationMenu2/Learn/Tigers/default.htm>

Tiger <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tiger>

Some other links

- [Truth about Tigers](#): Website with a lot of answers to the conservation issues faced by tigers
- [21st Century Tiger](#): information about tigers and conservation projects
- [Biodiversity Heritage Library bibliography](#) for *Panthera tigris*
- [Save The Tiger Fund](#): Program of the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
- [Tigers in Crisis](#): Information about Earth's Endangered Tigers
- [Sundarbans Tiger Project](#): research and conservation of tigers in the largest remaining mangrove forest in the world

## **What is a Camera Trap?**

A camera trap is an automated camera used to capture photographs of wild animals. A camera trap is installed in a site that a rarely-seen animal is expected to visit. When a motion or infrared sensor detects the presence of an animal, a photo is taken. After a period of time, a researcher will typically return to the camera to collect the photographs.

Camera traps are an important tool used in researching rare, shy, or nocturnal animals. They generally do not disturb wildlife.

Sometimes, cameras can be damaged by the animals themselves. People in the area may also damage, destroy or remove them, e.g. those who are caught hunting protected species on camera.

Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Camera\\_trap](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Camera_trap)