Tiger Conservation in the Endau-Rompin landscape of Peninsular Malaysia

Background

Wild tigers are found in three main landscapes in Peninsular Malaysia: Belum-Temenggor, Taman Negara and Endau-Rompin (Figure 1). However, due to poaching of tigers and tiger prey, as well as habitat degradation, the number of tigers in each of these landscapes is below the carrying capacity. Fewer than 500 Malayan tigers are thought to remain in the wild.

WCS-Malaysia’s overall tiger program in the Endau-Rompin landscape

For the past four years, WCS-Malaysia has been working closely with the State Governments of Johor and Pahang (in Peninsular Malaysia) to initiate a recovery of the tigers and other wildlife in the Endau-Rompin landscape. WCS-Malaysia is committed to working in this landscape over the many years it will take to achieve a recovery of the tiger population.

There are three main direct threats to tigers in the Endau-Rompin landscape: habitat loss in key corridor areas, direct killing of tigers by poachers (Figure 2) and, killing of tiger prey by poachers. To address these threats, WCS-Malaysia works with the state and federal governments of Malaysia to facilitate the following interventions: tiger-friendly land-use planning in the key corridor areas; a robust, continuous, on-the-ground anti-poaching effort across the whole Endau-Rompin landscape (Figure 3); outreach programs with local communities living in and around the Endau-Rompin landscape to increase awareness on protecting the tiger and its prey (Figure 4 and 5) and; regular monitoring of tiger and prey population numbers to determine the success of the conservation effort (Figure 6-8). All of these interventions are ongoing and will require steady funding over the long-term to ensure the recovery and continued maintenance of the tiger population.

Option 1 for support: Anti-poaching Efforts

The WCS-Malaysia tiger conservation program focuses on two major activities to curb poaching in the Endau-Rompin landscape. The first is catalyzing and supporting effective on-the-ground ranger patrolling across the Endau-Rompin landscape. Some patrols are on foot in the backcountry (Figure 3), while others use vehicles and boats. Mobile spot checks and static checkpoints are also conducted at the entry points to the landscape, as a further means of deterring the high number of relatively less-committed, minor poachers and the smaller number of more committed poachers (Figure 9). WCS-Malaysia’s engagement with the enforcement units of the state governments has led to a dramatic increase in the effectiveness of the on-the-ground anti-poaching activities.
A second major anti-poaching activity of WCS-Malaysia is to strengthen the laws that impact poaching in the landscape. For example WCS was successful in helping initiate a discussion which culminated in a ban on licenses to hunt wildlife in Johor, which previously had served as a means to launder much illegally poached tiger prey (Figure 10). Another example of WCS-Malaysia’s efforts is to help ensure the auditors of the Malaysian Timber Certification Council (similar to the Forest Stewardship Council) check on hunting infringements during field audits on sustainable logging practices (which include maintaining biodiversity in the timber concessions).

Your support for WCS-Malaysia’s anti-poaching efforts will enable a vital and constant on-the-ground presence of robust ranger patrols that will protect and allow for the recovery of wild tigers across the Endau-Rompin landscape.

**Option 2 for support: Education and Outreach**

The education and outreach component of the WCS-Malaysia Endau-Rompin tiger conservation program consists of a few main activities. The first is extensive formal and informal engagement and conservation education activities with adults and children in the villages throughout the landscape (Figures 4 and 5). The main purpose of this engagement is to increase the acceptance of all the tiger conservation activities in the Endau-Rompin landscape. We have repeatedly found that in the absence of such regular outreach activities with local communities, they look upon the conservation activities of WCS and the Government of Malaysia with suspicion and concern, instead of regarding the activities as either neutral or mildly positive. Examples of how the funds from the Tiger Conservation Campaign would be used include the purchase of curriculum supplies, salaries of education specialists, and transport to and from the villages. Though education and outreach activities in villages surrounding the landscape are currently opportunistic, a sustained and regular outreach could be accomplished if a donor would be willing to commit to support this project at a relatively high level for the long-term. For more information, contact Dr. Peter Clyne (WCS) at pclyne@wcs.org.

A second outreach activity is regular interaction with local media to ensure conservation messages are regularly reported (Figure 10). The local media also serves as a way to further increase acceptance for conservation activities. Examples of how the funds from the Tiger Conservation Campaign would be used include the transport of media to and from the regions within the landscape.

A third outreach activity is regular interactions with senior government officials such as the Sultan of Johor (in which much of Endau-Rompin lies), foreign ambassadors and local prominent businessmen. These interactions are essential for securing high-level political support for tiger conservation. Examples of how the funds from the Tiger Conservation Campaign would be used include the preparation of reports, photographs and other outreach materials customised for government audiences.

"Note: In 2012, the Tiger Conservation Campaign offered “Tiger and Prey Research” as an option for support. Though we are no longer highlighting this project, we will be happy to send you more information or accept donations toward this project."
Figure 1 - Location of the three main tiger conservation landscapes in Peninsular Malaysia.
Figure 2 – Poachers that hunt tigers are a major threat in Peninsular Malaysia.
Figure 3 – On-the-ground ranger patrols across the Endau-Rompin landscape are a major conservation intervention.
Figure 4 – Conservation education activities with children from local communities are a regular and helpful conservation intervention.

Figure 5 – Conservation education activities with adults from local communities are a regular and helpful conservation intervention. Here adults take part in the “Web of Life”, which introduces the idea of components of an ecosystem.
Figure 6 – A) WCS biological surveys extensively cover the whole Endau-Rompin landscape in a highly intensive and systematic fashion. B) Such biological surveys also serve as detectors of threats such as this jungle camp (illustrated) where numerous discarded rice packaging indicated that the intruders were camping in the jungle for several weeks. Such campsites are likely set up by poachers or groups of intruders who illegally collect high-value non-timber forest products such as agarwood. Such groups will hunt wildlife for sustenance and may also target high-value wildlife.
Figure 7 – Ad hoc camera-trap images of tigers in Endau-Rompin taken in 2007. These photos and others from 2007 inspired senior Malaysian government officials to fully endorse the tiger conservation efforts and to allocate increased Government funding and other resources to tiger protection.

Figure 8 – WCS-Malaysia staff setting up a camera trap in Endau-Rompin.
Figure 9 – A stationary checkpoint along one of the major access routes into Endau-Rompin, set up by Kulim (M) Ltd., a partner of the wildlife conservation efforts in Johor. Their security personnel will check all vehicles for illegal wildlife, illegal guns and other illegal activities.
Ensuring that conservation related newspaper articles are regularly published is a key outreach activity.