



TIGER DISTRIBUTION: ENVIRONMENT

NEWS: India's uneven tiger tale: 22 reserves host fewer than 10 big cats — and 3 of them have none at all, finds DTE analysis

WHAT'S IN THE NEWS?

India, home to 75% of the global tiger population, faces challenges in tiger conservation due to uneven distribution, poaching, invasive species, and habitat fragmentation. Key reserves like Corbett, Nagarhole, and Kaziranga house the majority of the tiger population, while several reserves face staff shortages and low prey availability.

Tiger Distribution in India:

Uneven Distribution:

- 40% of tigers are concentrated in just 11% of reserves.
- Six reserves host more than 100 tigers, accounting for 795 tigers:
 1. **Corbett National Park:** 231 tigers (highest in India)
 2. **Nagarhole:** 127 tigers
 3. **Bandipur:** 126 tigers
 4. **Kaziranga & Bandhavgarh:** 104 tigers each
 5. **Mudumalai:** 103 tigers
- 22 reserves report fewer than 10 tigers, including **Buxa** (West Bengal), **Dampa** (Mizoram), and **Palamu** (Jharkhand), which recorded no tigers.

Coverage and Reserves:

- India has 56 tiger reserves spanning 78,626 sq. km, about 2.3% of India's total area.
- Recent additions of tiger reserves:
 1. **Veerangana Durgavati** (Madhya Pradesh)
 2. **Dholpur-Karauli** (Rajasthan)
 3. **Guru Ghasidas-Tamor Pingla** (Chhattisgarh)

Threats to Tigers and Their Habitats:

Poaching and Staff Shortages:



- 20 reserves lack sufficient anti-poaching staff, with staffing shortages of up to 40%.
- Key vacancies in forest guards and frontline staff, hindering patrolling and monitoring efforts.

Invasive Species:

- 40 reserves affected by invasive species like **Lantana camara**, **Prosopis juliflora**, and **Chromolaena odorata**, dominating 66% of natural ecosystems.
- These invasive plants disrupt herbivore populations, which in turn impacts apex predators like tigers.

Habitat Fragmentation and Mining:

- Linear infrastructure projects (roads, railways) and mining activities fragment habitats and tiger corridors, affecting genetic diversity.

Low Prey Base:

- Insufficient prey populations lead to interventions like augmenting prey species, which are considered unscientific by experts, akin to farming in wilderness areas.

