

TOP 10 NOMINATION FORM

2020 Topic: Illegal wildlife (plants and animals) trafficking and unsustainable trade

Species must meet these qualifications:

- Must be native U.S. species or international species with significant U.S. demand
- Must be experiencing substantial decline (do not have to be threatened/endangered listed)
- Must be directly or indirectly impacted
 - Direct: exploited as trophies, pets, medicines, etc.
 - Indirect: impacted by imported exotics or imported disease vectors (e.g., chytrid)

Your Name: Carson Barylack

Organization: International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW)

Email: cbarylack@ifaw.org

Phone:

Nominated Species (Common Name & Scientific Name): Tiger; Panthera tigris

Question 1: Threat to the Species

How is the species and/or its habitat threatened by illegal wildlife trafficking and/or unsustainable trade? Note the extent of the threat and whether it is direct or indirect. Include references to relevant scientific studies. Does the species face any associated political threats?

Tigers are globally listed as "Endangered" on the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species. Two of the remaining sub-species — Malayan and Sumatran — are "Critically Endangered." As recently as 100 years ago, as many as 100,000 wild tigers roamed across Asia. Today, about 3,900 tigers are left in the wild, occupying a mere four percent of their former range. This catastrophic population decline is driven by a range of threats, including poaching for the illegal wildlife trade, overhunting of prey species by local people, habitat loss and fragmentation, and human-tiger conflict.

(<https://www.panthera.org/cat/tiger>)

There are more tigers living in captivity in the United States than there are wild tigers remaining in the world. Most of the estimated 5,000 to 7,000 captive tigers in the U.S. are held at roadside and traveling zoos, pseudo-sanctuaries, and private menageries where they are subjected to extreme confinement and neglect.

(<https://www.humanesociety.org/sites/default/files/docs/captive-big-cat-welfare-factsheet.pdf>)

The demand for cubs in petting parks and private zoos in North America means owners must constantly breed more tigers. Tigers that have grown too large for public contact, and thus are less profitable and more expensive to house, can easily be exploited and pushed into the illegal wildlife trade. If that happens, their availability would help sustain a market that also **drives the**

poaching and capture of tigers in the wild. (<https://blog.wwf.ca/blog/2020/04/08/5-things-tiger-king-doesnt-explain/>)

Question 2: Role of the Species

What is the ecological and/or scientific importance of the species?

Note if it is a keystone species and describe its role in its environment. Include references to relevant scientific studies.

The tiger is a unique animal which plays a pivotal role in the health and diversity of an ecosystem. It is a top predator which is at the apex of the food chain and keeps the population of wild ungulates in check, thereby maintaining the balance between prey herbivores and the vegetation upon which they feed.

(https://www.wwfindia.org/about_wwf/priority_species/bengal_tiger/why_save_the_tigers/)

Healthy tiger habitats help mitigate climate change, provide fresh water to animals and people, reduce the impact of natural disasters, and improve the health of local people.

(<https://www.worldwildlife.org/stories/4-unseen-benefits-of-protecting-tigers-and-their-habitat>)

Question 3: Message

What is the most important message about this species for decision-makers and the public?

Tigers are not pets, and they do not belong in captivity! We must immediately stop allowing tigers to be kept as pets in the US, or bred for commercial purposes like cub petting and photo opportunities. Since captive-bred tigers generally cannot be released into the wild, they should be allowed to live their remaining lives in accredited sanctuaries where they are neither bred nor handled by the public, and we should focus conservation efforts on restoring and protecting tigers in their native ranges.

Final Selections

If my nomination is selected for inclusion in the report, I would like the first draft of the species profile for the report to be written by (choose one):

You (ESC), and then my NGO will edit the profile and approve the final draft.

Me (my NGO). I understand that I (and other participating writers) will need to adhere to ESC's writing guidelines.

Deadline: May 8, 2020

Send to: top10@endangered.org