

PELESTARIAN HARIMAU SUMATERA KERINCI SEBLAT

Kerinci Seblat Tiger Protection & Conservation

**Progress report to Dreamworld
Conservation Funding**

SEPTEMBER-FEBRUARY 2011



FAUNA & FLORA
INTERNATIONAL

Summary

A range of activities were conducted in eleven of the 13 districts and all four provinces bordering Kerinci Seblat National Park although the primary focus was to protection and conservation of key tiger populations in national park forests in five districts of two provinces (Jambi and Bengkulu).

Staffing issues relating to the unexpected transfer of a senior team member to the Jambi city-based SPORC forestry rapid response unit and a month-long habitat protection operation meant the number of routine forest patrols conducted was lower than normal.

Only one tiger-related law enforcement operation was conducted during the reporting period and resulted in the arrest of a hunter who is believed to have poached not fewer than 23 Sumatran tigers from national park and buffer zone forests in Bungo district of Jambi on the eastern side of the park.

TPCUs also provided support to the national park and the Jambi SPORC unit for a month-long action to stop encroachment in a key area in and bordering the national park in Merangin district of Jambi.

A total of 24 Sumatran tiger records were made in the course of 32 routine forest patrols and 150 active large mammal snares – some strong enough to hold a tiger – were destroyed along with a further 139 snares for small mammals or birds.

For the first time, no dedicated tiger snares were detected by patrol teams during the September-February reporting period although in early March, outside of this reporting period, eight active tiger snares were destroyed as a result of information received.

As with 2009, no snares were detected in areas where patrols have been maintained at >2 per year however there are strong indications that hunters from one park edge district are now seeking to anticipate “safe” periods in which to place snares having observed TPCU patrol capacity is limited and that it may be 3 or more months before an area is patrolled again. This issue will be addressed through short, strategic ‘surprise’ patrols.

The frequency of encounters with tigers reduced slightly compared with the same period in 2009-2010, as measured by tigers-per-patrol kilometres walked. However, the percentage of patrols recording tigers present was stable or increased slightly compared with the same period 2009-2010.

Investigations into suspected wildlife crime - poaching and trafficking - and to identify individuals suspected to pose a threat to tigers and tiger prey were conducted in 11 of the 13 districts bordering KSNP and in all four provinces around the national park.

One tiger related law enforcement operation was conducted during this period and resulted in the arrest of a middle-aged man from Jambi province to the east of the national park who had previously claimed to have poached not fewer than 23 Sumatran tigers.

Tiger Protection & Conservation Units mitigated a total of nine human-tiger conflicts during the reporting period, six of which were low-grade conflicts where no livestock predation occurred.

The program also facilitated mitigation of two additional human-tiger conflicts by a former TPCU Leader who has now returned to duties with the national park and who we hope will subsequently develop a conflict mitigation program in key forest edge communities to develop conflict prevention and mitigation capacity so reducing pressure on the TPCU teams.

Additionally the program worked closely with KSDA (Unit for Conservation of Natural Resources) West Sumatra and with ZSL in the rescue, from a pit trap in park-edge forests and subsequent release and radio collaring of a sub-adult male Sumatran tiger.

The program was able to facilitate the team's field manager to attend a month-long training programme in Thailand intended to train trainers in MIST and SMART patrol systems analysis so that patrol data is collected in a standardised format for subsequent analysis.

The programme continued to work closely with local NGOs around the national park and, at date of this report, is preparing for campaigning actions against proposals for roads building through core tiger habitat in the national park in Jambi and Bengkulu provinces

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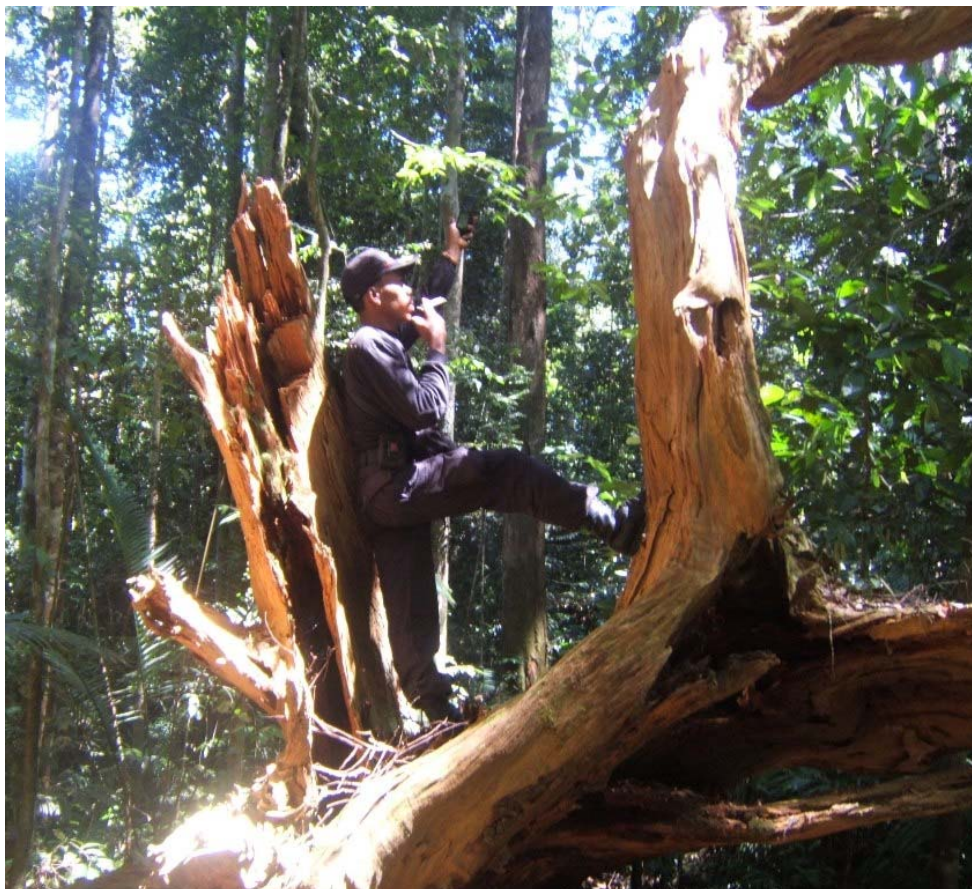
Activities

Forest Patrol. A total of 32 forest patrols were conducted during the reporting period covering a walking distance of just under 600kms.

The lower-than-planned number of patrols was primarily due to a request by the national park authority for TPCUs to join a two-weeks long law enforcement action against illegal forest encroachment in the national park and its buffer zone to the south of the Sipurak ecosystem in Merangin district of Jambi. As a result only two and not the planned 10 field patrols were conducted in November 2010.

Frequency of encounter with Sumatran tiger on patrol reduced, slightly, from one tiger per 22.1 patrol kilometers walked in the period September 2009-February to 1-24.5Kms for this reporting period however the percentage of patrols recording tigers present, park-wide, increased slightly to just over 54%.

Video camera trap monitoring of tigers in the central Sipurak ecosystem area by colleagues from the national park working with the PHS team recorded an increase in tigers in the central Sipurak area from six-seven individuals in 2006 to eight-nine adults in February 2011 one of which had cubs. . Subsequent video camera trap images of the tigress and her cubs was posted by the monitoring team on Youtube <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uSoZVNQxqeE> and http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l_d_cJ_qN7I



Above:- Rest stop on a patrol in Bengkulu forests of the national park

Disturbingly however, none of the individuals camera trapped in this area in 2005-6 were documented as still present early this year and it is highly possible that two individuals photographed were poached in 2009 (see previous reports)

For the first time in program history, no active tiger snares were detected and destroyed during a six months long period. However, immediately after this reporting period (Sept-February 2011), as a result of information secured, eight active tiger snares were found and destroyed in early March in a forest area on the borders of Kerinci and Muko Muko district of Bengkulu.

To the deep distress and anger of TPCU rangers, this patrol also found clear evidence that two tigers had been snared and killed in the previous two months while a third tiger had been caught but subsequently released itself from a snare.

The patrol findings directly substantiated information secured late the previous month during an on-going investigation into tiger poaching in three park-edge districts. Three individuals – all previously known as tiger and previously rhinoceros poachers – have been identified as the men placing these snares as has a local non timber forest products trader funding their activities on behalf of a yet to-be identified individual in a neighbouring province.

TPCU units also detected and destroyed a total of 150 deer and other large mammal snares, some dual purpose and strong enough to hold a tiger and 139 small mammal and bird snares. Information from community informants directed patrols to more than half of the locations where snares were found and disarmed

Patrols recorded illegal forest conversion or encroachment into the national park or illegal logging on almost a third of all patrols conducted. A localized but serious resurgence in illegal logging was also recorded in three park edge districts, in one case, apparently conducted with the active involvement of rogue army officers.

Law enforcement:

One tiger related law enforcement operation was conducted by the programme during the reported period as a result of an undercover investigation by a veteran TPCU ranger in a forest edge area of Bungo district on the eastern side of the national park in Jambi province.

The investigation resulted in the arrest of a middle-aged hunter (see photograph below) who was arrested while transporting the mutilated skin of an adult Sumatran tiger to Bangko in neighbouring Merangin district.

The bones of this tiger remain buried in the forest in an unknown location. The skin of this tiger was not complete because the hunter had run out of pickling alcohol (*spiritus*) and so dried the skin and was selling it in small pieces as '*jimat*' or charms rather than as an entire pelt

This poacher (*see right*) had been known to the PHS team since early 2010 and is believed to have poached not fewer than 30 tigers which were usually sold to an Indonesian-Chinese trader in a district capital of Jambi province known to this program, since 2001, as a major dealer in protected wildlife.





Above: TPCU rangers await the suspect known to be carrying a tiger skin due to surveillance of the man in his village

This law enforcement action was conducted in partnership with rangers of the SPORC forest crime rapid response unit whose legal unit is building the case against the man and who are keen to become more competent in wildlife crime law enforcement.

Unusually, a lawyer is acting on behalf of this poacher. It is not known at date of this report who is paying the lawyer or who instructed the lawyer to attend this case.

A second planned law enforcement action planned to be conducted in Bengkulu province, also in February 2011, was cancelled when it became clear that the action had been leaked, almost certainly accidentally, by another government agency.

The suspects withdrew and it is now known that the skins of two Sumatran tigers poached from a protected forest bordering KSNP in North Bengkulu were transported to a town in West Sumatra province and then to another town in Jambi.

In November 2010 four of the program's five TPCUs joined what was proposed as a major law enforcement operation against large-scale, organized encroachment into national park and adjacent protected forests in and bordering the Sipurak ecosystem in Merangin district of Jambi.

The action, which lasted more than two weeks, was intended to secure more than 1400ha of national park forests in this key tiger habitat and up to 8000ha of protected state forests which have been illegally cleared or badly degraded by coffee syndicates from southern Sumatra island. TPCUs were seconded to join the activity due to local knowledge and a past record of successful law enforcement in this area.

Unfortunately the results of this operation which involved more than 100 forest rangers from KSNP and the SPORC rapid response unit under the command of Jambi SPORC were disappointing, in part due to the activities of rogue local NGOs

who successfully lobbied provincial police against joining the action, repeatedly sought to provoke violent confrontations with rangers in the field and conducted a deeply dishonest and misleading campaign through the internet and press.

Numerous encroachers did leave the national park and its buffer zone in this area either immediately before or during the law enforcement action, however no subsequent follow up action has since been taken by either the national park or SPORC Brigade to secure the situation or build on what was achieved even though funding has been provided by the forestry department for follow up actions.

The Minister of Forestry did however subsequently visit the area and ordered that all encroachers in this and other areas of the national park must withdraw and advising that adjacent protected state forests may not be converted to farmland however the Minister also advised he did not wish to see encroachers in state forests prosecuted. This has produced something of a quandary for forestry agencies anxious to resolve the encroachment in national park buffer zone forests and is being exploited by rogue NGOs funded by major coffee buyers

The transfer of more than one third of the national park's most able and younger rangers to the Jambi SPORC unit which operates out of Jambi city more than 375Kms west of the national park's eastern border meant that 'back up' for TPCUs conducting law enforcement as a result of patrols has become more difficult. As a result, during the reporting period TPCUs encountering breaches of forest law issued formal warning letters and ordered offenders out of the national park rather than conducting formal arrests and escorting the suspects out of the park.

Human-wildlife conflict resolution and wildlife emergencies

A total of nine human-tiger conflicts were responded to by one or more TPCUs during the period September-February 2011 in six districts and three provinces bordering Kerinci Seblat National Park.

Six of these conflicts involved no livestock predation but were low-grade conflicts relating to reports of one or more Sumatran tiger moving in and around forest edge farmland. Livestock predation was recorded in three cases (dogs, 2) and cattle (1) and water buffalo (2) injured in two other instances.

Additional minor reported human-tiger conflicts were checked by one or more community team members but did not require attendance of a full TPCU team or were handled by a former member of the team, Johann Simorangkir, who we hope, will shortly be able to launch a delayed conflict mitigation training program for forest edge communities

As in previous years, not all reports proposed as human-tiger conflict were found, upon investigation, to relate to Sumatran tiger and predation of three dogs over a two weeks period in Kerinci was found to relate to a pair of Asiatic golden cat..

Additionally a TPCU team attended a human-elephant conflict in Bungo district involving seven elephants displaced by the ongoing encroachment issues in neighbouring Merangin district 175kms to the west which destroyed three rice barns.

Discussions were held with the farmers who reported the incident and they subsequently accepted they had cleared protected state forests, agreed they would not take revenge on the elephants and that they would withdraw from the area.

In November 2010, with all TPCUs in the field supporting the national park and KSDA Jambi in a law enforcement action against illegal forest clearances in Merangin district, information was received regarding a Sumatran tiger caught in a pit trap set for pigtail macques in forest-edge farmland in Pesisir Selatan district, West Sumatra to the north-west of KSNP.

The PHS team leader was able to organize anesthetics through another donor to this programme and these were provided to a KSDA West Sumatra and vet team from Padang city.

The young male tiger – aged approximately 15-16 months on the basis of dentition – was subsequently successfully darted and evacuated to a holding point at Sawahlunto in West Sumatra while the FFI team leader liaised with Zoological Society of London who were able to provide a GPS radio collar and subsequently traveled to Sawahlunto to place the collar. Meanwhile TPCU teams checked previously-proposed release sites in West Sumatra to check the current situation and suitability for relocation. As in previous occasions (the program has now relocated three tigers), some difficulty was encountered in identifying a location that was safe, offered four-wheel drive access to the release team and was not already occupied by a resident tiger.

The young male was subsequently relocated to park-edge forests buffered from near by villages by the Tegal Kerinci Agung palm oil plantation in Solok Selatan in the foothills of Mt Tujuh.

To date the relocation has been successful although *Bujang Kandi* did not move deep into the national park to the west or south-west as had been hoped but instead north-west into an area where encroachment and illegal forest conversion is an ongoing problem. This was almost certainly due to an existing healthy tiger population within the park.

Interestingly, for some time this young tiger was resident very close to a populous village and lying up only a few hundred yards from the village and for some days less than 2Kms from the official residence of the district head. In spite of this, monitoring by a local NGO partner revealed villagers appeared to be entirely unaware of their new neighbour, probably because he was taking great care to avoid people after his experiences in late November-early December.

Capacity raising

The FFI team leader secured funding through the Global Tiger Initiative for Field Manager Dian Risdianto to attend a one month 'Training for Trainers' course in Thailand focused on implementation of MIST and SMART patrol techniques and GIS analysis of patrol results.

In May-June it is planned that Dian will start to train key members of the TPCUs and team administrators in MIST data collection and analysis techniques and, subsequently, extend training to selected members of Kerinci Seblat National Park junior management and ranger team so that patrol data collection and analysis is standardized at National Park level and with other tiger conservation programs in Asia.

Plans to develop a human-wildlife conflict mitigation training program for isolated forest edge villages and local officials in key areas bordering national park and buffer zone forests – initially in Jambi province of the park – were postponed due to delays in funding disbursement by other donors but we hope to commence activities in June 2011.

This planned activity will be particularly valuable in the Village Forest areas now being developed in Merangin district of Jambi by FFI and local NGO partners where the planned 30,000ha community-managed forest areas are within the range of up to five Sumatran tiger, three of which frequently enter village rubber gardens close to the villages of our local partners who frequently ask for support from the TPCUs to mitigate low-grade conflicts

The program was asked to involve other forestry agencies in law enforcement actions – in particular relating to tiger crime – when occurring outside the national

park so that other forestry agencies develop experience in planning and conducting wildlife crime law enforcement.

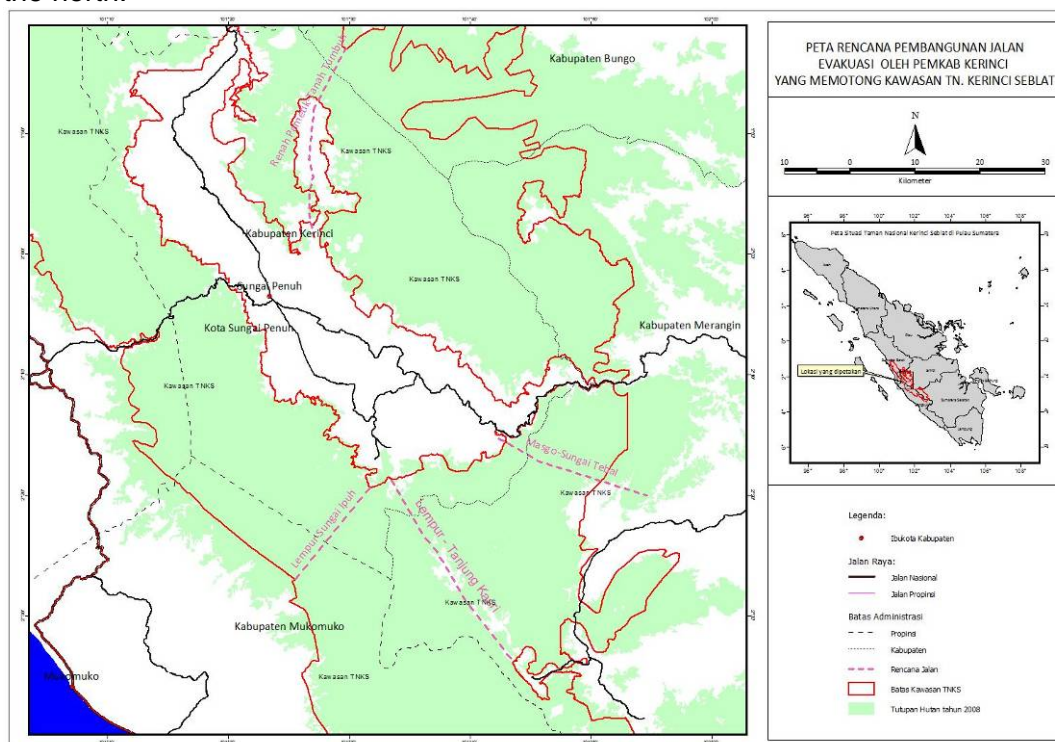
In March Indonesian officers of the Indonesian army special forces (KOPASSUS) and the KOSTRAD Indonesian army Strategic Reserve were due to be deployed to two areas of Kerinci Seblat National Park as part of the Indonesian Army 2011 Bukit Barisan Expedition.

It is planned that we will invite some selected officers of this expedition to join some TPCU patrols and other field activities to gain experience in species and forest protection issues and develop conservation awareness among an organization that currently is not seen, on occasion for good reason, as Tiger or wildlife friendly.

This suggestion has been greeted enthusiastically by the expedition organizers and the National Park and may offer potential for longer-term practical support for species and forest protection in the field along lines of the model developed in Nepalese national parks.

Other issues

- Pressure for construction of roads through core zones of Kerinci Seblat National Park continue to pose a threat to the integrity of the national park with proposals active for roads to the enclave village of Renah Kemumu from Tanjung Kasri to the south in Merangin district and from Lempur in Kerinci to the north.



Of even greater concern was a proposal lodged by Jambi province to the central government's disaster management and mitigation agency for three 'disaster evacuation' routes from Kerinci district through core zones of the national park to Muko Muko district of Bengkulu province to the west of Kerinci and Bungo and Merangin districts of Jambi to the east and south of the Kerinci enclave (*see map above*)

The program is working with both the Harimaukita forum and local NGO members of the park-wide AKAR local NGO network to urge ministers to reject the proposals by Jambi province which openly flout an agreement reached by 13 Tiger range states at St Petersburg in November 2010 regarding infrastructure development in core tiger habitats and that core tiger habitats must remain 'inviolable' and which are clearly intended as commercial interdistrict or provincial highways and not for disaster relief

- In February 2011 the team's field manager Dian Risdianto who has led the PHS team in the field since 2008 after returning from a Masters degree programme was promoted to lead the national park's Jambi section and so responsible on a day-to-day basis for more than 300,000 ha of forest in three local government districts

The national park authority director initially advised that Dian should no longer lead the program in the field and proposed a quite inappropriate candidate as field manager and a second, also entirely inappropriate candidate to replace Eko Supriatno, the Jambi teams' field coordinator who was unexpectedly transferred, without notice, to a junior position in the Jambi SPORC rapid response unit in October 2010.

We are now in discussion with the NPA regarding program structure and national park-seconded personnel and hope that agreement will be reached so that Dian may continue to lead the PHS team but that a young, newly appointed national park officer is seconded to the team to take responsibility for day to day management of the Jambi teams so relieving Dian of routine management duties.

This will also mean we can commence building a cadre of one or more young park officers able to take over management of teams in the future as existing coordinators or managers are promoted to other national parks or forestry agencies.