

# **Pelestarian Harimau Sumatera Kerinci-Seblat**

## **Kerinci Seblat Sumatran Tiger Protection & Conservation**

**Six Months Report to 21<sup>st</sup> Century Tiger  
by**

**Fauna & Flora International**



## **In Brief**

Five Tiger Protection & Conservation Units were operational during the six months reporting period conducting a range of activities in nine of the 13 districts and all four provinces bordering Kerinci Seblat National Park.

A total of 46 field patrols were conducted covering a total walking distance of 734Kms and recording the presence of not fewer than 34 Sumatran tigers including one or more cubs or juveniles.

Frequency of encounter with tigers on patrol, park-wide, was stable while the percentage of patrols recording tiger presence improved.

From mid 2007-mid 2009, TPCU ranger investigators found it increasingly difficult to secure valid data on threat to Sumatran tiger. Unfortunately this situation changed over the second half of 2009 with an increase in both reported (through investigations) and recorded (on patrol) direct threat to tigers.

Informal discussion with other tiger conservation programs in Sumatra and Malaysia suggests this rise in threat may not have been restricted to central western Sumatra. Two law enforcement operations to arrest tiger poachers or dealers were conducted following investigations by program rangers. These actions resulted in the arrest of three men and the seizure of skins and other body parts of three or more Sumatran tigers.

Ten incidents of human-tiger conflict required attendance of a full TPCU for two or more days during the reporting period and one case is on-going at date of this report and has required repeat and lengthy attendance by TPCUs.

In addition to full-time contracted TPCU personnel, a total of eight men from park-edge communities joined the programme for some or all of the reporting period for on-the-job training while competing for four full-time community ranger positions. Individuals not successful in securing a place on the team have returned to their villages and will act as ambassadors for tiger conservation in their home communities and also act as the team's eyes and ears in those areas.

Program staff continued to play an active role in the Sumatra-wide Harimaukita Sumatran Tiger Conservation Forum and the program team leader attended the Global Tiger Initiative workshop in Kathmandu, Nepal with the kind support of another program donor, Dreamworld Conservation Fund.

The program continued to work closely with key local NGOs around the national park, primarily members of the AKAR network.

One of these local NGO partners led a successful campaign to defeat a proposal by a subsidiary of pulp timber conglomerate Sinar Mas to convert more than 80,000ha of park edge forest lands to pulp timber monoculture.

## Patrols

Tiger Protection & Conservation Units conducted a total of 46 patrols during the reporting period covering a total walking distance of 734Kms in addition to night time vehicle patrols to deter armed hunters on a newly built road in the south of the Kerinci valley.

Teams made a total of not fewer than 34 tiger records in the course of these in forest patrols which equates to a frequency of encounter of 1 tiger per 21.48Kms walked, a slight improvement on the same period of 2008. The percentage of in-forest patrols recording tigers present increased to just under 74 per cent park wide but is unlikely to be maintained at this level over a one year period.

A total of nine snares set specifically for Sumatran tiger were destroyed on three patrols during the six months reporting period.

One of these snares had killed a tiger which had been left to rot in the snare by the hunters who appear to have been tipped off that TPCUs had learned of their activities and had fled without disarming their traps.

All these snares were found on either new routes or in an area where patrol frequency had been reduced due to negative threat in the previous two years. No tiger snares were found in areas where patrol frequency has been maintained.

As a result, the program is now reconsidering plans to reduce patrol frequency in areas where no threat has been recently recorded so as to extend field actions to

new areas as we are reluctant to lose ground gained.

Direct poaching threat to tigers calculated on the basis of percentage of patrols finding tiger snares increased to 8.6% from 6.45 per cent in 2008 but was still lower than in previous years (recorded tiger poaching pressure peaked in 2004 when just under 15 per cent of patrols reported active or recent tiger poaching threat).

Poaching of deer and other tiger prey species continues to pose a problem in some areas of the national park often with the same



individuals or individuals from a small number of communities found responsible for snare placements.

TPCU patrols also recovered and destroyed a total of 326 snares set for sambar deer or muntjak during the reporting period. As in the case with tiger poaching, hunters avoided placing snares in areas regularly patrolled by TPCUs and the teams used local knowledge and information from community supporters to direct patrols to areas suspected at risk.



Of this total, 174 (53%) were found during the six weeks leading up to the Hari Raya festival which marks the end of the fasting month of Ramadan and which shows the extent to which seasonal factors influence threat to tiger prey

species, in particular, deer.

Since 2004, illegal logging has been a relatively minor threat to Sumatran tiger in and bordering Kerinci Seblat National Park and has been replaced by illegal or illicit forest clearance for agriculture with 37 per cent of patrols reporting encroachment into the national park or conversion of the park's theoretically protected state forest buffer zone.

One formal arrest on illegal forest conversion charges was made and the encroacher surrendered into police custody, other offences were handled through formal warning letters with the individuals responsible instructed to leave the area immediately and confiscation of equipment (axes/chainsaws etc).

Since 2007 the program has been increasingly concerned by problems regarding disbursement of funds to national park ranger staff which meant that, in 2009, there was no routine patrol presence in KSNP other than through the PHS team.

In July 2009 a new director of the national park was appointed and commenced a searching review of national park administration and financial procedures. This resulted, in early September 2009, in the arrest of the national park treasurer on charges of fraud, false accounting and theft of park operational funds.

At date of this report the treasurer's case is proceeding through the courts system and we hope that, in 2010, funds will be swiftly and effectively disbursed, in full, to park rangers to allow them to effectively conduct their duties so that the PHS team is not the only routine presence within the national park.

## Law enforcement

Two law enforcement operations to arrest poachers or dealers of Sumatran tiger were conducted during the reporting period and led to the arrest of three men and the seizure of the pelts and other body parts of not fewer than two Sumatran tiger.

Probably the most significant of these actions took place in early November 2009 when two men from the notorious poaching community of Tapan in Pesisir Selatan district of West Sumatra province were arrested in Sungaipenuh, Kerinci district where they planned to sell the skin and bones of a tiger.

One of the two men, \*K\* had been known to the program since 2005 as a suspected trader or broker dealing in tiger body parts from northern Bengkulu province as well as Pesisir Selatan. His partner, \*D\* had first been logged in 2002 as a suspected professional poacher of tiger and rhinoceros in both Kerinci and Bukit Barisan Selatan National Park in southern Bengkulu province and with links to a major trader based in Malaysia but frequently visiting Sumatra.

Poacher/dealers from other areas around KSNP are generally reluctant to visit Kerinci district due to the many arrests of poachers and dealers that have occurred in this area. In this case, however, the pair were confident they would be safe as they were escorted by a rogue police officer. The police officer based in Tapan, but originally from Kerinci was also arrested and his case is being dealt with by POLRI through internal disciplinary procedures.

Careful subsequent examination of the evidence showed that the 'package' being sold comprised the skin of a young adult tiger and the bones of a juvenile with the pelvic girdle possibly relating to a third tiger.

This case again reinforces the importance of careful examination of seizures to confirm whether bones and skin are from the same or different individuals, in more than 15 per cent of seizures made by this program, examination of evidence has clearly advised that poacher/dealers were combining the skin of one tiger with the bones of a second individual.

The individual who sold the pelt and bones to \*K\* and to \*D\* has been identified as a non-timber forest products dealer and former hunter based on a small town on the Bengkulu-West Sumatra provincial border who first came to the program's attention in 2004 when he sold a tiger pelt to a dealer from Medan in North Sumatra.

Three weeks later, almost a year of surveillance of a suspect in Kerinci district resulted in the arrest of a man in Bangko, capital of Merangin district.

The man, \*B\* or Sinar, had been logged as an occasional trader in Sumatran tiger in mid 2008 (and previously as a trader in deer and serow antlers), apparently sourcing tigers from rural forest-edge communities as an addition to his main business as a dealer in cattle and goats.

In early 2009 a planned law enforcement operation regarding this man was aborted when surveillance advised of the presence of one or more armed individuals, including one who knew the team's undercover operative, in the location where the undercover ranger was planning to confirm the existence of a tiger skin.

The team immediately withdrew and this investigator was subsequently replaced by a second PHS ranger based in Bengkulu district who could not be known to \*B\* or his accomplices.

In early December the PHS investigator learned that \*B\* was planning to travel to Bangko, 175Kms east of Kerinci where he was proposing to sell the pelt of an adult



tiger. Initially the team could not respond as the evidence was being concealed in an army base where forestry and police officers cannot act as such an area is under military authority.

Eventually however \*B\* and his son, an army officer, left the military camp to proceed to another location and they were arrested en route in a joint operation between PHS rangers and Merangin district police.

The army officer was subsequently released without charge as it was known that he had previously urged his

father not to continue to engage in trading tigers and action against this young officer would have been counter-productive and damaged relations between local army commanders and the local police and national park.

TPCU rangers continued to seek to identify the location of \*C\*, a notorious deer poacher, one of whose serow snares killed a tiger relocated from a conflict situation in June 2009.

Evidence in this case – both the bones of the tiger which had been left on the mountain peak where he died – and the skin, secured by PHS rangers using unorthodox means after law enforcement failed for reasons outside of the control of this program, are in Custody of the national park and the poacher placed on the district police wanted list.

However \*C\* has been moving constantly since escaping arrest in late June rarely spending more than two nights in any one place. It has proved very difficult to secure timely information on his whereabouts so that he can be arrested and, at date of this report, he remains at large.

Visual evidence was secured regarding tiger crime in an area bordering Bukit Tigapuluh NP in Tebo district to the east of KSNP as part of a larger investigation into tiger and elephant poaching in districts bordering KSNP in Jambi province but planned law enforcement could not be conducted because the poacher appears to have subsequently been killed by a second tiger he had snared.

In addition to these actions, a number of other arrests were made in the field, including of a very elderly recidivist deer poacher in Kerinci district who was released, again, under a formal legal warning. Two chainsaws were confiscated and one man was surrendered into police custody on encroachment charges while a group of bird catchers were arrested and expelled from the national park and more than 100 birds released.

Planned law enforcement action against an ivory trader was suspended pending identification of unknown individuals were observed shadowing the TPCU investigator

## **Investigations**

Throughout 2008 and the first months of 2009, TPCU rangers encountered considerable difficulty in securing valid data on threat to Sumatran tiger and validating information and many reports were found, upon careful investigation, to be related to fraudsters from 'barang antik' or curiosity item networks.

This began to change in the second quarter of 2009 with a sharp rise in apparently credible reports regarding both poachers and dealers' activities in all four provinces around KSNP.

The program received reports from two areas of dealers advancing funds and providing snares to hunters, something that has not to our knowledge occurred in Kerinci Seblat NP for at least three years although it was common in the first years of program operation.

In the Sipurak area to the south of Kerinci, two and possibly three tiger poachers from the notorious poaching community of Tapan placed at least 12 snares specifically for tigers before an informant advised the program that two 'suspicious' individuals were entering and leaving the forest at night and an investigation patrol was launched.

The program strongly suspects that these men were being funded by a Kerinci based man identified as a suspected dealer in 2002-3 but who then left the area. It is now known that he is again based in Kerinci district and investigations suggest he has provided capital and snares to a group of professional hunters on the basis that tigers caught are sold through him.

In line with project planning, the team began to develop investigation capacity in Musi Rawas district of South Sumatra at the south east edge of the park and in the remote forest enclave areas of Bukit Bulan and Batang Asai in Sarolangun district to the south of Merangin.

All these areas are difficult or very difficult to access and in upriver Musi Rawas area the situation is further complicated by lawlessness and widespread ownership of firearms with even community leaders warning against travel at night due frequent armed robberies. In all three areas we found information and supporting evidence relating to tiger and other wildlife crime disturbingly easy to acquire.

Although investigations and threat assessment continues in these areas, we believe that establishing a patrol schedule or conducting law enforcement for anything other than tiger crime would be most effective if preceded by basic awareness activities focused to community leaders and we are liaising with local NGO partners to draft proposals for such an activity.

Additionally the team conducted some highly focused investigations in an area of Tebo district of Jambi province bordering Bukit Tigapuluh NP in connection with an ongoing investigation into trafficking of elephant ivory and tiger in a KSNP park-edge district where evidence was suspected to have come from Bukit Tigapuluh NP.

Prices demanded by poachers, brokers and local level dealers for tiger skins increased noticeably during the program period but should not be taken as a fully valid reflection of black market prices.

At local park-edge level, prices reportedly achieved for tiger bone averaged around \$48 (USD 1-IDR9300) – unchanged since late 2008 – although one South Sumatra-based poacher claimed to have sold tiger bone for an unprecedented \$172 in Jambi city to a previously unknown trader while a Traffic investigator based in a district to the south of KSNP reported that tiger bone in Palembang in late 2009 was fetching up to \$107 per kg at exporter level.



## **Human-Wildlife Conflict**

A total of 10 distinctive individual human-tiger conflicts were mitigated by TPCU rangers during the reporting period, some requiring repeat attendance and field activities to protect both people and tigers.

Three of these cases involved livestock predation (cattle: 1, water buffalo: 1, a farmland guard dog: 1) with the remaining cases involving tigers moving in or through farmland and so causing alarm to farmers.

One tiger died (poisoned) after predated livestock in an enclave area at the extreme north west of the park in Pesisir Selatan district of West Sumatra in an area where the team does not have the staffing capacity to work.

No tigers are known to have been killed in conflict-related revenge incidents in the program's focal areas in Jambi and Bengkulu provinces.

The most time consuming of the conflicts handled continues to date of this report and is centered on a new road built, following a series of landslides on the former inter-district highway, through abandoned farmland and fragment forest on the Kerinci-Merangin district borders in Jambi province.

Unfortunately, once the road was rerouted, it rapidly became clear that the mixture of abandoned farmland and fragment forest was rich in deer and other ungulates and that not fewer than two adult tigers were present and intermittently seen along the 15Km stretch of road.

While the adult male tiger resident in this area has caused no serious problems – although frequently seen by road construction crews in late 2008-early 2009, a second adult, a female, has proved a more serious problem as she favours a 'saung' or 'tiger nest' on a hilltop above the road and now has two cubs and frequently relaxes on the road side.

TPCUs since September have been conducting frequent night time patrols along the road to deter armed deer hunters, including rogue members of the Perbakin hunting club and other activities including patrols of farmland and villager awareness and safety training.

At date of this report threat from hunters outside the area has increased and we have concluded that the tigress and her cubs must be caught and relocated to a safer area. This will not be easy since both mother and her cubs, now, on basis of distance (+/-15m) assessment approximately 7 months old, must be caught at the same time or problems will escalate and the cubs are not of an age to survive independently.

## **Community and stakeholder awareness and liaison**

FFI Kerinci and the PHS program maintained a close relationship and support and technical advice for local NGO members of the AKAR network of local NGOs which we helped establish in 2006 to campaign against proposals to build numerous roads through the national park.

In 2009 support was secured for a short-term NGO Coordinator and Mentor position through Australia Zoo specifically to provide focused technical advice and fund-raising support to our local NGO partners.

A grant was secured through the Panthera Foundation in late 2009 for focused interventions in 2010 by a local NGO partner to build grassroots support for tiger and tiger habitat conservation and conduct highly-focused field surveys in the Tandai Tiger Corridor area between KSNP and the Batang Hari Protected Forest (HLBH) in West Sumatra.

It is hoped this program will also mobilize support for law enforcement action by KSNP against a large palm oil company, PT SJAL, which has knowingly cleared large areas of national park forests since 1998 for palm oil and for actions against rogue local government officers and other involved in an illegal open caste iron ore mine in the HLBH forests which, surveys advise, protect a population of up to 30 Sumatran tigers.

The most significant achievement by our local NGO partners around the national park was the defeat of a plan, announced in early 2009, by a major pulp and paper conglomerate with a poor record of corporate social and environmental responsibility to convert more than 80,000ha of former logging forests in Merangin and Sarolangun districts of Jambi to acacia plantations.

Supported with technical advice, species and other biodiversity data collected by both the PHS team and the FFI/DICE Tiger Monitoring team (MHS), Lembaga Tiga Beradik who have worked with FFI Kerinci since 2005 in this area, mobilized villagers from across Merangin district to campaign against the pulp timber plantation proposal and, by August 2009. More than 80 villages and the leaders of Merangin and Sarolangun districts had formally rejected the plan.

More than thirty traditional forest edge villages have subsequently requested support from FFI and L-TB to establish community protected forest areas in these two key districts for Sumatran tiger conservation and the NGO mentor subsequently secured a Darwin Initiative grant to support develop of community protected forests covering up to 30,000ha of important tiger habitat bordering KSNP in Merangin and, possibly, in Sarolangun districts.

The Department of Forestry in Jakarta finally formally announced that it had withdrawn its draft permit for the WKS plantation in December 2009.

The FFI team leader also provided detailed technical advice to an international palm oil company with a plantation in Muko Muko district of Bengkulu which is planning to establish a 20,000ha protected forest area between its plantations and the national park forest to support conservation of KSNP and its buffer zones.

The FFI team leader also enjoyed discussions with colleagues from ZSL and an oil palm company owned by the Wilmar plantation group in a district bordering KSNP in West Sumatra which resulted in initial informal agreement on co-operative activities to secure and develop wildlife movement corridors between the plantations in this area.

The FFI team leader worked with colleagues in the Harimaukita Sumatran tiger conservation forum to facilitate a survey to assess actions needed to secure the full

implementation of the Sumatran Tiger Conservation Strategy and Action Plan and, with the support of Dreamworld Conservation Fund, joined the Global Tiger Workshop in Kathmandu, Nepal.

The program also hosted study visits from WWF Riau Tiger program to discuss patrol planning and design and how to leverage greater support for tiger protection from key institutions, in particular effective support for law enforcement actions.