

Pelestarian Harimau Sumatera Kerinci-Seblat

Kerinci Seblat Sumatran Tiger Protection & Conservation

**PROGRESS REPORT June- November 2008
to**

21st Century Tiger

by

Fauna & Flora International



Summary

Program Objective

To secure the long-term conservation of wild Sumatran tiger in and around a World Heritage Site National Park that forms part of a globally important Tiger Conservation Landscape primarily through controlling the poaching of Sumatran tiger and prey species and habitat loss and effective mitigation of human-tiger conflict. Additionally through raising the ability of the forestry department and others to tackle tiger and other serious wildlife crime and winning the support of forest-edge communities and local governments for conservation of Sumatran tiger and habitat

Summary of Activities June-November 2008

Five Tiger Protection & Conservation Units (TPCU) - which form the backbone of program field activities - were fully staffed and active during the reporting period although management and staffing issues meant units on occasion had to amalgamate

Delayed disbursement of funds from two other donors and other issues meant that recruitment to fill vacant positions in TPCU VI was abandoned and existing TPCU VI rangers reassigned to the other five ranger units.

Given the current world economic outlook, the program will not now seek to return TPCU VI to operational status in the immediate future although the program can re-form that unit temporarily in an operational emergency with staff previously trained by or assigned to this program by the national park authority.

Forest Patrols

A total of 39 forest patrols ranging from three to 8 days in length were conducted by TPCU ranger units, primarily in national park forests in districts of Jambi and Bengkulu provinces but additionally in West Sumatra and South Sumatra provinces.

Patrol teams made a total of 37 separate Sumatran tiger records during the reporting period June-November 2008 mainly from footmarks but including two unplanned, close-quarters observations of wild tigers.

Frequency of encounter with tiger sign was higher than in the same period of 2007 with TPCUs recording 1 tiger present per 26.97 patrol kilometres walked compared with a frequency of encounter in 2007 of 1-28.2 patrol kilometres walked.

The percentage of patrols recording tiger presence during this period was also higher with 64 per cent of patrols encountering tiger sign compared with 56.7% during the June-November 2007 period.

While patrol records for Sumatran tiger were stable or increased in the reporting period, snare poaching pressure recorded plummeted with only one active tiger snare

and 22 deer snares found and destroyed by TPCU patrol units (in the same period of 2007, nine tiger snares and 152 deer snares were found and destroyed).

Snare poaching has, over the period of this program, reduced steadily in all areas where teams were able to maintain field activities however the reduction recorded during the last six months is not indicative of a sudden and dramatic fall in threat and the program is now re-evaluating field patrol strategies and TPCU members are being asked to urgently identify areas hunters are suspected to be using as 'safe havens'

The fall in active snares found and destroyed is also likely to reflect escalating use of illegal firearms by hunters around KSNP and investigations suggest that five sambar deer were shot in just one area of forest-edge farmland in the south of the Kerinci valley in the three weeks leading up to the festival of Eid ul Fitri which marks the end of the fasting month of Ramadan.

To address this issue, the program and national park officers are lobbying park-edge police forces to take a more active role in combating illegal use and ownership and black market trade in guns and ammunition.

Between 2000-2005, the most commonly encountered forest crime other than poaching was illegal logging. Since the Presidential Instruction 04/05 of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono illegal logging has dramatically reduced in all areas around KSNP.

Unfortunately, as advised in previous program reports, illegal logging has been replaced by encroachment as the most commonly encountered threat to Sumatran tiger habitat with new encroachment into the national park or protected buffer zone forests encountered on 1 in four of all patrols made between June and November 2008.

TPCU ranger units will always respond to encroachment where possible – as evidenced by 7 arrests and subsequent prosecutions made in May 2008 or with numerous formal warning letters issued by TPCU teams during this reporting period, however a more co-ordinated approach to this issue is required. This would be best secured through a Presidential Instruction to all government agencies as was made regarding illegal logging in 2005.

Law enforcement

Only one successful tiger-related law enforcement operation directly led and initiated by the program was conducted during the reporting period when an army officer posted to the national park-edge sub-district of Jangkat in Merangin district of Jambi was arrested, in June in a lodging house in Jambi city while seeking to sell the skin and complete skeleton (minus hyoid process) of an adult Sumatran tiger.

As in all previous tiger-related law enforcement operations, the army officer was arrested following investigations over a two months period by members of the PHS team.

The man was subsequently called before a military tribunal in Palembang city and sentenced to a period of five months in a military prison in Java and fined Rp5 million with a subsidiary sentence of an additional three months if the fine was not paid.

In October, an unarmed TPCU patrol unit arrested an armed deer poacher, believed to have also previously hunted tigers, in park-edge forests on the borders of Muko Muko and North Bengkulu districts.

The man is related to an influential local government legislator and so the team escorted the arrested man to Bengkulu police headquarters to ensure that local police were not subjected to unorthodox pressures or inappropriate lobbying as would have occurred if the man had been passed into the custody of district level police authorities. This man was subsequently sentenced to a one year prison term under firearms legislation.

Also in October, a TPCU ranger unit in Kerinci district arrested three men on suspicion of poaching deer: the suspects were arrested and taken out of the forest to National Park headquarters where, after legal advice was taken, they were released under formal legal warnings as, although they were carrying snare ropes, the TPCU could not prove their connection with a number of active deer snares found in the area where the men were arrested..

In early November a TPCU ranger leader secured information on a taxidermised tiger being held in an office in Jambi city and which was proposed to be sent by courier service to Java.

The TPCU leader (Eko Supryatno) investigated and succeeded in confirming the report and advised the program and the director of KSDA Jambi province who subsequently ordered its seizure by rangers of the SPORC rapid response unit.

The 'owner' was subsequently found to be a senior army officer from a neighbouring province who had been promoted and reassigned to service in Java island.



Following this seizure, KSDA came under heavy pressure for the stuffed tiger to be returned to the army officer in question but stood firm. The man was not prosecuted but district army commanders were advised that future cases where army officers are found in possession of taxidermised tigers will be prosecuted.

Three Kerincinese men arrested during a routine TPCU patrol when they were found clearing national park forests in Bungo district for palm oil in early May 2008 were subsequently sentenced to one year custodial sentences at Muara Bungo district court.

Three Bengkulu men arrested by TPCU rangers in Merangin district while clearing national park forests bordering the Sipurak ecosystem area in late May 2008 were also sentenced to one year custodial sentences at Bangko district court.

A 72 year-old retired army officer and 'antique dealer' arrested in a PHS-led operation in Curup, Bengkulu in January 2008 while trying to sell 2 taxidermised tigers (one old, one probably less than five years old) was subsequently sentenced to a one year suspended sentence on grounds of his age.

A man reported to be trying to sell an infant Sumatran tiger was found, by PHS investigators, to be in possession of a very young Island clouded leopard and the program organised its confiscation by KSNP rangers; the man, a rubber farmer, was issued with a formal warning letter as it was clear he had indeed "found" the cub in his rubber gardens and had no connection to poaching or trafficking networks

TPCUs found it increasingly difficult to act successfully on 'information received' with professional hunters and dealers adopting new and tactics to avoid arrest including use of decoy vehicles when transporting tiger skins and use of armed 'body guards' for 'transactions' with unknown/new "buyers." In one park-edge district, it is difficult to avoid the suspicion that suspects are receiving 'professional' advice on countering the activities of PHS investigators and law enforcement.

The team hopes to be able to discuss addressing these issues with colleagues in police criminal investigation units at provincial level.

Less serious forest crimes or cases where numbers of offenders made it difficult for the four-man TPCUs to respond were addressed through formal warning letters instructing offenders to withdraw from the national park.

Investigations

Collection of valid data on the identities and activities of individuals believed to threaten Sumatran tiger and their *modus operandi* is an essential activity of the program and is essential for an effective law enforcement response to tiger crime which is becoming more and more secretive.

Investigations during the reporting period extended to the Dharmasraya area of West Sumatra on the north-east edges of KSNP, were stepped up in Bungo district of Jambi and commenced in Musi Rawas district of South Sumatra province – the latter area, it is hoped, will give the team access to the notorious wildlife trading entrepot of Lubuklinggau.

Although evidence of tiger crime was confirmed on three occasions during the reporting period, only one law enforcement operation against tiger poaching and trafficking was successfully accomplished (see law enforcement).

Dealers and poachers in long-standing focus areas are now exceptionally cautious and while information can still be secured, in some areas it is very difficult to proceed to successful law enforcement and investigations frequently lead to the conclusion that the tiger being trafficked was poached far from this particular national park but that brokers from a large area of Sumatra are being employed to seek buyers.

Program activities have clearly disrupted trafficking networks and law enforcement has meant some major dealers will not conduct activities in some areas and in June a suspected wildlife and narcotics (ecstasy and amphetamines) dealer in a district of South Sumatra province advised PHS investigators he now refuses to conduct transactions anywhere in Jambi province on grounds that it is too dangerous and that there are too many 'untrustworthy' (ie undercover rangers) people.

Tiger bone prices appear to have increased, slightly, over the course of 2008 although still far below prices paid on the black market in early 2007 when the People's Republic of China was considering legalizing domestic trade in tiger bone.

No observable movement has occurred in prices reportedly paid by dealers for tiger skins however on a number of occasions reports were received of tiger skins being sold for division into 5cmx5cm pieces as 'charms' and not for taxidermy. This may indicate that ownership of a tiger skin by government, military and business elite is becoming less socially acceptable. Tiger skins cut into small portions have also been observed/reported by Traffic SE Asia and this may therefore be a regional trend

Human-Wildlife Conflict

One or more human-wildlife conflict interventions each month were conducted between June and November 2008, mainly "no victim" incidents relating to Sumatran tiger moving in forest-edge farmland and so causing alarm to villagers but including cases in which livestock (goats, cattle, guard/hunting dogs) were predated.

As in previous years, some reports lodged were found to be mistaken identification with animals alleged to be 'tigers' found, upon investigation, to include Malay sunbears, civets, clouded leopard and, in one cases, a Malay tapir.

Two cases of multiple (3 or more) predation of livestock were handled by teams, in one case, successfully with the tiger not predated again and informants placed in surrounding villages confirming the animal had not been killed. In the second case, in Lebong district of Bengkulu, a tigress and her juvenile cub repeatedly predated goats (the problems started in late 2007) along a long narrow valley surrounded on three sides by national park forests. In spite of counselling, patrols and other actions to protect villagers and livestock and to deter the animal (s), it is strongly suspected that one or both were subsequently killed (using poison bait).

Base line biological and habitat threat data

TPCU rangers collected simple baseline data on forest condition and the presence/absence of flagship and indicator species in the course of patrols and on potential or developing threat as well as responding to forest crime.

Tiger records made during the reporting period (37) relate to presence only and while rangers will estimate the number of individual present along a patrol route from footmark shape (to ascertain gender) and size, they do not estimate numbers of tiger present in an area. Multiple records in some areas may reflect habitat loss in buffer zone (ex logging) forests outside KSNP and not a naturally high tiger density.

The team liaises closely with the DICE/FFI tiger monitoring team (MHS) sharing basic information regarding tiger presence and threat to tigers and prey species and in mid 2008 a research student commenced analyzing eight years of TPCU field and intelligence data to correlate it with data collected since 2004 by Dr Matt Linkie and the MHS team..

In September 2008, taxonomists of the Deer Specialist Group confirmed that a pregnant muntjac hind found and released from a snare by PHS rangers and the FFI team leader in 2002 were of an endemic deer not recorded since the late 1920s.

Examination of the photographs by IUCN experts has led them to subsequently assign species status as *Muntiacus montanus* and not as a sub-species (*Muntiacus munjtac montanus*) as previously assigned. The deer is now placed in the IUCN Red List as 'data deficient'.

Community awareness

The PHS team works to maintain good relations with forest-edge communities and to working with farmers at forest edge to involve them in our activities and secure their support for project goals

A total of 18 community rangers and five other staff drawn from 17 villages in nine of the 13 districts around this national park were contracted to the program and able to campaign for tiger and tiger habitat conservation in their villages and communities.

.More focused community and institutional awareness activities around KSNP were conducted by local NGO partners, primarily NGO members of the AKAR network who in 2008 campaigned for action to stop encroachment into the national park.

The team worked closely with Lembaga Tiga Beradik, a local NGO based in Merangin district which has formed a collaborative forest patrol team (TMP2H) composing local villagers and forest rangers and is focused to stopping encroachment and conversion of important tiger habitats in former logging forests which protect an important tiger population in the Sipurak ecosystem borders area.

Capacity raising

Five KSNP rangers acting as TPCU Leaders and two young national park managers were on secondment to the program during the reporting period with two more KSNP rangers previously leading TPCUs now returned to full-time duties with the national park.

Four KSNP rangers were seconded to the program for three months field training with the program during the reporting period and have now returned to full-time duties with the

national park with a good basic grounding in the core principles of species protection and conservation.

The team's former Jambi co-ordinator Dian Risdianto was awarded a Master of science degree in Conservation Biology at University of Indonesia in July for his thesis entitled Patterns in poaching of Sumatran Tiger and Prey Species in and around Kerinci Seblat National Park.

He returned to duties with the national park in August but urgent need for skilled personnel at the national park meant he was not permitted to return to the program as field manager during the reporting period.

Stakeholder Co-ordination and Involvement

The PHS team operates as an embedded unit within KSNP and all activities are conducted in co-ordination with the park director or his deputies. The program enjoyed friendly links with other species conservation programs in Sumatra and took part in the 2-day meeting that launched the Harimaukita Sumatran tiger conservation forum.

The PHS program team continued to work to develop an effective and close working relationship with park edge police forces and with KSDA in Bengkulu, West Sumatra and Jambi provinces,

Wildlife rescue and response to wildlife emergencies

Although the program is primarily focused on in situ conservation and protection, where necessary the team will always respond to wildlife emergencies or trade in live endangered carnivores.

No snare injury emergencies occurred during the reporting period however the program provided care to an infant Island clouded leopard which subsequently died from an acute enteritis and organized the rehabilitation and release of two confiscated bear cubs with the support of another donor and the rescue, veterinary treatment and release of a young male Malay tapir. A more co-ordinated, focused and effective approach to issues involving live, young animals of endangered species is required given husbandry and other issues in ex-situ institutions in Sumatra and lack of any facility which can care for and rehabilitate and release confiscated animals.

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