

Pelestarian Harimau Sumatera Kerinci-Seblat

Kerinci Seblat Sumatran Tiger Protection & Conservation

**Report on activities conducted with
support of 21st Century Tiger**

**August 2011-January 2012
by**

Fauna & Flora International



In Brief

Tiger Protection & Conservation Units conducted a total of 39 forest patrols, some related to human-tiger conflicts covering a total walking patrol distance of just under 620 Km in six districts and three of the four provinces bordering Kerinci Seblat National Park.

Patrol units made a total of 27 individual tiger records in the course of these forest patrols and destroyed a total of three active tiger snares and 167 active deer snares

The number of patrols and patrol units fully operational during this period was slightly lower than planned due to staffing issues following the resignation for health or family reasons of three long-serving TPCU rangers.

These positions are now in the process of being filled through competitive recruitment but this meant that on occasion only two and not three TPCUs were fully operational in the eastern area of the national park.

Evidence of tiger crime was secured in the course of two investigations however law enforcement was not subsequently launched, in one case for technical reasons and in the second so as not to endanger a wider and more important investigation into a major wildlife trader

Investigations included ongoing actions to identify the key individuals in a wildlife crime syndicate now believed active in at least five districts of three of the four provinces bordering Kerinci Seblat National Park.

A total of 12 cases of human-wildlife conflict or major wildlife emergencies were reported and attended by TPCUs or TPCU members.

The majority of these cases related to Sumatran tiger moving in forest-edge farmland however, for the first time since 2008, two incidents were recorded in which attacks on people occurred with one man seriously injured and a second killed

Although these cases occurred in two different locations to the east of the national park and were separated in time by just under three months, it is now considered highly likely that these two attacks were related.

A third attack on a person occurred in early February 2012, just outside this reporting period framework, and is likely to be related to the previous two incidents.

The program also conducted the rescue of one conflict tiger and a Sumatran clouded leopard from conflicts in districts of Jambi province and worked, with colleagues from KSDA Bengkulu, to rescue a snared and badly injured tiger in forests to the south of the national park in Bengkulu

The National Park now conducts its own tiger monitoring and camera-trapping program under the management of a highly-experienced young national park officer who has worked with FFI/DICE since 2004 and was facilitated to attend Smart Patrol training with the programme's Bengkulu teams leader and two others in Thailand through the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute and Global Tiger Initiative.

The program maintained close links with local NGO partners in five park-edge districts and with the Sumatra-wide Harimaukita Sumatran tiger conservation forum and worked closely through this reporting period to seek rejection of proposals to build a network of roads through core areas of the national park

The program also maintained dialogue with two park-edge palm oil plantation companies in Bengkulu and West Sumatra provinces and one of these companies is now

in the process of planning to establish a small Sumatran tiger sanctuary (for two tigers which cannot be released) and a temporary holding site for rescued/conflict tigers in a 3000ha forest block within its plantation area bordering KSNP.

Finally, this reporting period saw the resignation of two highly valued PHS team members, Samsul Basir, who was a founding community ranger member of the PHS TPCU teams in May 2000 and retired from the team in October 2011 due to problems with a long-standing ankle injury and Boy Ronnal, a TNKS ranger and TPCU ranger leader since 2009 who resigned from the team to allow him to focus on a law degree.

Both maintain close contact with the programme while *pak* Samsul's son, Eki, has now joined the TPCU team, full-time, as a community ranger.

We thank both for their absolute and outstanding dedication to the cause of Sumatran tiger, tiger prey and habitat conservation.

DJM

Sungaipenuh, Kerinci
February 2012

Activities August-January 2012

Patrols

A total of 39 field patrols were conducted in six park-edge districts of three provinces bordering Kerinci Seblat National Park, covering a total walking distance of 620Km and recording a total of not fewer than 27 adult individual tigers.



One of these patrols was aborted due to seizure of two chainsaws from illegal loggers before the TPCU patrol team had entered core tiger habitat while a second patrol was primarily focused to identifying threat to tiger habitat from an industrial timber plantation company and open-caste iron ore mining.

Frequency of encounter (FoE) with Sumatran tiger by patrols during the reporting period stood at 1 tiger per 22.9 patrol kilometres walked, park-wide, a fractional reduction on the same period 2010-2011.

TPCU members were encouraged to use information networks at village level to identify areas at possible threat from active

poaching of both tiger and prey species and two of the three active tiger snares found and destroyed were on intelligence-led patrols.

Additionally TPCU ranger teams detected and destroyed a total of 167 active deer snares, some strong enough to hold a tiger if caught and, indicative of the growing pressure on wild song birds, a total of 227 liming points or snares for ground birds, primarily pheasant.

Two chainsaws were seized from illegal loggers who were taking timber before squatters moved in to encroach on protected forests and formal warning letters issued to other offenders encountered, primarily bird trappers.

Although tiger frequency of encounter was stable, park-wide, reduced encounter rates were recorded in three specific sites including on one patrol route where active tiger snares were destroyed in early 2011.



Patrol units also recorded continuing forest degradation and loss as a result of mining activities in a number of areas bordering the national park including in high conservation value forests assigned for selective logging only due to watershed protection and biodiversity values but which are now being assigned to mining consortia by local administrations.

A TPCU patrol unit also confirmed that a state-owned mining company was conducted illegal explorations within the national park in Jambi province and had established its operating forward base camp within national park borders: this case is now under investigation by forestry department officers at national level and the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) but may be related to major anomalies between Forestry department maps of Sumatra island and those used by the Ministry and directorates of mining.

Illegal logging was recorded in a number of areas around the national park, possibly as local communities have become aware of the lack of capacity of park staff to respond due to ranger staffing issues while encroachment into protected and state forests for agriculture continues to cause serious concern

Investigations

Investigations into suspected tiger poaching and trade and to identify areas where field patrols were required were conducted in nine districts of the four provinces bordering Kerinci Seblat National Park.

More than half of the active deer snares disarmed and two of the three active tiger snares found and destroyed were detected as a result of information on possible poaching threat secured by TPCU members

Two investigations during the program period resulted in direct evidence of poaching and trade in Sumatran tiger .

In the first case, a team investigator secured a tiger vertebrae, clearly of a recently killed animal, reported, by the broker, to be an adult female. The poacher was identified but the evidence had already been traded to a dealer long known to this programme. This animal is strongly suspected to have been poached in production forests bordering the national park in the Tabir river area on the borders of Bungo and Merangin districts of Jambi in late September 2011, an area where forests are now being seriously disturbed by commercial activities (industrial timber plantation forest and open-cast iron ore mining).

It is possible that this incident is related to a subsequent string of human-tiger conflicts, including three attacks on people, one fatal, in nearby areas between October and February 2012 which are strongly suspected to have been conducted by one or more juvenile or sub-adult tigers.

A second investigation resulted in the team investigator being offered an incomplete tiger pelt, apparently relatively old, by an individual who has been under intermittent surveillance for some time as a street vendor of bear claws, fake tiger claws and fake canines. No action was taken against this street vendor since it would have endangered an ongoing investigation into the activities of an individual only recently identified as a major as opposed to opportunist wildlife dealer based to the east of the national park.

The emergence of closed syndicates where the poacher sells poached wildlife to a local 'boss' (who also provides capital for the poachers' activities in return for first offer on any poached animal) and then transports the poached animal(s) on to the second tier dealer/'boss' has made it more difficult to secure first-hand evidence of crime (required for launching of law enforcement)

Conflict Mitigation and Wildlife Emergencies

On the basis of past experience, the programme routinely expects to receive information on and respond to an average of two or more human-wildlife conflict reports each month.

The majority of such conflicts are 'low-grade' problems, most frequently relating to tigers moving in the farmland-forest interface and so causing anxiety to farmers, in particular rubber tappers, and where interventions range from counselling to 'scaring' the tiger away using noise makers (fireworks and/or 'cannons')

However during this reporting period the programme experienced an unprecedented number of serious human-tiger conflicts, including the first fatal attack by a tiger on a person in park-edge forests since 2008.

PHS staffers also conducted or worked with other forestry agencies to conduct the rescues of two Sumatran tigers (excluding a major incident in February 2012) and a Sumatran clouded leopard during this six months period.

It is too early to conclude whether the events of August-January 2012 mark an escalation in intensity of conflicts and wildlife emergencies or whether the sequence of incidents is coincidental.

The first serious conflict incident developed in late September 2011 when community informants in a forest-edge village to the south of the Kerinci valley reported problems with a tiger establishing a presence in farmland mixed with degraded forest close to the village.

This settlement is accustomed to tiger presence, often close to the village, but were concerned because the animal had not, as is normal, moved on after two-three days. TPCUs deployed noisemaking cannons and fireworks to disperse the tiger but this was not successful.



The tiger then moved into the settlement and preyed on a goat and dogs and 'Catch' boxes were deployed at key points leading into the village and on the fifth night an adult male Sumatran tiger was caught.

The animal was in extremely poor condition with a 'staring' coat and large-scale fur loss (see *photograph, left*), very emaciated and had suffered a catastrophic snare injury (see *below*) to one forefoot resulting

in the severing of four of its toes. It is not clear whether the snare injury provoked the

conflict *vice versa* however three individuals known to have hunted tigers live in the immediate surrounding area.

Urgent veterinary support was requested and provided by a Kerinci district government vet with a strong interest in wildlife medicine who has frequently worked with the TPCU teams and by Dr Erni Suyanti Musabine of KSDA Bengkulu.

The animal's condition was such that any attempt to evacuate to a provincial capital with better resources could not be risked and he died on the fourth night following evacuation from the conflict location.



An on-site *post mortem* found this tiger to be suffering a massive and long-standing infestation of at least four types of parasite including worms most commonly associated with humans and livestock with heart and lungs showing evidence of chronic and serious damage and with pneumonia (in spite of antibiotic treatment to stave off infection from the foot injury) as the probable final cause of death.

There is a strong suspicion that the parasite infestation which was the primary cause of both the conflict and this tiger's subsequent death may be related to worm infestations in domestic dogs used both to guard farmland and for hunting wild boar

Just one month later, the Jambi PHS teams were advised through their community network of an attack on a person – a rubber tapper in farmland by the Tabir river in the Ngaol area of Merangin district.

The incident occurred approximately 14 km to the east of the national park in an area of mixed land tenures (production forest and traditional village farmlands). The victim, a rubber tapper, was seriously injured but survived because the force of the attack drove him down a steep hillside and he was released by the attacking animal and able to seek help.

PHS rangers concluded that one or more tigers were present in the area which borders a site where extensive open-cast iron mining is being conducted in production forests using the 'Pinjam Pakai' system in which local governments loan out state forests to mining companies under local permissions not always approved or even reported to the Ministry of Forestry.

A TPCU patrol unit also surveyed adjoining production forests assigned, in 2009, as an industrial plantation (HTI) forest area to a Bungo district-based logging company (PT Mugitriman International) where very extensive timber extraction and forest clearance was being conducted using inappropriate methods not in keeping with the AMDAL (environmental impact assessment) certificate granted

Meanwhile, working with colleagues from KSDA Jambi, catch boxes were placed in the victim's village and a neighbouring settlement, approximately 4km from the site of the attack where predation of goats by an animal, identified by villagers as a tiger, was occurring. TPCU rangers were dubious that a tiger was responsible for the livestock

predation but concentrated instead of resolving the situation as villagers in the area were deeply alarmed by the attack on the farmer and the subsequent incursions into their villages.

Five days after the capture box was placed, an adult male Sumatran Clouded leopard was caught and evacuated to Bangko where it was observed to be suffering from a shoulder injury which would have impacted on its ability to hunt or move freely.

The animal was then evacuated to the Taman Rimbo Zoo in Jambi city for veterinary treatment. Given the proximity of the incidents (attack on rubber farmer and incidents of livestock predation in villages) it was widely proposed that the animal responsible for both the attack on the rubber tapper and predation of village livestock was the same individual although this assumption was a cause of some concern to some team members including the FFI team leader.

Just over 10 weeks later, in late January 2012 a serious incident resulting in the death of a 32 year-old man, an illegal logger, occurred in the Sungai Manau production forest in the Nalo area of Merangin district, approximately 15km east of the national park .

The PHS team did not join the combined police-KSDA team which recovered the body from the incident site, approximately 5km into an area of production forest, however police advised they were forced to fire warning shots to dispel two Sumatran tiger which were observed close to the body of the victim which had been partially eaten. These two animals were described as 'not large tigers' by the police officer leading the team.

A TPCU team spent the next week working with villagers in the area adjoining forests where the incident had occurred, providing advice on safety in the current situation and seeking to ascertain whether the tiger(s) responsible for the attack were likely to move out of forest and into farmland.

The TPCU team noted the presence of a large adult male Sumatran tiger which was concluded to be the Resident and not the tiger(s) responsible for the attack but were unable to enter the area where incident had occurred for safety reasons, including that since 2009, the national park has not been able to renew fire arms licences for rangers..

Meanwhile GIS mapping strongly indicated that there was a high probability that October's non-fatal attack in the Ngaol area (at the time assigned to a Clouded leopard in the absence of clear evidence to the contrary) and the incident in Nalo Tantan which sites were separated by only approximately 14km.

The team further drew a tentative conclusion that both incidents were likely linked to the poaching of an adult female Sumatran tiger in late September in *S* village in the Tabir river valley area and that the tiger(s) involved in these two attacks were possibly sub-adult offspring of the poached tigress.

The two attacks on people (in October 2011 and January 2012) caused widespread problems for the PHS team in the district in which they occurred since this is an area where there is no 'hard edge' between forest and farmland and tigers frequently move within the traditional mixed village rubber 'gardens' and so there was widespread anxiety among traditional villages across a wide area

These problems were exacerbated by local political interests hostile to both the national park and seeking political gain in Merangin district where elections for the district head are scheduled for 2012 .

Meanwhile the 2008 Ministerial decree on a multi-stakeholder approach to human-wildlife conflict mitigation has yet to be fully implemented in Sumatra while the compensation scheme for victims of serious human-tiger conflicts launched by the Ministry of Forestry was abandoned in early 2011 after the Auditor decreed the

Ministry could not make social welfare payments to conflict victims as welfare payments are not within the Ministry's remit.

With no one body able or willing to take any statutory responsibility for support for the victim's family, wild rumours began to be circulated by villagers from the victim's community intended to secure attention. This was perhaps counter productive since the community in this area has a reputation for sometimes acting in an anarchistic fashion so that authorities were generally not keen to visit the village, especially given the wild and fantastic stories being circulated

Unfortunately, just as PHS discussion with the village's headman secured an informal agreement on how to resolve the immediate situation, a KSDA ranger visited the victim's village to request a chronology of events and was held hostage for some hours by the victim's family until the village headman was able to negotiate his release.

The FFI team leader who has been familiar with this village since the late 1990s and a PHS ranger from a neighbouring sub district who is well known in the area subsequently visited the victim's family, provided immediate financial support - on a non-formal basis - to the victim's wife and were able to resolve the immediate hostility; this permitted local government officials and the district leader to also visit the village with support and reduce local tensions.

Unfortunately, this situation was exploited – and continues to be exploited – by local elites, some connected with the illegal logging syndicates long active in this area of Merangin district, with the head of the district parliament openly calling for villagers or police to 'shoot' straying tigers and making wild accusations that the tiger(s) responsible for the attacks had been deliberately released.

Finally, also in January 2012, TPCUs in Bengkulu worked with our colleagues from KSDA Bengkulu to rescue and evacuate an adult male Sumatran tiger, snared by a poacher and then badly injured by wild pig hunters, from a protected watershed forest in Lebong district to the south-west of KSNP.

The animal was evacuated first to Bengkulu and then airlifted to the wildlife hospital at Taman Safari Indonesia for intensive treatment however it died 2 days later as a result of internal injuries from spear wounds.

Capacity raising

The programme's Bengkulu teams' leader and two other young and enthusiastic national park officers, including the leader of the NPA's tiger monitoring team were facilitated to join Smart Patrol training in Thailand in January 2012.

It is hoped that Smart Patrol techniques and data base management will be phased in over the course of 2012-13 by both the PHS team and by the National Park Authority

In previous years the program has routinely offered on-the-job training to national park rangers through involving them in a range of field activities in particular forest patrols and conflict mitigation.

However this activity was only occasionally conducted during the reporting period due to ranger staffing issues at the national park

The team leader worked with local NGO partners who are members of the AKAR Network to give advice on tiger conservation issues and, in particular, on mitigation of low grade human-tiger conflicts.

Stakeholder liaison and working with partners

The program worked closely with local NGO partners on a variety of issues, most importantly pressure for the Ministry of Forestry to give permission for a network of roads through core tiger habitat in Kerinci Seblat National Park.

FFI was able to secure support for AKAR Network lobby and campaigning against the roads proposals, AKAR Network concluded these proposals had secured high level support at national and political level even while clearly breaching protected areas law.

The programme provided extensive data on tiger populations and likely impacts on tiger conservation in KSNP to the 'Independent Team appointed by the Ministry of Forestry to evaluate the roads proposals but was concerned to note that two or the three scientific advisors to the Independent Team were staff of two provincial universities in provinces where the government strongly backs the roads plans.

The Minister of Forestry is expected to announce his decision on whether roads will be approved or not in March or early April 2012.

The team leader also worked with colleagues at NPA to design a proposal for future monitoring of Sumatran tiger and tiger prey species in KSNP which will deliver quantitative data on the impacts of patrols and other tiger protection and conservation actions to guide future field protection and conservation strategies in this and other tiger landscapes.

Meanwhile, the Tidar Kerinci Agung palm oil plantation in Solok Selatan district, West Sumatra, which directly adjoins KSNP, plans to develop a small tiger sanctuary for two tigers which cannot be released into the wild and a temporary holding and treatment point for rescued or conflict tigers.

Unfortunately, no such progress has been made with a Belgian-owned oil palm plantation company which operates plantations in Mukomuko district Bengkulu to the immediate west of the national park which has previously expressed interest in providing support for tiger conservation including possibly for a holding centre for rescued/injured tigers and other wildlife.