

MYCAT FINAL REPORT TO 21ST CENTURY TIGER

Project Information

- Project Title:** CAT Walk – Citizen Action for Tigers
- Project Description:** Supporting anti-poaching efforts with citizen volunteers in the Yu River Wildlife Corridor and Taman Negara National Park, Malaysia
- Organisation:** Malaysian Conservation Alliance for Tigers (MYCAT)
- Project period:** 1 March 2015 – 31 December 2015
- Prepared by:** MYCAT Secretariat's Office



The Malaysian Conservation Alliance for Tigers (MYCAT) is an alliance of the Malaysian Nature Society (MNS), TRAFFIC Southeast Asia, Wildlife Conservation Society-Malaysia Programme and WWF-Malaysia, supported by the Department of Wildlife and National Parks Peninsular Malaysia for joint implementation of the National Tiger Conservation Action Plan for Malaysia.

Executive Summary

Decades of unabated poaching had extirpated tigers and their prey from the most important forest linkage connecting the world's 5th largest tiger landscape in Malaysia. Through the Citizen Action for Tigers (CAT) conservation programme, 821 individual volunteers from 32 countries have walked and protected 1,774 km of the forest and disarmed 136 snares in the Yu River Wildlife Corridor to date. Finally, in 2015, the volunteers have documented amazing signs of wildlife recovery. People are making a difference. With CAT Walks, anyone can save tigers! CAT Walks bring wildlife back to the forest and people back to nature. While maintaining the vigilance at the Corridor, we plan to expand this successful citizen conservation model to another site in Malaysia in 2016.

Introduction

[Listed as Critically Endangered in the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species](#) last year (Kawanishi 2015), the Malayan tiger faces a number of threats, pushing them to the verge of extinction. Habitat loss and fragmentation, depletion of prey species and retaliation killing resulting from human-tiger conflict have contributed to a population decline from an estimated 3,000 to 500 in the 20th century. Currently estimated at 240-350, the most immediate threat that needs to be addressed to stave off extinction is poaching.

A benchmark study conducted in Malaysia's largest protected area, the Taman Negara National Park (4,343 km²), found that the Park had the largest single tiger population in Southeast Asia in 1999-2001 (Kawanishi and Sunquist 2004). A follow-up study by MYCAT in 2011, however, indicated that the tiger population had drastically declined. It also highlighted the locations of poaching hotspots and illegal access routes into the western part of the Park through an adjacent wildlife Corridor. Decades of unabated poaching have extirpated endangered species such as the tiger and sambar in this area.

MYCAT's project site, the Yu River Wildlife Corridor, is an 11 km stretch of rainforest flanking the Yu River in the west of the Park. It is a priority wildlife area for Taman Negara and is the last linkage connecting the two largest tiger landscapes in Peninsular Malaysia – the Greater Taman Negara and the Main Range. They form the fifth largest tiger landscape (35,000km² in total) combined, and are recognised as 'TCL16' by international tiger conservation communities (Sanderson et al. 2006). The Corridor is bisected by a highway that further increases the poachers' accessibility into the park.

The inception of the Citizen Action for Tigers (CAT) programme in 2010 was a response by MYCAT to suppress poaching in the Corridor. CAT enables citizen conservationists to volunteer and be actively involved in on-the-ground protection of this important tiger habitat. They deter poaching by their presence at poaching hotspots and the Taman Negara border.

While carrying out recreational activities such as hiking or bird-watching, volunteers look out for snares and traps, which are deactivated, thus saving the lives of a myriad of wildlife. They report any suspicious activity immediately to the 24-7 MYCAT Wildlife Crime Hotline. MYCAT then relays the information to the relevant enforcement agencies and follows up on the actions taken. CAT Walkers also check camera traps and share the excitement of seeing wild animals that are otherwise not observable in the rainforest. This unique programme enables the public to share the responsibility of saving Malaysia's tigers.

The ultimate goal of this project is to protect and recover the tiger population in the Yu River Wildlife Corridor and Taman Negara National Park. The immediate objectives are to:

1. Deter poaching activity and encroachment into Taman Negara through CAT.
2. Elicit reliable information on crimes against wildlife from the public to aid law enforcement through the Wildlife Crime Hotline.
3. Cultivate wildlife stewardship among the Malaysian public and business community.

21st Century Tiger has been supporting this programme since 2013. This document describes the accomplishments and overall progress in 2015.

Activities and Outputs

Results are presented according to the project's objectives.

Objective 1: Deter poaching activity and encroachment into Taman Negara through CAT

The deterrence of poaching activity and encroachment is mainly due to the presence of CAT Walkers at the Yu River Wildlife Corridor. This is because the perpetrators, who are mainly opportunistic poachers, will not carry out their illegal activities in places that are frequented by people.

A CAT Walk involves eight to twelve volunteers. It is led either by MYCAT staff or a certified CAT Walk volunteer leader, and usually assisted by a guide from the indigenous Batek community. The interaction between the volunteers and the Batek is important as it helps the public to understand their stand on the threats to wildlife. It is also a good opportunity to watch the Batek in action and learn from their extensive knowledge of the forest.

Thanks to the support from 21st Century Tiger, MYCAT was able to sustain the project for the past three years, and maintain a steady protection of the Corridor using human presence as a poaching deterrent during this period (Table 1).

Table 1. Output of Citizen Action for Tigers programme in Yu River Wildlife Corridor between 2013 and 2015. As the project for 21st Century Tiger starts in March each year, data from January and February were omitted.

	2013*	2014	2015
No. of CAT Walks	54	72	66
No. of man-days	571	505	603
Total distance covered (km)	239	364	443
No. of snares/traps encountered	59	16	2

*The actual grant period was March to August in 2013. Data from September to December were added for cross comparison.

In 2015, we conducted an average of 6.6 CAT Walks every month, slightly less than 2014. The surveillance effort in terms of man-days and distance covered, however, was greater. The number of snares encountered had drastically declined over the years, indicating CAT's success in deterring poaching. Similarly, signs of encroachment have declined and there was no evidence of deforestation in the Corridor in 2015.

Towards sustaining and expanding CAT, we are training CAT Walkers with leadership qualities as CAT Walk volunteer leaders. They undergo the training, assessment and certification process before being certified. Certification qualifies them to lead CAT Walks in the Corridor without the presence

of MYCAT staff. We have trained 34 potential volunteers to date, some of whom are currently leading CAT Walks.

Greater spatial coverage was achieved in 2014 (Figure 1). It contracted in 2015 due to a new strategy which focused surveillance in the areas where wildlife was recovering.

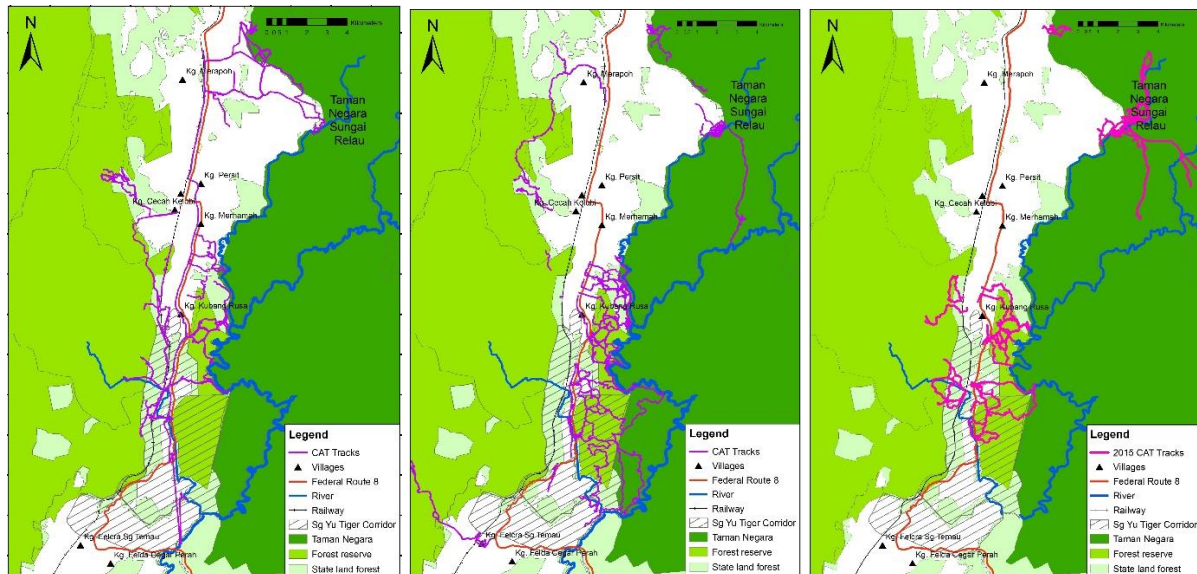


Fig. 1 CAT coverage in 2013, 2014 and 2015 (from left to right).

For effectiveness and adaptive management of the programme, it is important to keep engaging with the Department of Wildlife and National Park (DWNP) Peninsular Malaysia, an important stakeholder and CAT’s official partner. We met twice in 2015 to discuss issues, provide progress updates and security recommendations on the Corridor, and follow up on wildlife crime reports made by CAT Walkers.

Objective 2: Elicit reliable information on crimes against wildlife from the public to aid law enforcement via the Wildlife Crime Hotline

While on CAT Walks, volunteers report any illegal wildlife crimes they encounter in the forest (e.g. snares, traps, signs of encroachment, human presence, logging) to MYCAT’s Wildlife Crime Hotline. Apart from CAT Walk volunteers, the Hotline also provides an avenue for the general public to report wildlife crimes anywhere within Malaysia. MYCAT serves as a link between informants and the authorities, follows up on the action taken for specific reports and gives feedback to the informants.

In 2015, CAT volunteers reported seven incidents to the Hotline. These were reported to wildlife and forestry officials, who took appropriate action.

One notable report was the detection of a snare in the Corridor. The authorities dispatched an enforcement team to do a wider sweep in the area, which resulted in the removal of several snares, thus saving more wildlife.

Objective 3: Cultivate wildlife stewardship among the Malaysian public and business community

CAT is gaining popularity internationally. 821 individual volunteers from 32 countries have walked and protected the Corridor to date (Figure 2), 76% of them Malaysians. A total of 203 new and 38 repeat volunteers participated in 2015.



Fig. 2 Distribution of global CAT Walkers.

There is greater awareness of conservation among the public and a willingness to be involved, as indicated by the number of new and repeat volunteers participating in CAT. While this is a proxy measurement and the real benefits to individuals and society in terms of personal growth and change of attitude are difficult to monitor quantitatively, we have noted indications of an awakened sense of responsibility and a connection with nature in the CAT Walkers' feedback.

Volunteers are recruited through various online channels, including the CAT microsite (www.citizenactionfortigers.my), MYCAT e-news, website, Facebook, Twitter, volunteering portals and by word-of-mouth. CAT is also promoted in print media and at MYCAT outreach programmes (Appendix 1).

Other than the public, corporations have sponsored their staff to participate in CAT Walks as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility commitment (Table 2). Participating in a conservation programme gives them a chance to experience and internalise a sense of wildlife stewardship, as corporate citizens and as individuals.

Table 2. Comparison of output between the public and corporate volunteers for CAT in Yu River Wildlife Corridor and the western border of Taman Negara between March and December 2015.

No.	Activity	Public volunteers	Corporate volunteers
1.	No. of CAT Walks	36	30
2.	No. of man-days	359	244
3.	Total distance covered (km)	252	191

Last year, CAT Walks conducted by corporate volunteers constituted 40% of the total protection target in terms of surveillance man-days. Long-term collaboration has also resulted in their decision to support MYCAT's cause by donating a portion of their profits and exploring various ways to highlight the plight of Malayan tigers. This shows that corporate citizens are engaged and are gradually internalising a sense of ownership for corporate CAT Walks.

Outcomes and Conclusion

CAT's continuous presence in the Corridor has resulted in the gradual reduction of poaching, deforestation and encroachment, and the effective protection of endangered wildlife in this critical habitat. In 2015, after five years of protection from CAT, we are seeing amazing signs of wildlife recovery. While we are unable to disclose details, this underscores the importance of public participation in tiger conservation. With CAT, anyone can save wildlife.



Large mammals typically avoid open spaces such as the Corridor (see image on left) and need cover for movement.

To enhance the functionality of the Corridor, reforestation is the next phase of CAT at the site. While maintaining vigilance with trained CAT leaders and local guides, we plan to replicate this successful citizen conservation programme at another site around Taman Negara in 2016.

Media Outputs

- [Article](#) in The Star, a national English daily newspaper
- [Article](#) in Sin Chew Daily, a national Chinese language daily newspaper
- [Article](#) in Cari.com.my, a Chinese language online news portal
- Article in Association of British Women in Malaysia magazine (not available)
- Article in the New Straits Times, a national English daily newspaper (not available)
- Article in Sin Chew Daily, a national Chinese language daily newspaper (not available)
- [Article](#) in The Ant Daily, a multi-lingual online news portal
- Radio interview on Traxx FM, an English radio station (not available)
- [Television interview](#) on Mobtv.my, a Malay language internet television portal
- [Article](#) in *Harian Metro*, a national Malay language daily newspaper
- [Blog post](#) in Woodland Park Zoo official blog
- [Blog post](#) in *pokokkelapa*, a Malaysian travel blog
- [Blog post](#) in Chocolate Cats, a Malaysian Fashion blog

References

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Sanderson, E., Forrest, J., Loucks, C., Ginsberg, J., Dinerstein, E., Seidensticker, J., Leimgruber, P., Songer, M., Heydlauff, A., O'Brien, T., Bryja, G., Klenzendorf, S and Wikramanayake, E. 2006. Setting Priorities for the Conservation and Recovery of Wild Tigers: 2005-2015. The Technical Assessment. WCS, WWF, Smithsonian, and NFWF-STF, New York and Washington, DC, USA.

Appendix 1: List of outreach and awareness programmes conducted between March and December 2015

No	Date	Programme
1.	27-31 Mar 15	Tiger Roadshow at AFC U-23 Championship 2016 Qualifiers
2.	18 Apr 15	Tiger Roadshow at The Body Shop Earth Day free plant give-away, The Curve
3.	7 May 15	Tiger Talk to The Body Shop staff
4.	8 May 15	Sharing session with University of Malaya Ecology students
5.	9 May 15	Tiger Talk at Creative Volts Artist Sharing session, Ode Art Café
6.	31 May 15	Tiger Roadshow at Team Malaysia Fan Run 2015, Putrajaya
7.	18 Jun 15	Tiger Talk for Gardens International School A-Levels students
8.	4 Jul 15	CAT Talk to Cicada Tree Eco-Place and their supporters, Singapore
9.	5 Jul 15	CAT Talk to Vertebrate Study Group, National Society of Singapore, Singapore
10.	26 Aug 15	Tiger Talk for the Rotary Club of Kuala Lumpur DiRaja
11.	8 Sep 15	Tiger Talk at Woodland Park Zoo, Seattle, USA
12.	13 Sep 15	Tiger Talk at San Francisco Zoo, USA
13.	15 Sep 15	Tiger Talk for the Wildlife Conservation Network staff at San Francisco, USA
14.	21 Sep 15	Talk on MYCAT partnership at Malaysian Nature Society Silver Jubilee Symposium on Nature and Biodiversity
15.	3-4 Oct 15	CAT Walk Volunteer Leader Training
16.	5 Dec 15	Tiger Talk at Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum, Singapore
17.	6 Dec 15	Tiger Talk at Tea for Tigers, hosted by Cicada Tree Eco-Place in Singapore
18.	15 Dec 15	Using science to solve problems in tiger conservation at International School of Kuala Lumpur, Ampang
19.	28 Dec 15	Talk for AIESEC students, University Putra Malaysia
20.	16-17 Oct 15	Tiger Roadshow at 1Malaysia Contemporary Art Tourism Bazaar
21.	17 Oct 15	Tiger Roadshow at Malaysian Nature Society Festival of Wings
22.	14 Nov 15	Tiger Roadshow at International School of Kuala Lumpur Parents-Teacher Association International Festival
23.	15 Nov 15	Tiger Roadshow at MANZA Christmas Bazaar
24.	21 Nov 15	Tiger Roadshow at Austrian-German Christmas Bazaar
25.	29 Nov 15	Tiger Roadshow at Association of British Women in Malaysia Christmas Bazaar
26.	1-2 Dec 15	Tiger Roadshow at National MyBioD Seminar, Kuala Lumpur
27.	5 Dec 15	Tiger Roadshow at International School of Kuala Lumpur Farmer's Market, Ampang
28.	12 Dec 15	Tiger Roadshow at Market 17, Jaya One, Selangor
29.	12 Dec 15	Tiger Roadshow at Other Things Market, Selangor
30.	25 Dec 15	Tiger Roadshow at Christmas Brick Fair, Kuala Lumpur