

MYCAT INTERIM REPORT TO 21ST CENTURY TIGER

Project Information

Project Title:	CAT Walk – Citizen Action for Tigers
Project Description:	Supporting anti-poaching efforts together 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 2014 – 28 February 2015
Reporting period:	1 March 2014 – 31 August 2014
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

The Citizen Action for Tigers (CAT) programme involves citizen conservationists in the protection of a priority wildlife corridor known as the Yu River Wildlife Corridor. This corridor is the last remaining linkage connecting the two largest tiger landscapes in Malaysia, the Main Range and Taman Negara National Park. CAT enables volunteer conservationists to deter poaching by placing more “boots-on-the-ground”, save wildlife by deactivating snares, and support law enforcement by becoming the eyes and ears of the authorities.

The objectives of this project are to: 1) deter poaching activity at Yu River Wildlife Corridor and encroachment into Taman Negara National Park; 2) elicit reliable information on crimes against wildlife from the public to aid law enforcement; and 3) cultivate wildlife stewardship among the Malaysian public and business community and nurture in-house “conservation champions”.

With the support from 21st Century Tiger, during the 6-month project period between March and September 2014, MYCAT has conducted a total of 23 CAT trips, with the protection effort of 367 man-days which covered 351 km. CAT led volunteers to make four reports of threats encountered in corridor to the Wildlife Crime Hotline. The effective promotion of and increased public interest in CAT resulted in 132 new volunteers joining CAT trips.

There has also been a significant increase of corporate involvement in CAT compared to the same duration prior to this project. Corporate volunteers joined nine trips, contributing to protection efforts of 191 man-days. This figure, denoting 52% of the total efforts by volunteers, has far surpassed the target of 30% for CAT efforts by corporates targeted under this project. It is also note-worthy to report that we have seen some corporate volunteers taking initiatives to contribute to CAT outside of work and champion our cause in their respective organisations.

The regular presence of volunteers at poaching hotspots has successfully reduced poaching and illegal logging activity at the project site. This is clearly indicated by the decrease of poaching signs recorded in this reporting period. This decrease in threats could be why we have recorded more signs of sambar in the park and this justifies the premise that citizen conservationists do make a difference by being present at poaching hotspots. Although no images of tiger were captured on 11 camera traps set up in various locations, we have encountered signs of tiger presence as well as a kill site suspected of a tiger's.

Besides poaching and illegal logging, the corridor is constantly under threat from other activities including land clearing and mining operations, on both alienated lands and forest reserves. MYCAT plans to continue the protection efforts on the ground while working with the authorities to find solutions for this issue, as well as extend the current CAT coverage area to the southern section of Tanum Forest Reserve and engage more corporations for CAT.

This support from 21st Century Tiger enabled MYCAT to continue engaging the individual members of the public and Malaysian corporates to protect this critical wildlife corridor. The decreasing signs of poaching and strong support from the public for CAT fuels our hope for the recovery of the Malayan tiger population in the area.

Introduction

With less than [300 wild tigers remaining](#), the Malayan tiger (*Panthera tigris jacksoni*) is in dire straits. While tigers are threatened by habitat loss and fragmentation, depletion of prey, and retaliation killing due to conflicts with human interest, the single most important driver of the rapid population decline in the past century has been the poaching of tigers for commercial trade and profit. In Malaysia, a country where 45% of the land is forested and 80% of which are either forest reserves or protected areas, population recovery depends primarily on stopping poaching before the diminishing population is pushed over the threshold of extinction.

At the beginning of this century, Taman Negara National Park (4,343 km²) boasted a healthy tiger population. It is not only the largest protected area in the nation, but also contains West Malaysia's largest tract of intact lowland dipterocarp forest. However, MYCAT's recent research in the western part of the park found that the tiger population has drastically declined. That research project also identified the locations of poaching hotspots and illegal access routes into the park through an adjacent wildlife corridor. Despite being a priority area for tiger conservation (DWNP 2008), park rangers cannot patrol the area regularly enough to protect wildlife from poachers, mainly due to shortage of manpower.

The project site, known as the Yu River Wildlife Corridor, is the last forest link connecting Taman Negara to the Main Range, the two largest tiger landscapes (35,000 km² in total) in Peninsular Malaysia (Fig. 1). The corridor is divided by a highway that further increases poachers' accessibility into the park. In order for Taman Negara to function as a source of wildlife populations that disperse into the surrounding forests, the park and the corridor must be kept inviolate through the suppression of poaching and effective law enforcement.

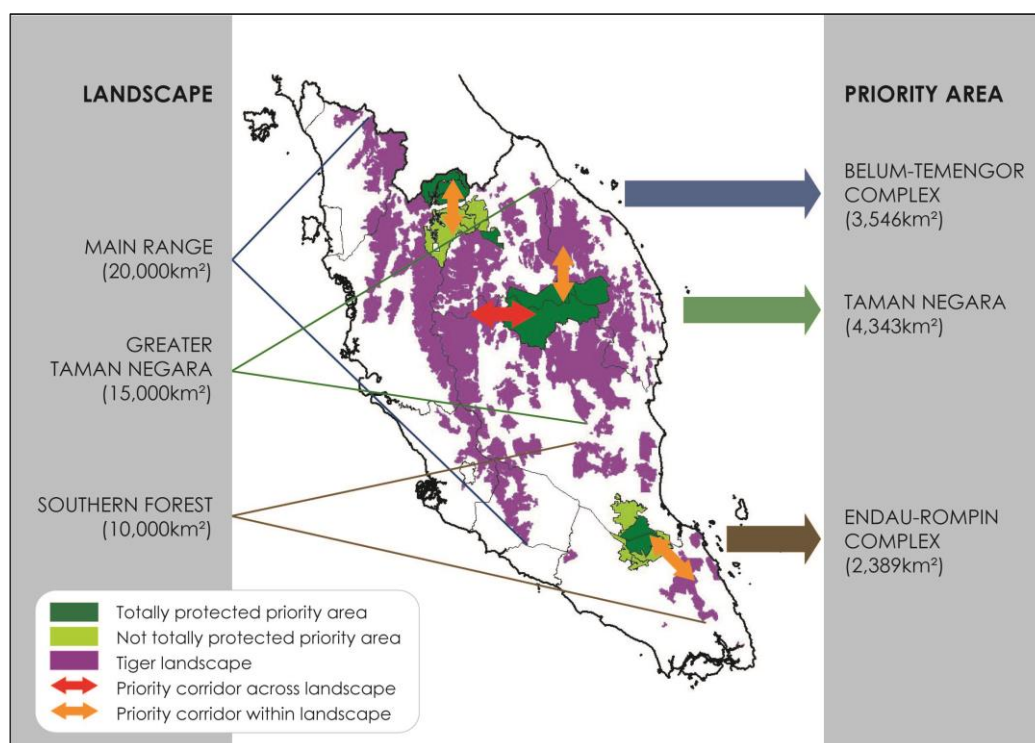


Fig. 1. The location of the project site, Yu River Wildlife Corridor (red arrow) and Taman Negara in respect to the three tiger landscapes and priority areas identified in the National Tiger Conservation Action Plan (DWNP, 2008).

The Citizen Action for Tigers (CAT) programme engages citizen conservationists to take proactive

measures to protect this important tiger habitat. Volunteers deter poaching by providing much-needed “boots on the ground” enabling them to become “eyes and ears” of the authorities. While enjoying recreational activities in a wilderness setting, volunteers save wildlife by deactivating snares and support law enforcement efforts by reporting illegal activities such as signs of poaching, illegal logging etc. to MYCAT’s 24-hour Wildlife Crime Hotline. MYCAT then relays the information to the authorities and follows up on the actions taken. CAT activities range from weekend walks when poachers are most active and park rangers are stretched thin, to week-long trips by volunteers assisting park rangers in park border maintenance (Appendix 1). By providing an avenue for the public to get involved, this project enables global citizens to share the responsibility of saving Malaysia’s tigers.

The objectives of this project are to:

1. Deter poaching activity at Yu River Wildlife Corridor and encroachment into Taman Negara National Park;
2. Elicit reliable information on crimes against wildlife from the public to aid law enforcement; and
3. Cultivate wildlife stewardship among the Malaysian public and business community and nurture in-house “conservation champions”.

The ultimate goal of the CAT programme in the area is to protect and recover the tiger population in the Yu River Wildlife Corridor and Taman Negara National Park.

This mid-term report presents the achievements of the project within the period of March to August 2014, future plans, and discussions on issues faced in the implementation of the project.

Activities and Outputs

Results are presented according to the project’s objectives.

Objective 1: Deter poaching activity at Yu River Wildlife Corridor and encroachment into Taman Negara

Four Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) were established to monitor the execution of this objective under the CAT project. Thanks to the support from 21st Century Tiger this year, MYCAT was able to keep up the momentum and continue our protection efforts at the project site. We successfully increased the distance covered by 16% in this reporting period compared to the same duration prior to this project (Table 1).

Table 1. Comparison of achievements of Citizen Action for Tigers programme in Yu River Wildlife Corridor in Malaysia during the previous 6-month period and this reporting period.

No.	Activity	Period Between September 2013 – February 2014	Period between March - August 2014 (21 st Century Tiger Project)
1.	No. of CAT trips	23	23
2.	No. of man-days	401	367
3.	Total distance covered (km)	301.9	350.6
4.	No. of poaching and encroachment incidences encountered	45	11

In this reporting period, the response to CAT programme from the public has been quite encouraging. A total of 23 CAT trips were held, averaging about 3.8 weekend trips in a month. The protection efforts amount to 367 man-days in the forest.

While there has been no changes in the number of trips conducted, the number of man-days in the forests have decreased by 8% in this reporting period compared to 2013. This could be due to the new limit of CAT volunteers per trip put in place this year (max. 12 volunteers/trip) to reduce the human impact on the forest and prioritise the volunteers' safety.

Overall, CAT volunteers have covered a total of 367 km in the corridor and the border of Taman Negara, focusing on routes located mainly in the eastern side of the corridor i.e. Tanum Forest Reserve and the surrounding state land forests (Fig. 2). This is mainly due to inaccessibility of the routes on the western side due to the highway construction as well as the alarming number of poaching threats and sign of encroachment into the park found in the eastern side during reconnaissance trips.

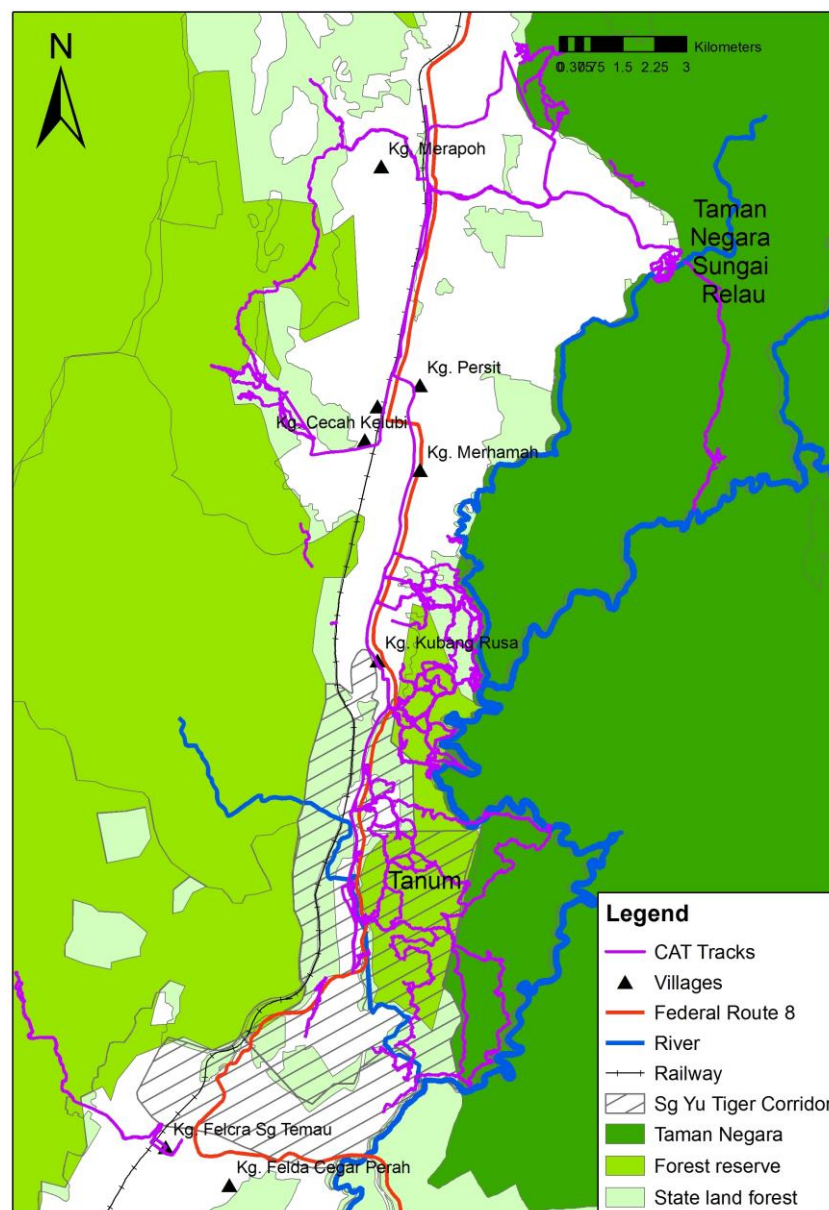


Fig. 2: The routes covered by CAT Walk volunteers in the Yu River Wildlife Corridor and western border of Taman Negara between March and August 2014.

There has been a significant decrease of poaching signs found in the corridor since the start of this project. CAT volunteers recorded 11 incidences of threats to wildlife – including signs of snares/traps, poachers’ campsites, hunting platform etc. via the Wildlife Crime Hotline. This decrease despite the intensified CAT efforts in terms of area coverage in the corridor (Table 1) indicates that illegal wildlife crimes has been effectively suppressed here and that poachers and encroachers are slowly being rooted out. MYCAT will continue to monitor the most critical parts of the corridor that provides access into Taman Negara, with regular intervals of CAT Walks and overnight Border Walks to ensure that poaching and encroachment are suppressed.

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

Besides protecting the tiger habitat and deactivating snares, CAT volunteers also record signs of possible crime against wildlife – poaching signs, suspicious human presence, encroachment, illegal logging etc. Since March this year, four reports were made to the authorities, i.e. Department of Wildlife and National Parks (DWNP) Peninsular Malaysia, Forestry Department of Peninsular Malaysia (FDPM) and the Royal Malaysia Police to report the 11 incidences of threats encountered by CAT volunteers. Some of these reports have been acted upon by the authorities, while the others are still under investigation. Within this reporting period, volunteers reported finding 15 snares/traps in the corridor, out of which the authorities destroyed and removed 12.

Table 2. Comparison of reports received via the Wildlife Crime Hotline during the previous 6-month period and this reporting period.

No.	Activity	Period Between September 2013 – February 2014	Period between March – August 2014 (21st Century Tiger Project)
1.	No. of reports to hotline	17	4
2.	No. actions taken by authority	10	3

During one trip, CAT Walkers came across an active trapline and feathers of Malayan Peacock pheasant and reported it to the hotline. Upon receipt of the report, DWNP immediately swept the area and removed the trapline. Although the culprit could not be identified and arrested, it is extremely important for the local opportunistic poachers to know that the area is under the surveillance of MYCAT and DWNP.

Objective 3: Cultivate wildlife stewardship among the Malaysian public and business community and nurture in-house “conservation champions”

CAT volunteers are recruited through various channels which includes the MYCAT e-news, website, Facebook page, other volunteer portals and by word-of-mouth from previous volunteers. Additionally, CAT is also promoted among the public via the media, both online and print and during MYCAT outreach programmes (Appendix 2). Following the increase in popularity of the CAT programme, we launched a new microsite specifically for CAT (www.citizenactionfortigers.my) on 29 July 2014 in conjunction with Global Tiger Day. This microsite, developed with the help of a volunteer, provides easy access to information on the programme and how volunteers can sign up for CAT.

As of 31 August 2014, the cumulative number of MYCAT volunteers was 1,214 individuals, out of which 553 were CAT volunteers. A total of 132 new CAT volunteers, from urban and local

communities, have participated in CAT trips during this reporting period.

MYCAT has also engaged several corporates to sponsor their staff to participate in the CAT programme in line with their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) policies. This engagement enabled corporate employees to “walk the talk” of conservation and instilled an overall sense of wildlife stewardship among the corporations as well as each participating individual. One notable corporation is the Royal Selangor, a leading home-grown pewter manufacturer and retailer. Royal Selangor staff have been coming regularly on CAT Walks for the past two years, completing a series of four CAT Walks in a year, and they have since committed to another four CAT Walks.

Since the commencement of this project, corporate volunteers have participated in nine out of 23 CAT trips. They have spent 191 man-days in the forest, which represents 52% of the total protection efforts, surpassing the 30% CAT efforts by Malaysian corporates targeted under this project. As a result of the long-term collaboration with some organisations, we have observed the emergence of “conservation champions” amongst the staff participating in CAT programme. A few were willing to participate in CAT on a personal basis and even willing to further promote MYCAT’s cause in their respective companies – be it to solicit donations for the programme or continuation of the existing collaboration.

Table 3. Comparison of achievements of Citizen Action for Tigers in Yu River Wildlife Corridor and western border of Taman Negara in terms of public and corporate volunteers between March and September 2014.

No.	Activity	Non-corporate volunteers	Corporate volunteers
1.	No. of CAT trips	14	9
2.	No. of man-days (% of total efforts)	176 (48)	191 (52)
3.	Total distance covered (km)	210.7	114.9

As part of the ongoing efforts to increase protection of the corridor and ensure the sustainability of the programme, selected volunteers were trained to lead future CAT Walks. Two training workshops were conducted – targeting local nature guides at the project site, and urban volunteers from the around Kuala Lumpur, respectively. The participation of the local nature guides at this workshop was a big step towards getting the local community’s buy-in for the CAT programme. As most of them were already aware of the plight of wildlife in their own backyard, the guides were able to easily comprehend the need for this programme and the necessity of their involvement as “conservation champions” in their community.

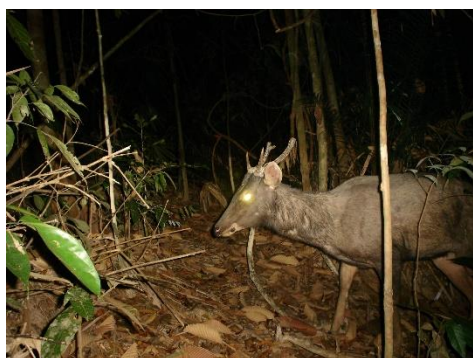
We also work closely with the aboriginal community at the project site, the Batek people, who are enthusiastic about the CAT programme. MYCAT often engages Batek men as guides during CAT trips. Batek women, although not directly involved in guiding CAT trips, are beneficiaries of another ecotourism activity brought in by MYCAT. [Ecoteer Responsible Travel](#), an international community service organisation, brings in overseas “voluntourists” interested in nature conservation to participate in CAT Walks in the corridor. As part of their programme, they engage with the Batek women on overnight CAT Walks and during English classes taught by the volunteers at the Batek village. These activities, in addition to the guiding by men, help supplement the Batek’s income through conservation and ecotourism activities.

Outcomes and Conclusion

The tiger population in the western part of Taman Negara was estimated to be seven adult tigers some 12 years ago (Kawanishi and Sunquist 2004). This number, however, dwindled to only one surviving animal (MYCAT 2012), aptly named *Bujang* (bachelor in Malay) by MYCAT. This lone tiger, frequently captured by the camera-traps set up in the park previously, stopped appearing in the images taken at five camera-trap locations in the park since late 2012.



This may be caused by *Bujang* avoiding the area due to construction projects nearby or the limited number of functioning camera-traps on our hands. Nevertheless, *Bujang* cannot be presumed to have been poached because there have been sightings and signs of tigers since 2012 in the area. In 2013, MYCAT detected nine signs of tiger in the corridor while five signs were detected in this reporting period. The high number of detection of tiger signs in 2013 is mainly due to the intensive search of *Bujang* conducted by MYCAT and DWNP with support from WWF-Malaysia's tiger biologists. During that survey, we came across a sun bear carcass surrounded by tiger pugmarks. This year, we chanced upon a sambar carcass, suspected to have been killed by a tiger. We are hopeful that these might be the kill sites of *Bujang* or another tiger.



The reduction of poaching activity in the corridor in this reporting period, validates the premise of the project that the frequent presence of people in poaching hotspots suppresses poaching activity. The decrease in the poaching signs suggests that while there are still some threats to wildlife found in the corridor, it has reduced over time and will continue decreasing while there is such a citizen wildlife watch acting as deterrent in the corridor. Additionally, the reducing threats have also resulted in the slight uptick in the signs of sambar detected in the western part of Taman Negara. This is an encouraging indication of possible population recovery of a crucial tiger prey species, which has been over-exploited for its meat almost to the point of extirpation in many parts of Malaysia (Kawanishi et al. 2014).

MYCAT plans to continue the CAT programme in the corridor to further increase the “boots-on-the-ground” and complement the protection efforts by DWNP. Expansion of the existing CAT routes to the western part of the corridor were in the plans but due to mining activities taking place in the area, this plan had to be postponed. Following this issue, we are expanding the CAT programme to the southern section of the Tanum Forest Reserve (Fig. 2). Reconnaissance is conducted with the assistance of Batek guides to identify new routes and emergency evacuation routes. The western part of the corridor will be kept in the pipelines for the future expansion of CAT as new roads created for the mining will inevitably increase illegal access for poachers and loggers.

Currently, we are approaching more corporations to participate in CAT for monetary support and volunteer manpower. MYCAT, being an alliance of conservation organisations, will however be mindful of the possibility of corporations seeking partnership solely to greenwash their image.

Despite the challenges, the positive factors presented here fuel our hope for tiger population recovery in Yu River Wildlife Corridor and Taman Negara and the optimism, supported by information gathered, continues to motivate the volunteers and MYCAT.

Media Outputs

- [Article](#) in MSN Malaysia, an online English news portal
- [Article](#) in The Star, a national English daily newspaper
- [Article](#) in The Star, a national English daily newspaper
- [Article](#) in The Star, a national English daily newspaper
- Radio interview on BFM, an English radio station (podcast available [here](#))
- Radio interview on Traxx FM, an English radio station (podcast available [here](#))

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Kawanishi, K., Rayan, D. M., Gumal, M. T. and Shepherd, C. R. 2014. Extinction process of the sambar in Peninsular Malaysia. *Deer Specialist Group News* 26: 48-59.

List of Appendices

1. Citizen Action for Tigers programme flyer
2. List of outreach and awareness programmes conducted between March and September 2014

Appendix 1: Citizen Action for Tigers programme flyer

Citizen Action for Tigers

Now anyone can help save wildlife!

Poaching is the main threat to the survival of wild tigers in Malaysia. Always wanted to help but don't know how?

Join Citizen Action for Tigers (CAT) to keep an eye out for illegal activities while having fun in the great outdoors! If you see anything suspicious in the forest, report it to the Wildlife Crime Hotline (019-356 4194).

Sg Yu Tiger Corridor CAT Walk

Keep the Sungai Yu Tiger Corridor safe while enjoying nature in Sungai Yu, near Merapoh, Pahang, over the weekend. Take moderate walks of varying lengths and enjoy leisure activities such as bird watching, picnicking and swimming. Fitness level normal.

moderate

Taman Negara CAT Trailblazer

Backpack Taman Negara border with park rangers for 5 days. Maintain the park border while deterring poaching and keeping eyes out for illegal activities and tiger signs. Fitness level high.

extreme

**Volunteers must be above 18 years old and in good physical condition.*

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Appendix 2: List of outreach and awareness programmes conducted between March and September 2014

No	Date	Programme
1.	6 Mar 14	Tiger Talk at UPM Faculty of Environmental Studies
2.	8-9 Mar 14	Outreach at Raptor Watch
3.	13 Mar 14	Talk on Citizen Action for Tigers for Amanzi Travel
4.	15 Mar 14	Talk on Wildlife Crime Hotline and CAT at MNS Selangor Branch Volunteer Appreciation Day at Awana Genting
5.	20 Mar 14	Talk on Citizen Action for Tigers for Green Badge guides at Merapoh
6.	14 Apr 14	Outreach at The Star Health Fair, Mid Valley
7.	13 Apr 14	Talk on tigers and wildlife conservation in Malaysia at MNS Selangor Branch workshop for Kelab Pencinta Alam teachers
8.	25 Apr 14	Talk on Citizen Action for Tigers for Singapore Zoo
9.	29 Apr 14	Talk on Citizen Action for Tigers for Cicada Tree Eco-Place
10.	12-13 Jun 14	Booth at National Workshop on Human-Wildlife Conflicts at Institute of Biodiversity, Lanchang
11.	11 Jul 14	Tiger Talk at Taylor's College Subang
12.	3 Aug 14	Booth at Eco Adventure Tourism Day at Dataran Merdeka
13.	9 Sep 14	Talk on Citizen Action for Tigers for Malai Adventure and Swedish Women Association
14.	26 Sep 14	Talk on Citizen Action for Tigers at Botanic Garden, Singapore
15.	27 Sep 14	Tiger Talk at Cicada Tree Eco-Place's Save the Malayan Tiger Fundraising Dinner