

Report Card - 2014

If you have not done so, I recommend you read my other tiger papers to become familiar with my stand on saving the tiger.

I recently visited a rescue facility's Web site where they made these two statements.

1) "No one who breeds tigers outside of the Species Survival Plan which is only for AZA accredited zoos is really breeding for conservation."

What a giant pile of tiger manure. They either copied that statement from some AZA propaganda or made it up because they are a proponent and supporter of the AZA.

2) "The only purebred tigers in the U.S. are in AZA zoos and include 133 Amur (AKA Siberian), 73 Sumatran and 50 Malayan tigers in the Species Survival Plan. All other U.S. captive tigers are inbred and cross bred and do not serve any conservation value."

They may be correct on the number of purebred tigers, but the second sentence is another pile of manure. Not all captive tigers are inbred. This puts the spotlight on what I, Dr. Bleyman, and other advocates who want to save the tiger have been saying for years. The AZA is directing accredited zoos/organizations (accredited by them) to save **only** purebred tigers. The AZA itself hasn't saved anything. This is a ridiculous, outdated, self-serving position that will lead to extinction.

The Wildlife Conservation Society (total revenue in 2012: \$230,042,654) and the World Wildlife Fund (total revenue in 2012: \$229,248,747) are two of the largest conservation organizations. The WCS has tiger programs in Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Russia, and Thailand. The WWF states on their Website that they are, "The world's leading conservation organization, WWF works in 100 countries and is supported by almost five million members worldwide."

Estimated Wild Tiger Population in 1995: 5,000 - 7,500

Estimated Wild Tiger Population in 2014: 1,500 - 3,500

The estimated numbers, reported by major organizations, tell the story. Tiger conservation efforts in the wild are **failing**. There have been some noted successes, but one has to look at the entire picture. Poaching and loss of habitat are driving these magnificent creatures into extinction. Scientists are still studying tigers and watching them go the way of the Dodo. The following lines are quoted from an Indian newspaper article on tigers.

"The increasing number of tigers being poached in India will not come down as long as the demand for tiger products in China continues, wildlife experts say. The latest figures released last week show that India lost approximately 48 tigers last year to poachers."

"Until the demand is addressed and stopped, tigers will go on being killed by poachers. But this issue of demand is something that can only be tackled by China," said Belinda Wright, head of the Wildlife Protection Society of India.

According to the government-run National Tiger Conservation Authority, 63 wild tigers died last year, some to accidents, illness or old age, but 48 to organized poaching gangs who sell the body parts to China where they are used in traditional medicine."



China Bone Farm

What's the Solution?

Stop thinking like the AZA! Aside from traditionally indoctrinated scientists, those being few in relation to the population in general, who cares about purebred vs. generic tigers? Put a purebred tiger next to a generic tiger (of the same size and region) and ask a thousand people if any could tell the difference. Better yet, ask some scientists. They couldn't tell the difference either without a DNA sample.

If we want to save the species, we need to concentrate on the generic tiger. There needs to be a comprehensive program that identifies unrelated pairs of generic tigers residing in well managed, existing private preserves. Unrelated pairs could then be bred with the goal of creating a sustainable tiger population that will preserve the tiger for future generations. Perhaps re-wilding could take place at some future date when ancient Asian medicine myths have vanished, civilized human beings no longer tolerate poaching or trophy hunting and populations are under control (nature will take care of that).

Don't get me wrong. I am all for conservation in the wild. I hope the tiger, elephant, rhino, and all other endangered species can be saved. Nevertheless, an alternative plan for the tiger must be put in place while there remains a viable number of unrelated founding pairs. Left to the AZA and narrow-minded scientists, the tiger will be lost.

Additional Information for Your Contemplation

Wildlife Protection Society of India: 2014

"India holds over half the world's tiger population ... a minimum of 1,571 to a maximum of 1,875. Few of the tiger reserves have an established intelligence network and most of our tiger reserves do not have an armed strike force or basic infrastructure and equipment to combat poaching."

Wildlife Conservation Society:

Ullas Karanth, WCS Director for Science-Asia

December 24, 2012 - "Despite dangerously low global numbers, tigers are rebounding in three significant landscapes where WCS operates."

World Wildlife Fund: 2014

"Wild tiger numbers are at an all-time low. We have lost 97% of wild tigers in just over a century. Tigers may be one of the most revered animals, but they are also vulnerable to extinction. As few as 3,200 exist in the wild today."

IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature:

"In 1998, the global Tiger population was estimated, less rigorously, at 5,000 to 7,000 Tigers (Seidensticker et al. 1999). Although to some extent the new numbers represent improved knowledge, it is clear that there have been substantial population declines..."

Ron Tilson, Minnesota zoo director of conservation, passed away in 2013. He was the coordinator of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums' Tiger Species Survival Plan. That plan focuses solely on pure sub-species. That plan is shortsighted and a threat to saving the tiger.

Dr. Alan Rabinowitz worked for nearly 30 years with the Wildlife Conservation Society where he served as the Executive Director of the Science and Exploration Division. What is the tiger population today compared to 1998?

Stanford University - April 16, 2014:

"Since genetic variability is the raw material for future evolution, our results suggest that without interbreeding subpopulations of tigers, the genetic future for tigers is not viable," said co-author Uma Ramakrishnan, a former Stanford postdoctoral scholar in biology and current researcher at the National Centre for Biological Sciences in Bangalore, India.

We hope you will find a project to support that works well for your zoo. Please direct questions to Tara Harris, Director of Conservation, AZA Tiger SSP Coordinator, Minnesota Zoo, 952-431-9206; tara.harris@state.mn.us

AZA - Association of Zoos & Aquariums:

"The Tiger Species Survival Plan (SSP) works with AZA-accredited zoos and aquariums across North America to: Maintain sustainable, genetically diverse tiger populations as a kind of genetic insurance policy for their wild counterparts."

Minnesota Zoo:

"The Tiger Species Survival Plan has launched the Tiger Conservation Campaign to raise awareness about wild tigers and funding for their conservation!"

"The Generic Tiger SSP is a Yellow SSP program. This designation indicates that the Generic Tiger SSP population consists of more than 50 individuals. The Generic Tiger SSP differs from the Amur, Malayan, and Sumatran SSPs, in that its goal is to reduce the population of generic tigers in AZA-accredited zoos. This will eventually free space for studbook-registered tigers. A breeding moratorium for generic tigers is now in place."

John Seidensticker:

Dr. Seidensticker is chairman of the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's Save The Tiger Fund Council. He is an author or editor of more than 190 articles, management plans, and books.

Between 1995 and 2004, \$12.6 million was invested by Save the Tiger Fund (STF) in more than 250 grants in 13 out of 14 tiger range countries.

Where did 77% of this money go?

- 1: Scientific research of tiger ecology and monitoring of tiger numbers to improve our understanding of their needs (31%)
- 2: Education and outreach activities to build public support for tiger conservation (27%)
- 3: Anti-poaching patrols to enforce laws in protected areas (13%) - *(Where the money should have gone)*
- 4: Leadership training to emerging M.S. and Ph.D.-level conservation leaders (6%)

The Wildcat Sanctuary:

"Many times exhibitors or pseudo sanctuaries will try to convince you that by breeding their animals they are contributing to conservation. This is NOT true. Professionals and scientists around the world have found ways to reintroduce individuals of an endangered species back to its original habitat in order to restore a genetically sound population. The key words here are professionals and scientists. Private owners, pseudo sanctuaries and exhibitors are not professionals and they are not scientists. They breed to make money not to help save the species from going extinct. The animals that are bred for conservation have specific genetics that scientists believe will help the species survive. The animals that are bred by exhibitors and private owners do not meet these standards and therefore do not qualify for conservation breeding efforts."

"Animals that have been owned do not know how to hunt properly. They still retain their natural instincts to hunt however never learned from their parent how to execute a kill. It is dangerous to the animal and to the public if you were to release your wild animal."

Big Cat Rescue:

Bahar Dutt

CNN-IBN

Posted Monday , May 15, 2006 at 19:59

Updated Monday , May 15, 2006 at 20:29

New Delhi: From 3,000 in 2002, India's tiger population is down to 1,500 in the last count. That is, if government figures are to be believed.

"No one who breeds tigers outside of the Species Survival Plan which is only for AZA accredited zoos is really breeding for conservation."

That last quote is hogwash. Dr. Michael Bleymann, founder of the Carnivore Preservation Trust, was a pioneer in captive breeding with a focus on maintaining genetic diversity.

SCT - Save Chinas Tigers:

Sybille Klenzendorf, World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF criticism of their project)

(The article: Tiger finance, a banker's effort to fund survival, Reuters, Feb 16, 2011)

"The World Wildlife Fund thinks Bray and Quan (Save Chinas Tigers) are spending their money in the wrong place.

Sybille Klenzendorf, the WWF's managing director of species conservation, says SCT's money would be better put to saving Amur tigers. I would rather have them give (their money) to us than what they are doing ..."

The WWF would love to have everybody's money to further, in many cases, their failed efforts.