

**08– 12 – 2024**

**News: Ratapani Wildlife Sanctuary**

- Recently, the Ratapani Wildlife Sanctuary has been officially declared a tiger reserve, becoming the 8<sup>th</sup> such reserve in Madhya Pradesh and 57<sup>th</sup> tiger reserve in India.

**Ratapani Wildlife Sanctuary and Tiger Reserve**

- Ratapani Wildlife Sanctuary and Tiger Reserve is the 8<sup>th</sup> Tiger Reserve in Madhya Pradesh and 57<sup>th</sup> Tiger Reserve in India.
- The Ratapani Tiger Reserve encompasses a total area of 1,271.4 square kilometers, with a core area of 763.8 square kilometers and a buffer area of 507.6 square kilometers.
- It is situated near the Vindhya hills; the sanctuary encompasses the Bhimbetka Rock Shelters, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

**Flora and Fauna**

- Dry and moist deciduous, with teak (*Tectona grandis*) covering 55% of the area.
- Bamboo and evergreen Saja forests, enhancing tourist appeal.

- The sanctuary is home to more than 35 species of mammals, 33 species of reptiles, 14 species of fishes and 10 species of amphibians and over 40 Tigers.

### **Procedure to Designate Tiger Reserve in India**

- **Initial Proposal:** The state government proposes a wildlife sanctuary or national park for designation as a tiger reserve, assessing ecological significance and tiger presence.
- A comprehensive plan is prepared, outlining management strategies and habitat requirements to support a viable tiger population.
- **Approval from NTCA:** The proposal and conservation plan are submitted to the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) for review and evaluation.
- **In-Principle Approval:** The NTCA grants in-principle approval, recognizing the area as critical for tiger conservation and eligible for funding.
- **Official Notification:** The state government issues an official notification declaring the area as a tiger reserve under Section 38V the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, delineating core and buffer zones.
- Initiatives are launched to benefit local communities and promote sustainable livelihoods while managing the tiger reserve effectively.

- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Continuous monitoring by NTCA and state authorities assesses conservation effectiveness and adapts management strategies as needed.

## **National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA)**

- National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) is constituted under **Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 (amended in 2006)**.
- It was **established in 2005** December following the recommendations of Tiger Task Force.
- It was an **executive body** and later given statutory status after the amendment of Wildlife Protection Act in 2006.
- NTCA along with **Wildlife Institute of India**, in collaboration with state forest departments **conduct the Tiger Census once in 4 years**.
- It also **conducts the leopard census once in 4 years**.

### **Composition**

- NTCA is headed **by Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change**.
- He is **assisted by the Vice – chairperson who is the Minister of State for Environment and Forests**.

- Official members include representatives from various ministries such as Environment and Forests, Tribal Affairs, Social Justice and Empowerment, as well as from commissions related to Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes.
- Additionally, members from the Ministry of Panchayati Raj and the Wildlife Preservation department are part of the Authority, along with six chief wildlife wardens from Tiger Reserve States on a rotational basis.
- Three Members of Parliament are nominated by the Parliament, and an officer from the Ministry of Law and Justice is also nominated.
- The Ministry of Environment and Forests is responsible for selecting eight non-official experts or professionals with specified qualifications and experience, including at least two from the field of tribal development.
- The Inspector General of Forests in charge of Project Tiger serves as the Member Secretary of the Authority.

### **Powers and functions**

- The Authority is tasked with establishing normative standards and guidelines for tiger conservation within Tiger Reserves, as well as National Parks and Sanctuaries.

- Its responsibilities include providing information on protection measures such as conservation plans, tiger estimation, disease surveillance, mortality surveys, patrolling activities, and reports on any untoward incidents.
- Additionally, it oversees various management aspects related to conservation planning.

The functions and powers of the Authority also include,

- Approving Tiger Conservation Plans prepared by States, setting normative standards for tiger conservation, providing information on various aspects such as protection measures, tiger estimation, and patrolling, addressing human-wildlife conflicts and promoting coexistence with local communities, preparing annual reports for presentation to Parliament, establishing Steering Committees by States, overseeing the preparation of tiger protection and conservation plans by States, safeguarding the agricultural and livelihood interests of people residing in and around Tiger Reserves, and assisting States in establishing tiger conservation foundations to support their development efforts.
- National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) also approves the application of a Wildlife Sanctuary or National Park to become a Tiger Reserve which is officially notified by State Governments.

- Currently, **Madhya Pradesh is the state with most number of Tiger Reserves in India (8) followed by Maharashtra (6).**

### **Recent Tiger Survey Reports**

- More than **80% of the world's wild tigers are in India**, and it's crucial to keep track of their numbers.
- Recent tiger census released in 2023 shows that, **the number of tigers in India has increased from 2967 in 2019 to 3682 in 2023.**
- Highest **number of tigers is found in Madhya Pradesh with 785 individuals followed by 563 in Karnataka, 560 in Uttarakhand and 444 in Maharashtra.**
- Nearly a **quarter of the tigers were reportedly outside protected areas.**
- India's **tigers are largely concentrated in 53 dedicated tiger reserves spread across 75,796 square km, spanning about 2.3% of India's total land area.**
- The **reserves with the most number of tigers were the Corbett National Park in Uttarakhand, which reported 260 animals, followed by Bandipur (150), and Nagarhole (141), both in Karnataka.**
- **Central India, the Shivalik Hills, and the Gangetic plains witnessed increases in tiger population, particularly in the States of Madhya Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and Maharashtra.**

- Certain regions, such as the Western Ghats, experienced localised declines, needing targeted monitoring and conservation efforts.
- Some States, including Mizoram, Nagaland, Jharkhand, Goa, Chhattisgarh, and Arunachal Pradesh, have reported “disquieting trends” with smaller tiger populations.