

Save the Tiger Protect Shola Forest, India

A recent study has revised downwards the Bengal tiger population, from a previous guesstimate (in 2002) of 3,300 to as few as 1,300 now. These alarming figures reflect the impact of human development on tiger inhabited areas. The journal 'Bio-Science' claimed last year that tiger habitat has declined by 41 percent such that conservation areas and national park land are the principal remaining habitats. Conservationist Valmik Thapar said this new data "signals the end of the tiger for most of India."

The other significant threat comes from poaching. Tiger skins and other body parts are thought to be very power Chinese medicine, making tiger carcasses big business. Poachers poison known watering holes, and then grind flaccid corpse down for all manner of ridiculous treatments. Traditional 'wisdom' holds that tiger bones cure rheumatism, the eyeballs epilepsy and the penis, cooked up into a steaming broth, is reputed to kick-start a flagging libido. Flouting its protected status, poachers still manage to kill one tiger every day.

Tigers will breed like rabbits if their habitat is extended. Our practical solution has been to set up the Shola Trust in India, which is buying up land, and protecting it. The first purchase of land should be completed by the end of 2009, and further pockets of land available for purchase have been identified.