

**NATIONAL TIGER CENSUSES  
IN THE 13 TIGER RANGE COUNTRIES:  
Current Status & Future Plans Toward 2016**

## Overview

In 2009, the global population of wild tigers was estimated to be as low as 3200. In November 2010 at the Tiger Summit in St. Petersburg, Russia, global leaders committed to double the world's wild tiger population (known as TX2) and laid out an ambitious plan to take wild tiger populations to 6000+ by 2022.

The current 3200 estimation is based on the rigorous scientific data available for a few countries and, with no alternative, rough estimations and expert opinion for the rest. Determining the actual number of tigers in the wild is extremely difficult as the species is notoriously elusive and inhabits some of the most remote and rugged terrain in Asia. For many countries, carrying out tiger surveys has been a prohibitively expensive and time-consuming task.

In recent years improved survey techniques and equipment, particularly cheaper and more durable camera traps, have enabled some countries to get more accurate data. In countries such as India, Russia and Nepal, tiger population dynamics are becoming better understood. However in countries that have never been surveyed thoroughly, such as Malaysia and Indonesia, tiger population figures are based on broad estimates and are therefore unreliable.

The TX2 goal of 6000+ wild tigers is both an inspiration and firm numerical guideline for the global recovery effort. Therefore it is imperative we track and report progress towards toward this goal using population numbers. Recent surveys in India, Russia and Nepal have indicated that tiger numbers have begun to stabilise, if not actually increase. It should be noted these three countries currently invest significant time, money and resources in tiger conservation (demonstrated by their investment in comprehensive national surveys). While preliminary figures indicate we are on track towards TX2 in at least these three countries, the picture may not be the same elsewhere. It is critical for the success of reaching the TX2 goal that we know tiger numbers and distribution in all 13 tiger range countries.



## THE TX2 REALITY

NGOs are working with governments and donors to promote a comprehensive effort to ascertain the global population of wild tigers by 2016. Methods and approaches will need to be agreed upon by experts from each tiger range country as soon as possible to achieve this goal. Additionally, significant resources need to be allocated to this task in each country. Survey results should then be the focus of a major high-level meeting by government heads that would entail an acknowledgment of progress (or lack there of) and a re-commitment towards TX2.

Tiger range countries have set an ambitious goal in TX2 and NGOs are committed alongside them to make it a reality. To know global tiger population dynamics will be to know where we are with TX2. Determining the global tiger population in 2016 and 2020 will promote the TX2 goal, renew global focus and mobilize resources to boost populations in sites that are lagging behind the goal.

This is critical in making the 2022 goal a reality; critical for recovering the tiger.



## Current Status of National Censuses in Tiger Range Countries

In December of 2013 tiger biologists from across the wild tigers range met to discuss the global status of wild tigers and identify, country by country, what actions are needed to obtain the scientifically rigorous data needed for an updated, and more accurate, global count in 2016.

Three countries (India, Nepal, Russia – shown below in dark green) already have or will carry out national-level surveys by 2016 and need little to no additional action. Three countries (Bangladesh, Bhutan, China – shown below in medium green) have not conducted previous national censuses; however a firm plan is in place for surveys in 2014. These countries require some action to ensure the necessary funds and support are in place. Four countries (Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand – shown below in light green) require significant and immediate action to establish rigorous population data by 2016. Three countries (Cambodia, Lao PDR, Vietnam – shown below in grey) likely no longer have breeding tigers and are therefore not applicable.

### COLOR KEY

National census efforts established and underway	Ensure planned national censuses move forward	National censuses not required due to lack of breeding tigers	Effort needed to establish national censuses	Immediate effort needed to establish national censuses
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COUNTRY	PAST SURVEY(S)	NEXT SURVEY	FREQUENCY	HURDLES TO OVERCOME	STATUS
Bangladesh	-	2014	4 years	None at this time, firm plan in place for 2014 census	Surveys planned Funded
Bhutan	-	2014	4 years	None at this time, firm plan in place for 2014 census	Surveys planned Funding required
Cambodia	-	-	-	Lack of breeding tigers in Cambodia	Not required
China	-	2014	4 years	None at this time, firm plan in place for 2014 census	Surveys planned Funded
Indonesia	-	2015	?	Government commitment Many NGOs conducting site-level surveys however they are not using comparable methods. Funding needed for necessary expansion of survey efforts.	Surveys and funding urgently required
India	2006, 2010	2014	4 years	None at this time, national census currently underway	Surveys underway Funded
Lao PDR	-	-	-	Lack of breeding tigers in Laos	Not required
Malaysia	-	2015	?	Government commitment Government/NGO monitoring protocols needed Funding needed for necessary expansion of survey efforts. Support needed to conduct surveys	Surveys and funding urgently required
Myanmar	-	2015	?	Government commitment Funding needed for site-specific surveys Support needed to conduct surveys	Surveys and funding required
Nepal	2013	2017	4 years	None at this time, firm plan in place for 2017 census	Surveys completed
Russia	2005	2015	10 years	None at this time, firm plan in place for 2015 census	Surveys planned Funded
Thailand	2005	2015	?	Government commitment to re-survey protected areas	Surveys planned Funding not required
Vietnam	-	-	-	Lack of breeding tigers in Vietnam	Not required

**BANGLADESH**

*Surveys planned  
Funded*

A national effort to survey the Bangladeshi Sundarbans, the only area where tigers persist in the country, is planned for 2014. NGOs are and will be pro-actively supporting this effort and will potentially contribute technical support to Bangladesh's efforts.

**INDONESIA**

*Surveys and funding  
urgently required*

Plans for a national census are currently not in place and swift action is needed. Across Sumatra NGOs are carrying out tiger surveys, however methods are not standardized and therefore not comparable. In order to get an accurate estimation by 2016, action is needed on several fronts. Government buy-in and support for the process is critical; organising a meeting has been suggested to gain this needed support. As survey efforts will be largely NGO-led, establishing standardised methodology across the different NGOs is also key (currently in process – hoping for finalisation in February 2014). Significant funds are needed to action these points, therefore a funding plan (and fall-back plan) are needed by March 2014.

**MALAYSIA**

*Surveys and funding  
urgently required*

Tentative plans for carrying out a national census are in place, however swift action is needed to firm up and realise this plan by 2016. Follow-up on the government's proposed monitoring protocols is needed; significant funds need to be raised; support in terms of personnel to carry out surveys is needed. High-level government buy-in and engagement is critical.

**RUSSIA**

*Surveys planned  
Funded*

Landscape-wide surveys for the entire Amur region occur every 10 years; 16 locations are surveyed annually. The next landscape-wide census will be carried out in 2015, the results of which will be used in the 2016 estimate. The national census plan is fully supported by the government.

**BHUTAN**

*Surveys planned  
Funding required*

A national census is planned to start in early 2014. NGOs have responded to Bhutan's request for feedback on survey design and strategy. As the census unfolds, technical assistance and help with fundraising will be needed.

**INDIA**

*Surveys underway  
Funded*

National censuses have been carried out in India every 4 years since 2006; the 2014 census is currently underway. India is a model for how to carry out extensive survey efforts and a key country for providing technical and potentially personnel support to other tiger range countries initiating censuses. However it should be noted India is not without its challenges: insurgencies do not allow for surveys in some areas; competition and political issues within and between states create issues; there has been difficulty changing mind-sets about using a more scientifically rigorous methods (especially in 2006); some areas lack good logistical support.

**MYANMAR**

*Surveys and funding  
required*

Anecdotal information indicates tigers persist in pockets of protected areas throughout the country. Therefore, only site-specific surveys are needed to obtain a better population estimate in Myanmar. To conduct these surveys, government support and approval is needed. Funds are needed to conduct surveys as well as personnel support to carry out efforts on the ground.

**THAILAND**

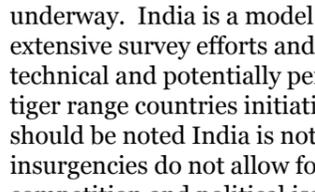
*Surveys planned  
Funding not required*

Previous extensive sign surveys by the Thai government have determined few to no tigers persist outside of protected areas. Therefore it is not necessary to sample the whole country; site-specific survey efforts can focus on the areas where we know tigers exist. Estimates already exist for most places, with the exception of Hala Bala in the south. The major action needed to obtain a rigorous estimate for 2016 will be to organise a meeting between the government and NGOs to re-assess wild tiger population status.

**CAMBODIA**

*Not required*

The lack of evidence of tiger presence indicates there are few to no breeding tigers remaining in Cambodia, therefore a tiger survey is not necessary. NGOs are participating in a potential reintroduction programme in the Eastern Plains Landscape, currently under consideration by the Cambodian government.

**NEPAL**

*Surveys completed*

The first national census was carried out in 2013 in Nepal and the country is on track to carry out a second census in 2017. Nepal anticipates expanding monitoring efforts on an annual basis into areas where there is currently low population density (tiger/tiger prey). Numbers from the 2013 census will be used for the 2016 estimate. Nepal is a model for engaging and gaining government support and may be able to assist other tiger range countries in census design and/or personnel support.

**VIETNAM**

*Not required*

The lack of evidence of tiger presence indicates there are few to no breeding tigers remaining in Vietnam, therefore a tiger survey is not necessary. NGOs are keeping aware of potential reintroduction plans, currently being discussed by the Vietnamese government.

**CHINA**

*Surveys planned  
Funded*

A national census is planned to start in spring of 2014. Evidence from other parts of China show tigers are most likely extirpated, therefore the national population estimate will come solely from Heilong Province. NGOs are and will be key in these efforts to ensure the needed support and funding are in place.

**LAO PDR**

*Not required*

Anecdotal information indicates there are few to no breeding tigers remaining in Laos, therefore a tiger survey is not necessary.

