



A trap camera image of a tiger in the Sundarbans

# ***Sundarbans' tiger numbers climb***

**DEBRAJ MITRA**

**Calcutta:** The apex predator is thriving in its only mangrove habitat in the world.

"The tiger population in the Sundarbans has gone up," Bengal forest minister Manoj Oraon told Metro on Monday, two days ahead of International Tiger Day (July 29).

"The specific details will be shared later. The rise in the number of tigers is proof that conservation efforts in the mangrove delta are working. What is more encouraging is the sighting of healthy cubs. The cubs are not included in the count, but their presence indicates that tigers are thriving in the Sundarbans," said Oraon.

Sources in the forest department said the current tiger population in the Sundarbans is estimated to be between 105 and 110.

The final report of the 2022 national tiger count,

'Status of Tigers 2022', was released on International Tiger Day 2023. The quadrennial exercise estimated India's tiger population at 3,682, including 101 tigers in the Sundarbans.

Fieldwork for the 2025-26 All India Tiger Estimation, the sixth such exercise, began in late 2025. More than 1,400 camera traps were installed in the Sundarbans between November 2025 and January 2026.

The exercise is coordinated by the National Tiger Conservation Authority and the Wildlife Institute of India. While the final results are expected next year, sources said some preliminary trends may be shared on July 29 this year.

The last report estimated that tiger density in the Indian Sundarbans had reached 4.27 tigers per 100sqkm.

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# Tiger numbers climb

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The mangrove forest's estimated carrying capacity is 4.68 tigers per 100sqkm, the report said.

The Sundarbans spans around 10,000sqkm across India and Bangladesh, with about 4,000sqkm falling in India. The Indian Sundarbans is divided between the Sundarbans Tiger Reserve (STR) and the South 24-Parganas forest division.

The STR covers around 2,600sqkm. It comprises the Sundarbans National Park (East and West), the Sajnekhali Wildlife Sanctuary and the Basirhat Range.

The tiger habitat in the South 24-Parganas division includes the Matla, Raidighi and Ramganga ranges, measuring around 1,100sqkm.

"There is a general assumption that a male tiger needs a territory of about 20sqkm and the female needs about half that area, overlapping with a male's territory. But this is not cast in stone. Sundarbans is a unique ecosystem. The carrying capacity of Tadoba (in Maharashtra) cannot be compared with that of the Sundarbans," said a forest official who has worked in



A tiger in the Sundarbans

the mangrove delta.

Nilanjan Mallick, who recently retired as the additional principal chief conservator of forests of Bengal and director of the Sundarban Biosphere Reserve, said: "Sundarbans has been witnessing a steady growth in the tiger population. The only concern is the dispersal of tigers if rising numbers lead to conflict. There are tiger corridors linking other tiger reserves in India, but not in the Sundarbans."

The previous tiger estimation report had called for great-

er coordination between India and Bangladesh for tiger conservation in the Sundarbans.

Soumitra Dasgupta, director (programme) of the International Big Cat Alliance, former head of the forest force in Bengal and former field director of STR, told **Metro**: "Sundarbans tigers move between India and Bangladesh routinely. As the tiger population in Indian Sundarbans keeps rising, improved coordination between the two neighbours is imperative for their conservation."