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WWF-Thailand
92/2 Soi Paholyothin 5, Samsen nai,
Phayathai, Bangkok 10400
Tel: +662 6198534-37
Fax: +662 6198538
www.wwf.or.th

Media Release

Six Tiger Cubs Recorded in Thailand's Mae Wong and Klong Lan National Parks

16 Total Tigers Recorded but threat from Mae Wong Dam Looms

Bangkok, September 7, 2017 -- Six newborn tiger cubs have been recorded in Mae Wong and Klong Lan National Parks and the total number of tigers is 16 according to a new survey by the Department of National Parks, Wildlife, and Plant Conservation and WWF-Thailand. Two of the tigers were recorded in the site proposed for the Mae Wong Dam, highlighting that the dam will do irreversible damage to one of the most important tiger habitats in Southeast Asia.

The survey took place between November 2015 and October 2016 and involved 164 camera traps at 82 sites within the park. Ten adult tigers – six females and four males – and six cubs belonging to two mothers were photographed. The survey reveals that numbers of adult females are increasing by 25 percent per year on average, and cub numbers have doubled since the last survey.

“This is exciting news that further confirms Thailand’s status as a leading tiger range state and Mae Wong and Klong Lan National Parks as critical sites for tiger recovery in Southeast Asia,” said Runnapa Phoonjampa, WWF-Thailand Mae Wong and Klong Lan Project Manager. “But we remain very concerned about the proposed Mae Wong Dam as it will do incredible damage to this tiger habitat and threaten the entire ecosystem. Two of the tigers in this survey were photographed in the area that will be submerged by the dam.”

In addition to the good news about tigers, the survey revealed that leopard and dhole (Asiatic wild dog) populations have increased by nine percent and 16 percent respectively since 2014.

There are fewer than 4,000 tigers alive in the wild today, down from 100,000 at the beginning of the 20th Century. Thailand committed during the Global Tiger Summit in 2010 to support the effort to double tiger numbers by 2022 – the next “Year of the Tiger.”

WWF is working closely with the Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation to closely monitor the tiger population and ensure that they are protected from poaching and have enough prey. The key statistic from the latest survey is that adult females – the key segment of the population in terms of recovery potential – have very high survival rates, are increasing in number and consistently breeding. However, while cub numbers are increasing, their survival rates are still low. In addition, tiger prey species and cub litter sizes are both low.

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The report's authors recommend that the two most crucial actions to increase the tiger population are to prevent poaching, especially of adult female tigers, and increase prey abundance in order to increase tiger reproductive rates and cub survival.

"Mae Wong Klong Lan is a beacon of hope for tiger recovery efforts across Southeast Asia," said Phoonjampa. "We strongly urge the Mae Wong Dam to be permanently taken off the planning table as there are alternative methods of flood and drought control that should be investigated. The dam will destroy this world class ecosystem, opening up the forest and exposing wildlife to poachers and illegal loggers, and threatening the water and forest resources of local communities."

Editor's Note: The report's authors are Robert Steinmetz, Worrapan Phumanee, Rungnapa Phoonjampa and Surasak Srirattanaporn.

For more information, please contact:

Communications

Niramon Soonyakrai; (0)94 639 4993, (+66) 2619 8521-2 Ext. 607)

Email: nSoonyakrai@wwfgreatermekong.org

Nichanan Tanthanawit; (+66) 2619 8521-2 Ext. 322, (+66) 83 816 0006

Email: nTanthanawit@wwfgreatermekong.org

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