

STATUS OF TIGERS WITHIN PROTECTED AREAS (OTHER THAN TIGERS RESERVES) IN MIZORAM

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Introduction

Mizoram is located in the Malayan and Indian Bio-geographic region. Bio-diversity of the tract is rich with precious flora and fauna both Asiatic and Malayan origin, the ecosystem is typically tropical with Wet evergreen and Semi-evergreen forests and Sub-tropical pine in the Western belt bordering Myanmar. The terrain is hilly, traversed by several hill ranges running parallel in North-South direction. The highest peak is Phawngpui in Blue Mountains with an altitude of 2360 m. In all there are 13 perennial rivers contributing to the drainage system. Annual precipitation varies between 1700 mm to 3900 mm. Temperature ranges between 8°C to 18°C during winter while summer temperature varies between 20°C to 30°C. The State occupies a geographical area of 21,087 km² of which dense forests extend over 4,348 km² and open forests extend over 14,427 km². Traditional jhum practice has disturbed the flora and fauna virtually making the ecosystem fragile. Many plant and animal species are endangered due to continuous burning operation under jhum practice. The forests are relegated to few pockets and the scattered potential areas are constituted as National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries for protecting the flora and fauna.

Tiger Habitat in Protected Areas

In all, the State has notified six

protected Areas viz. Murlen National Park (200 km²), Ngengpui Wildlife Sanctuary (150 km²), Phawngpui National Park (50 km²), Khawnglung Wildlife Sanctuary (41 km²), Tawi Wildlife Sanctuary (103 km²) and Dampa Tiger Reserve (500 km²), reckoning to 4.9% of the total geographical area of the State.

Murlen National Park : The Murlen National Park (MNP) is situated about 245 km East of Aizawl, the State Capital of Mizoram at 23°32' - 23°42' N and 92°13' - 92°27' E. This Park lies close to the Indo-Myanmar border and is significant because of its proximity to the Chin Hills. It covers an area of approximately 200 km² and ranges in altitude from 400 m to about 1900 m. Large tracts of relatively undisturbed Sub-Tropical evergreen/Semi-evergreen forests are found in this Park. The important wild animals found in the Park are Tiger, Leopard, Sambar, Barking Deer, Ghoral, Serrow, Hoolock Gibbon, *Rhesus macaque*, Wild Boar, Himalayan Black Bear etc. Although Tiger is not residential, it might have strayed from across the neighbouring country of Myanmar. The Park is surrounded by five villages - Murlen, Vapar, Rabung, Tualpui, N. Khawbung. As per 1992 Tiger census the population was 3 but in 1997 a lone Tiger was reported. Although the prey animals are adequate in the Park, the movement of Tigers in the outskirts of the Park of late have been reported.

Blue Mountain National Park : The Blue

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Mountain National Park (Phawngpui National Park) (PNP) is located in South-Eastern Mizoram at 22° 39'N and 93° 02'E. Like Murlen National Park, it is also close to the Indo-Myanmar border and the Chin Hills. The highest peak in Mizoram, the Phawngpui (2360m) is located within this Park. The total area of Blue Mountain National Park is approximately 50 km². The general forest type in the Park is Montane Sub-tropical. Though not substantially some Oak dominated primary forest patches are still available in certain parts of the Park and are separated by secondary growth in various stages. The Park is surrounded by villages on all sides and is an isolated refuge of wild animals such as Ghoral, Serrow, Barking Deer, Sambar, Leopard, Blyth's Tragopan, Kaleej Pheasant, Hoolock Gibbon, Common Langur etc. Tiger occasionally visits the park from across the border Myanmar. In 1993 and 1997 census only 1 Tiger was reported. The population of herbivore prey animals are adequate. Colourful *Rhododendron* and Orchids are the special features of the Park.

Ngengpui Wildlife Sanctuary : The Ngengpui Wildlife Sanctuary (NWLS) is located in South-Western Mizoram at 92° 45' to 92° 50' E and 22° 21' to 22° 30' N. It is close to Indo-Myanmar and Indo-Bangladesh border. The total area of the Sanctuary is 150 km² and ranges in altitude from 200 m to about 1200 m. Undisturbed Sub-tropical/Evergreen/Semi-evergreen forests are found in the Sanctuary. The wild animals found in this Sanctuary are Tiger, Clouded Leopard, Elephant, Bison, Barking Deer, Sambar, Wild Boar, Porcupine, Hoolock Gibbon, *Rhesus macaque*, Common Langur etc. It is also surrounded by 7 villages. In 1993 census two Tigers were recorded while in 1995 the population was three. The population of prey animals is

extremely good in the wildlife sanctuary.

Khawnglung Wildlife Sanctuary : The Khawnglung Wildlife Sanctuary (KWLS) is located in Central Mizoram at 92° 55' to 92° 59' E and 23° 04' to 23° 10' N. It covers an area of 41 km² and ranges in altitude from 400 m to 1300 m. Sub-tropical and Semi-evergreen forest types are found in the Sanctuary. Tigers sometimes visit from outside Sanctuary areas. Common Wild animals found are Leopard, Barking Deer, Sambar, Hoolock Gibbon, Wild Boar etc. In 1997 one Tiger was reported from the Protected Area.

Status of Animals in Protected Areas as per Census conducted during the year 1992, 1993, 1997 in Protected Areas is given in Table 1.

Sambar and Barking Deer are two major Deer species upon which the predator depends mostly, but sometimes other animals such as Serrow, Ghoral, Wild Pig, Porcupine, Monkeys also constitute part of their diet.

Constraints

(a) Administrative

- (i) Murlen and Phawngpui National Parks are situated along the Myanmar border thus posing constant threat of smuggling for gall bladders of Himalayan Black Bear, Antlers for their trophies, Serrow for skin and Ghoral for the meat.
- (ii) Relocation of Murlen village from the core area of National park is inordinately delayed by the District Collector, Aizawl inspite of several reminders from time to time for

Table 1*Status of wildlife in Protected Areas (Census of 1992, 1993 and 1997)*

Species	MNP 1992 - 97		PNP 1993 - 97		KWLS 1996 - 97		NWLS 1993 - 95	
Tiger	3	1	1	1	-	1	2	3
Leopard	6	4	3	4	2	2	5	6
Sambar	17	12	8	22	16	3	122	95
Barking Deer	25	34	63	101	13	6	102	83
Serrow	14	8	72	80	18	4	-	-
Ghoral	54	5	117	251	-	3	-	-
Wild Boar	26	-	7	170	28	-	92	72
<i>Rhesus macaque</i>	190	80	131	275	35	20	517	602
Hoolock Gibbon	37	18	8	8	29	9	92	106
Common Langur	20	36	-	-	15	-	-	-
Porcupine	-	-	-	40	3	-	15	18
Malayan Giant Squirrel	17	8	10	37	-	2	-	-
Himalayan Black Bear	9	2	3	22	6	3	10	14
Elephant	-	-	-	-	-	-	10	7

Note : MNP - Murlen National Park; PNP - Phawngpui National Park; KWLS - Khawnglung Wildlife Sanctuary; NWLS - Ngengpui Wildlife Sanctuary.

Remarks : TWLS - Tawi Wildlife Sanctuary census has yet to be conducted.

finalizing the award. Delay in relocation of villagers has hampered the effective management of the Park and protection works. Core area is still disturbed due to the presence of the villagers.

of Forests as recommended in the State Wildlife Advisory Board Meeting in 1994.

(b) *Financial*

(iii) The creation of Field Director's post for Murlen National Park has not materialised inspite of the recommendation in the last State Wildlife Advisory Board Meeting in 1994.

(i) The allocation of fund for wildlife sector under the State Plan budget is inadequate which is in the region of 7% against the recommended funding of 15% by the Govt. of India.

(iv) Non-availability of trained officers for management of National Park and Wildlife Sanctuaries.

(ii) Paucity of fund has resulted in the neglect of maintenance of staff quarters and Rest Houses in the Protected Areas. The approach roads and inspection paths are not properly opened up.

(v) Non-creation of post of Chief Wildlife Warden in the rank of Chief Conservator

(iii) Adequate numbers of waterholes,

habitat manipulation and Nature camps could be attended with proper financial assistance.

- (iv) The Protected Area Managers are not provided with vehicles for effective patrolling and mobility.
- (v) Communication system need to be reinforced over a major portion of the Protected Area.
- (vi) Modern equipments, tranquilizer guns and arms need to be provided.

Strategies for effective conservation of Tiger population

- (i) Setting up of Tiger Cell in the State for effective implementation of conservation measures.
- (ii) Setting up of Wildlife Wing with exclusively wildlife trained personnel for the management of the Protected Areas.
- (iii) Joint Tiger Conservation Programme with neighbouring countries Myanmar and Bangladesh.

(iv) Prevention of smuggling, poaching of wildlife and their products with assistance of Border Security Force, Customs and Police.

- (v) Providing security to forest staff detailed on wildlife protecting areas and setting up of Strike Force.
- (vi) Improvement of communication system.
- (vii) Awareness for protection of Tigers through NGOs.
- (viii) Compensation provision to Tiger victims/domestic animals.

Conclusion

The Protected Areas covering 544 km² are the potential habitat for the Tiger. Proper management of the National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries will improve the Tiger population. This could be achieved with adequate financial support from the State and Centrally Sponsored Scheme funding. Strengthening of Wildlife Wing, infrastructure development and incentives to wildlife staff will certainly yield tangible results:

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SUMMARY

Meeting the challenge for protection of threatened Tiger population in Mizoram, some management prescriptions have been suggested with effective conservation measures.

मिजोरम में सुरक्षित किए (व्याघ्र संरक्षित क्षेत्रों से अन्यथा) क्षेत्रों में बाघों की स्थिति

पी०वी० सावंत

सारांश

मिजोरम में बाघों की संकरापन्न संख्या को सुरक्षा देने की चुनौती का सामना करने के लिए प्रभावकारी संरक्षण उपायों सहित उनके प्रबन्ध संबंधी कुछ निर्देश भी सुझाए गए हैं ।