

EAZA Position Statement on European Commercial Trade in Tigers and Tiger Parts



Approved by EAZA Council
12 November 2018

Tiger populations in the wild are shrinking due to increased human activity. Their habitats across Asia are small, confined and isolated. During the last century, four out of eight subspecies of tigers have become extinct due to habitat loss, hunting and illegal wildlife trade¹.

Despite strong international action, the survival of tiger populations continues to be seriously threatened by illegal trade in live tigers and tiger parts². In Asia, high market demand persists for tiger body parts that are used as traditional medicine and luxury products. Triggered by this demand and the resulting high prices, large-scale commercial trade continues not only across the tiger's natural range in Asia but globally, including within the EU. In addition to illegal exports of live tigers from Europe to Asia, recent seizures have also exposed well-organized trafficking networks for products originating from tigers that were captive-bred in Europe^{3,4}.

The European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA) has standards and rules to guarantee that tigers kept in our Member institutions are shielded from any form of commercial exploitation and illicit trade. EAZA zoos monitor and manage intensively the population of tigers in their care, with strict rules governing the transfer between zoos or breeding of these animals. Through such joint population management, as well as through field work, public awareness campaigns, fundraising, and sharing of knowledge and best practices, EAZA Members have been committed to the goals of tiger conservation for several decades.

EAZA urges the European Union institutions and the national authorities to take immediate action to eliminate the threats that endanger tigers, both in the Asian range states and in Europe, by:

- Combating wildlife trafficking more effectively, in line with the three priorities of the EU Action Plan against Wildlife Trafficking⁵: better prevention, more effective law enforcement, and enhanced global cooperation. We call for a more robust 'EU wildlife diplomacy' to promote conservation and discourage third countries from introducing measures and decisions that incentivise illegal trade.
- Ensuring ambitious funding to biodiversity conservation. Implementing the 'EU Biodiversity for Life' initiative in an effective and coherent way and in line with the strategies for conservation in Asia laid out in the study 'Larger than Tigers'⁶.

¹ Goodrich, J., Lynam, A., Miquelle, D., Wibisono, H., Kawanishi, K., Pattanavibool, A., Htun, S., Tempa, T., Karki, J., Jhala, Y. & Karanth, U. 2015. *Panthera tigris*. The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species 2015: <http://dx.doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.UK.2015-2.RLTS.T15955A50659951.en>.

² Ibid.

³ <https://cites.org/sites/default/files/eng/com/sc/70/Inf/E-SC70-Inf-24.pdf>

⁴ <https://eia-international.org/major-investigation-exposes-horrific-tiger-slaughterhouse-czech-republic/>

⁵ http://ec.europa.eu/environment/cites/trafficking_en.htm

⁶ Larger than Tigers. Inputs for a strategic approach to biodiversity conservation in Asia - Synthesis report. European Commission, 2018. <https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/8ed5fdcb-b187-11e8-99ee-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

- Ensuring that the *ex-situ* tiger population in human care within Europe serves non-commercial purposes such as research, education and conservation breeding, as exemplified by the EAZA Ex-situ Programmes described below.

1. What is EAZA?

With more than 400 Member institutions in 47 countries, of which 26 are EU Member States, the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA) is the world's largest regional zoo and aquarium association.

Our mission as a non-profit conservation organisation is to facilitate cooperation within the European zoo and aquarium community in public education and engagement, scientific research and nature conservation. We believe that zoos and aquariums have a strong role to play in the conservation of nature and wildlife, both at our Member institutions and in the field, and believe that wild animals in human care are central to this mission.

Through our joint population management programmes, EAZA aims at conserving healthy and self-sustaining populations of animals, and at providing a future for some of the world's most vulnerable species. At the same time, we strive to be Europe's key centre of excellence for scientific knowledge about wild animal welfare and management and one of the continent's foremost environmental education networks.

As agreed by its Members, being part of EAZA requires full adherence to the EAZA [Code of Ethics](#) and our [various Standards](#), for example, the [Standards for the Accommodation and Care of Animals in Zoos and Aquaria](#). Additional relevant guidelines, statements and rules regarding species population management are contained in the [EAZA Population Management Manual](#).

2. Tigers in EAZA institutions

Keeping of tigers by EAZA Members is coordinated under the umbrella of the **Felid Taxon Advisory Group (TAG)**. It is one of the 39 TAGs established for the different groups of animal species in our care. The TAGs are comprised of professionals with specialist knowledge of all aspects of management, care, and conservation of the taxon. The functioning of the TAGs is overseen by the EEP Committee, one of EAZA's Standing Committees reporting to the governing body of EAZA Council. TAGs are responsible for developing Regional Collection Plans (RCPs) that stipulate which species are recommended to be kept, why they are kept, how they should be kept, and whether they need to be managed as an EAZA Ex-situ Programme (EEP) or monitored by the TAG (Mon-T).

The **EAZA Ex-Situ Programmes (EEPs)** are set up for species which require proactive management by EAZA in order to fulfil their specified ex situ roles. Each EEP is overseen by an EEP Coordinator (from one of the EAZA Member institutions) who is supported by a Species Committee. The EEP Coordinator carries out a number of relevant population management tasks, such as creation of a studbook and analysing the demographics and genetics of the EEP population. Together with the Species Committee, the EEP Coordinator recommends future management of the species, including recommendations for breeding and transfers between participating institutions.

The TAGs provide expert advice on the management, care and welfare of species under their concern, ultimately aiming to publish these as Best Practice Guidelines. These guidelines aim to merge expert husbandry knowledge which is made widely available within and outside of the EAZA Community. Where management in the global scale is needed, Global Species Management Plans are established and hosted by one of the participating regions.

The [EAZA Population Management Manual](#) stipulates that **transfers of all EEP animals are purely non-commercial**. Furthermore, each transfer of an EEP animal must receive **prior approval** of the programme coordinator.

The EEPs seek to ensure that the populations are managed in such a way as to **minimise the occurrence of “surplus” animals**, i.e. animals that are not needed in the programme. Animals considered as surplus may be placed outside the EEP in a non-EAZA Member institution, but only after approval of the Species Committee and in relevant cases the EEP Committee, and only after ensuring that they will be appropriately housed and cared for in accordance with the [EAZA Standards for the Accommodation and Care for Animals in Zoos and Aquaria](#), and species-specific Best Practice Guidelines.

The taxa that are present in EAZA collections but require no active management are covered by **Monitoring** programmes (Mon-T).

The following population management schemes for tigers operate under the Felid TAG:

1. **The Amur tiger EEP.** At time of publication, the population in the EAZA region stands at 234 animals in 93 institutions. There is a Global Species Management Plan for the species, meaning that the management of the global Amur tiger populations is coordinated between the regional Associations of EAZA, EARAZA (Eurasia), AZA (North America) and JAZA (Japan).
2. **The Sumatran tiger EEP.** The population in the EAZA region stands at 119 animals in 53 institutions. The Global Species Management Plan for Sumatran tigers is hosted by an EAZA Member.
3. The 14 **Malayan tigers** in EAZA zoos are monitored as part of the International Tiger Studbook under the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA). The studbook is hosted by an EAZA Member.
4. There is an EAZA **monitor for generic/white/hybrid tigers**, i.e. tigers that are of unknown pedigree and/or of hybrid origin. This population consists of 144 animals in 53 EAZA member institutions.

The Regional Collection Plan of the Felid TAG recommends that EAZA zoos hold only Sumatran and Amur tigers. Breeding Malayan tigers is not recommended as the population is too small to be viable; Members are encouraged to focus on strengthening the Amur and Sumatran tiger EEPs instead. Generic tigers may be kept until the natural end of their lives but EAZA Members are strongly advised not to breed them, in line with the [EAZA Position Statement on ‘Intentional Breeding for the Expression of Rare Recessive Alleles’](#).

EAZA Members are requested to send DNA samples from **all their tigers** to the **EAZA Biobank**. The primary aim of the biobank is to support population management and conservation research of all the species under the care of EAZA Members. The samples also aid the identification of individual animals. EAZA can use data from the Biobank to support authorities wishing to confirm that animals, or derived body parts, intercepted from illegal activities did not originate from a professionally managed programme. EAZA is currently working with Czech authorities and the **tiger identification scheme (TigrisID)** on just such a project.

3. EAZA and tiger conservation in the field

From 2002 to 2004, tigers were the theme of one of EAZA's first joint [Conservation Campaigns](#). Besides raising awareness of the threats tigers face in the wild, the campaign raised €750,000 for conservation in the field (which exceeded the initial campaign target by 200%). We collaborated with 21st Century Tiger, a conservation partnership between the Zoological Society of London and Global Tiger Patrol. In 2018, 21st Century Tiger merged with the Amur Leopard and Tiger Alliance (ALTA) to form the WildCats Conservation Alliance which continues to be an official EEP-supported initiative.

In the last 20 years, EAZA Members have contributed more than €1 million to 21st Century Tiger and ALTA – and now the WildCats Conservation Alliance. Support is not only provided through raising money but also through the provision of staff hours or the donation of needed field equipment. This has allowed to fund and equip a variety of projects throughout the tigers' range, including: anti-poaching support in Sumatra, tailored education activities in Russia or setting up monitoring and research programmes in China. (EAZA Conservation Database, October 2018)

Moreover, EAZA as well as its individual Members have been leading, participating in or supporting over fifty projects aimed at conservation of tigers and their habitats. **Our Members have to date contributed €5.4 million in material support, as well as several thousands of staff working hours, to tiger-relevant projects.**

Annex

List of tiger conservation projects supported by EAZA Members.

Amur tiger conservation in Zov Tigra National Park in 2011, Russian Far East; Anti-poaching in the Russian Far East; Asian Conservation Awareness Programme, Indochina; Bengal tiger conservation programme, India; Chengdu Research Base of Giant Panda Breeding education programmes; Chester Zoo Human-Tiger Conflict Programme; Community leadership for tiger conservation, India; Compensation programme for tiger depredations, Russian Far East; Conservation of Amur tigers and leopards; Dietary analysis of Tiger and leopard faecal samples using metabarcoding; Emergency Appeal for Nepal Earthquake; Forest fire appeal, Russian Far East; Hunting lease management in the Russian Far East; Indonesia: Identifying and tackling social barriers to conservation; Investigation into poaching and illegal trade, India; Karnataka tiger conservation, India; Kerinci Seblat Tiger Protection Project; Leuser development programme, Indonesia; Living with Tigers; Management training for wildlife officials, India; Managing tiger habitat on unprotected lands in the Russian Far East; Mapping Amur tiger habitat; Monitoring the Recovery of tigers in the Salakpra Wildlife Sanctuary; Moving problem tigers in Russia; Nepal: An integrated approach to community based conservation in Bardia NP; Nepal: Increasing tiger numbers in Parsa wildlife reserve; Operation Amba - Antipoaching brigades in Primorski Krai, Russia; Poh Kao; Protection of Verkhnebikinsky wildlife refuge (Amur tiger conservation); Red Wolf wildlife managers' team in the Russian Far East; Save the Tiger Fund; SE Asia regional wildlife forensic support to reduce the illegal wildlife trade; Social barriers to conservation in Berbak-Sembilang tiger conservation landscape; Sumatran Tiger Conservation Team; Sumatran Tiger Project, Way Kambas, Sumatra; Support for Sitanadi, Udanti and Barnawapara National Parks, India; Support to Tigris Foundation; The Northern Tiger Project; The Sumatran Tiger Trust Conservation Programme; Tiger crate project for relocation of orphaned/problematic Amur tigers; Tigers in an oil-palm plantation, Sumatra; Tigers in forest edge, Sumatra; United for Wildlife technology testing sites at Parsa Wildlife Reserve; WildCats Conservation Alliance - Restricted support for wild Amur tiger conservation; WildCats Conservation Alliance - Restricted support for wild Sumatran tiger conservation; WildCats Conservation Alliance - Unrestricted support for wild tiger conservation; Wildlife and domestic veterinary programme, Nepal; Wildlife conservation in the Russian Far East; Wildlife Vets International - Support of an Amur Leopard Health Monitoring Programme; Zoo Outreach Organisation, India. (Source: EAZA Conservation Database, October 2018)



EAZA is supported in this work by the European Union LIFE NGO funding programme. The European Union is not responsible for the views displayed in publications and/or in conjunction with the activities for which the grant is used.