



Tiger tiger, burning bright

With their flame-coloured coats and amber eyes, tigers are mysterious, majestic and exceptionally powerful.

There are more wild tigers in India than anywhere else on Earth. Legends about the Royal Bengal tiger are woven into the country's long history. Yet tigers here, and everywhere, have always been vulnerable.

For hundreds of years, these iconic animals have been cruelly hunted by poachers – people who illegally kill wild animals – causing their numbers to dangerously dwindle. But it was not until 1975 that all tigers were finally declared an endangered species. There were once nine types of tiger, but three are already extinct.

Despite this, people are still killing tigers and destroying the wild places where they live.

Once, over 100,000 tigers prowled forests and grasslands across Asia. Today, less than 4,000 tigers roam free. Humans are pushing these magnificent beasts to the brink of extinction.

We must ensure that the fiery elegance of the tiger will forever burn bright.

How can we save them?

Prologue

The Emerald Forest

This tale unfolds in Panna, Central India, a dusty landscape that transforms into an Emerald Forest.

For much of the year, Panna's rolling hills of dry forest, high grasslands and hidden gorges bake in relentless sun. But with the arrival of monsoon rains Panna comes to life, dripping in shiny shades of green. The swollen waters of the Ken River crash over towering waterfalls as the river snakes through the reserve.

From the ground to the sky, Panna bursts with life. Antelopes, gazelles and deer graze on the high plains. Porcupines shuffle through deep bushes. Leopards and sloth bears lounge amongst shady trees and tiny rusty-spotted cats slink through the dark forest at night. Snakes ripple across the forest floor and crocodiles slink along the banks of the river and surrounding marshes.



More than 300 species of birds circle the hazy skies. Graceful woolly-necked storks, scavenging vultures, colourful plum-headed parakeets and paradise flycatchers all make the Emerald Forest of Panna their home.

It's not only wildlife that thrives in this wild, beautiful place. People and cattle also live close to the reserve boundaries, relying on the forest for food and fuel.

But of all these spectacular species, it is the tiger who rules the land.

Panna became a National Park in 1981. Later in 1994, it became India's 22nd tiger reserve – a protected area created for the conservation of tigers. It became illegal to kill wildlife and destroy precious tiger habitats. Yet, for many years, there were very few tigers in the reserve and little was known about them. So, in 1996, a team of scientists came to Panna to study its tigers.

They set out to gather information that could help protect tigers in India and around the world.



Meet the tigers

Many grand tigers have padded across Panna's plains. But scientists in this story followed the tales of two extraordinary tiger dynasties.

The first dynasty

M-91

This magnificent male tiger ruled Panna alone for five years.



Hairy Foot
A huge tiger with particularly hairy feet, who is at first mysterious and difficult to find.



Madla

Madla strolled into Panna in 1996, and went on to rule the east of the reserve.



T3
A lone male with a strong homing instinct.



T1

An orphan female tiger born in Bandhavgarn Tiger Reserve. 'T' stands for tiger.



52

With distinctive markings on her forehead bearing the numbers 5 and 2, this female tiger became the Queen of Panna for many years.



Julie

Julie is mother to Madla's first cubs inside Panna Tiger Reserve.

Sayani

Sayani is the daughter of M-91 and 52.



The second dynasty



T2

Another female orphan, T2 had 14 cubs with T3.



T4 and T5

Orphaned when they were just a year and a half, these two female tigers were brought to Panna from Kahna Tiger Reserve.