

## Are there tigers in Gujarat?

Tiger census will be held across national parks and wildlife this month. | Photo Credit: [K.R. Deepak](#)

Gujarat, which houses a rich population of lions, will now see an exercise to find out if tigers also inhabit the state.

The last time a tiger was spotted in Gujarat was way back in 1985. Now, over three decades later, a census has been planned next month to ascertain the presence of the striped animal in the forest of Dang district.

The state forest department earlier sent a proposal to the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) for the census after some media reports suggested the presence of tigers in Dang, which is full of forests.

The proposal was approved by the NTCA, a statutory body under the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests, Gujarat's principal chief conservator of forest (wildlife), G K Sinha, said.

Till the early 80s, there were tigers in Gujarat, mainly inhabiting the forests of Dang, Narmada and Sabarkantha districts, he said.

"The last tiger died in a road accident in Dang in 1985. No tiger was seen in the state after that. Local people generally confuse hyenas with tigers and that is how they assume there are tigers in Gujarat forests," Sinha said.

"We requested the NTCA to include Dang in the tiger census because there are reports in the media about tigers having been sighted in the area," he said.

The state forest department sent a team in July last year to survey the area to ascertain the presence of tigers, but the report was negative.

"Our surveys have shown a negative possibility of tigers in the state, but to put the debate to rest, we decided to include the area (Dang forests) in the census. If there is any such possibility, the census will bring it to its logical end," Sinha said.

After the NTCA agreed for the tiger census in Dang, three officials of the state forest department were sent for training in Assam for the purpose, he said.

The counting exercise in Dang will be part of the nationwide tiger census being conducted by the Wildlife Institute of India on the directions of the NTCA, the official said.

Notably, Gujarat boasts a sizeable population of lions, which are a major tourist attraction.

As per the last census conducted in 2015, there are about 650 lions, mainly inhabiting the forests of Gir Somnath, Amreli and Bhavnagar districts in Saurashtra region of the state.

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