

# A STRIPED REMINDER TO THE SUNDERBANS

Relevant for: Environment | Topic: Biodiversity, Ecology, and Wildlife Related Issues

On the move: There have been instances when male tigers drive out competitors from their territory. [File photo](#)

The residents of Mitrabari in the Satjhaleia area of the Gosaba block in the Sunderbans woke up on the New Year with tiger pugmarks in the forest near the habitation. As guards rushed to the spot and started placing nylon nets and trap cages, the tiger attacked one of them and he had to be rushed to a state-run hospital.

This has been the fourth incident of a tiger straying into the Sunderbans in the past few months. On two occasions, tigers strayed from the Sunderbans Tiger Reserve (STR) into the adjoining habitations and on the other two, from the South 24 Parganas forest division.

The forest officials were on December 28 able to trap a tiger more than five days after it had strayed into Gopalganj village in the Kultali area after crossing a 3.5-km stretch of the river. It took more than five days and a lot of patience on the part of the officials to tranquillise and put it in the cage.

Trap cages, tranquilliser teams, nylon nets, drones, water cannons and chilli bombs were used to rescue the tiger from the forest near human habitation in South 24 Parganas. On December 8, a tiger had strayed into the Bhubaneshwari forest and was trapped after a 12-hour operation.

"It is not one tiger straying but different tigers," Tapas Das, Director of the STR, told *The Hindu*. He ruled out prey shortage in the forest that is leading to the incidents.

He said if there was a shortage, the number of incidents would be more. He said there could be a number of reasons.

"In the Sunderbans, it is difficult to distinguish areas where the forest which are tiger bearing and which are close to habitation. So the tiger often strays into these forests," he said. He also said there could be territorial fights among the tigers that may result in the incidents. "There could be one male driving other males out of the territory."

Forest Minister Jyotipriya Mullick said the Sunderbans is facing the problem of plenty due to good forest management.

The last tiger census in 2021 had put the number at 96 and 74 of them were captured through camera traps and identified as unique individuals.

Incidents of attacks on fishermen who venture into the forest for livelihood have also been reported. A tiger attacked two fishermen on Friday near Rangmari Char near Haldibari forest in the Sunderbans. It jumped on their boat when they were catching crabs. While the other fishermen beat it up with sticks, the big cat was able to inflict injuries on two of them.

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