

PENCH, PERIYAR RATED TOP TIGER RESERVES

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Madhya Pradesh's Pench sanctuary and Kerala's Periyar sanctuary emerged as the best managed tiger reserves in the country, according to an evaluation of India's 50 tiger sanctuaries released along with the 4th National Tiger Estimation (Tiger census) on Monday.

The Dampa and Rajaji reserves, in Mizoram and Uttarakhand respectively, were left at the bottom of the ladder with a score of 42.97% and 44.53% respectively. The top performers scored 93.75%. A score of 41% and above was marked as 'fair' and those 75% and above rated 'very good.'

The sanctuaries, which spanned 80 States, were divided into five geographic clusters. On the whole, the Western Ghats cluster comprising reserves in Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka scored an average of 81%. These included the tiger reserves at Bandipur, Nagarhole, Bhadra, Billigiri-Ranganatha Swamy Temple, Kali, Periyar, Perambikulam, Sathyamangalam, Mudumalai, Anamalai, and Kalakad-Mundanthurai.

The ones in Ranthambore and Sariska in Rajasthan saw a dip in ratings: from 'good' to 'fair' compared to their ratings in 2014. Kerala had the best kept reserves followed by Madhya Pradesh. Chhattisgarh was the 'least performing State' in reserve management.

Pench was a well-managed reserve because it had a season-wise biodiversity plan as well as flying squads and tactical patrolling for managing security. There were regular meetings with local communities and funds collected from tourism were largely making it to the authorities for conservation purposes, the report added.

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