

# GUJARAT'S PRIDE GROWS AS IT NOW HOSTS 674 GIR LIONS

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

Lions at Gir National Park. Photo: Special Arrangement

Gujarat prides itself on hosting Asiatic lions exclusively, and their numbers have now risen to an estimated 674 in the Gir forest region and other revenue areas of coastal Saurashtra.

Once seen as threatened by extinction, the lion population has grown by almost 29% from the [last count in 2015](#). Today, Asiatic lions are present in Protected Areas and agro-pastoral landscapes of Saurashtra covering nine districts, over an expanse of about 30,000 sq. km.

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The State Forest Department says the population is 674 including males, females and cubs. During 2015, the baseline was 523 lions. Moreover, the distribution of the lions expanded from 22,000 sq. km in 2015 to 30,000 sq. km in 2020.

As soon as the State shared the details of the census conducted on June 5-6 by over 1,400 staffers of the Forest Department, Prime Minister Narendra Modi praised his home State. "Two very good news: Population of the majestic Asiatic Lion, living in Gujarat's Gir Forest, is up by almost 29%. Geographically, distribution area is up by 36%. Kudos to the people of Gujarat and all those whose efforts have led to this excellent feat," Mr. Modi said in a Twitter post.

"Over the last several years, the lion population in Gujarat has been steadily rising. This is powered by community participation, emphasis on technology, wildlife healthcare, proper habitat management and steps to minimise human-lion conflict. Hope this positive trend continues!" he added.

Forest officials said there was a consistent increase in the population and distribution. The department had implemented strategies and interventions like community participation, use of technology, habitat management and increase in prey base, human-lion conflict mitigation and healthcare including import of vaccines after some lions were infected with Canine Distemper Virus (CDV).

This year, the department carried out a "population estimation exercise" on the night of June 5-6 because the five-yearly regular census in May could not be held due to COVID-19. In October 2018, [Gir witnessed an outbreak of CDV](#) in which 36 lions died. The Prime Minister had then directed the State authorities to import vaccines.

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As per Forest Department data, there are 161 male, 260 female, 45 sub adult male, 49 sub adult female, 22 unidentified and 137 cubs. Experts said the male-female ratio was healthy in the Gir region with 161 males vs 260 females.

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