

Feline Conservation Federation Census Documents Less than 3,000 Tigers in America

The Feline Conservation Federation used the Freedom of Information Act to gain USDA and state wildlife agency inventories of all wild cats

Washington, DC ([PRWEB](#)) September 19, 2011 -- Contrary to the wild guesses of five to ten thousand tigers in the U.S., a nation-wide survey of tigers and tiger habitat, conducted by the FCF, has revealed less than 3,000 tigers live in America.

"We have suspected this for a long time, but now we know for a fact that the pitiful, dwindling number of tigers living in nature exceeds those protected in state and federally licensed animal facilities in the US", says Lynn Culver, executive director for the Feline Conservation Federation (FCF).

"The FCF survey also proved the so-called "pet tiger" in your neighbor's back yard, is an overblown urban legend. The majority of tigers live in licensed exhibits such as zoos, nature centers, and sanctuaries."

In 2011 the Feline Conservation Federation used the Freedom of Information Act to gain USDA and state wildlife agency inventories of all wild cats. The project also worked to identify non-exhibiting sanctuaries, and non-licensed wild feline owners

The FCF census has documented 2,884 tigers, which is less than the estimated number of tigers in nature. The FCF census revealed that the licensed tiger habitat in America consists of 468 facilities. Of these facilities, at least 226 have been identified by the FCF as USDA Class C exhibitors that operate city, county, or private zoological parks. These facilities hold at least 809 tigers, including the nearly 400 tigers maintained in AZA member zoos. Another 91 sanctuaries hold 1,544 tigers. At least 22 educational facilities provide habitat for 68 tigers. The remaining 585 tigers held by 129 USDA or state licensed entities, reside in commercial breeding facilities, nature centers, are owned by small exhibitors, are owned by individuals, or are part of retired commercial operations, or are school or university mascots, are used in circus, stage, and other traveling exhibits, or could be tigers in zoos and sanctuaries not identified by the FCF.

Speculation by animal rights organizations that the state of Texas holds more tigers than the country of India has been proven completely false by the Feline Conservation Federation census. "Actually only about 300 tigers live in Texas, and most are in zoos or sanctuaries," says Ms. Culver.

In 1998 the Fish and Wildlife Service enacted the Generic Tiger Rule, legalizing interstate commerce of mixed sub-species and non-pedigreed tigers. This exemption allowed tiger breeders to purchase unrelated bloodlines, which improved the health and genetic diversity of tigers. Ms. Culver says the benefits of the CBW exemption are "right before our eyes", noting that decades of out crossing have created perfect white tigers, a public favorite at zoological parks and in animal shows.

The World Wildlife Fund and TRAFFIC, the wildlife trade monitoring network, have pressured the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to rescind the Captive Bred Wildlife registration exemption for generic tigers. A 2008 report by TRAFFIC titled "Paper Tigers," examined whether U.S. tigers were involved in the illegal trade in tiger parts and could not find any evidence. TRAFFIC did however, speculate that U.S. captive tigers could potentially, someday, enter the body parts black market, and fuel the demand and cause an increase in poaching

in range countries.

The FCF believes the proposal to rescind the Generic Tiger Exemption is unnecessary at this time due to other laws that already regulate and protect tigers. The Captive Wildlife Safety Act restricts interstate movement of tigers to USDA licensed facilities and sanctuaries. The Rhinoceros and Tiger Conservation Act criminalizes the sale, import, and export of products intended for human use and containing, or labeled or advertised as containing, any substance derived from tiger.

“It is important to note,” says Ms. Culver, “that to date, there have not been any prosecutions of any alleged violators of either law, suggesting these are not currently problems that demand action.”

Ms. Culver believes even if the CBW registration is enacted, it will result in very few facilities being eligible for registration. “Many people do not understand what a captive bred wildlife registration is, or what it does, and mistakenly believe that removing the exemption means the Fish and Wildlife Service will be tracking all tigers; it is not going to do that”, according to Ms. Culver.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) is the federal agency that keeps track of all animal acquisitions and dispositions and inventories of licensed facilities. It is these same USDA records that the Feline Conservation Federation accessed to census the nation’s population of wild felines.

The Feline Conservation Federation is a leader in feline conservation, supporting habitat protection and felid conservation through its Rare Species Fund and conservation grants program. The international FCF membership includes zoos, sanctuaries, educators, and feline owners, researchers and conservationists.

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