

## Sumatran tigers habitat depleted, destroyed

The number of Sumatran tigers in national parks in Jambi is in decline due to the loss of its habitat, forcing the wild cat to venture into human settlements, as such, conflicts between humans and tigers are inevitable. Forested areas in Jambi's national parks have gradually depleted due to forest conversion and illegal logging by irresponsible parties, disrupting the natural environment.

The Jambi Forestry Agency's Forested Area Planning section head Endang Kurniadi said national parks were the best habitat for rare and protected wildlife species, such as honey bears, jungle cats, elephants and tigers. It is estimated that there are 254 tigers in the province. The Jambi Natural Resources Conservation Agency (BKSDA) recorded 24 cases of human-tiger conflict since 2008. Besides attacking residents, the tigers often maul livestock.

Jambi BKSDA's forest ecosystem controller, Ida Herwati, said despite being at the top of the food chain and ferocious, the beasts never disturb humans intentionally. "They attack if they are disturbed first," said Ida. Separately, Kerinci Seblat National Park (TNKS) region II head Dian Risdianto said only 165 tigers remained in the national park. The dwindling population is attributed to rampant poaching. In 2012, six tigers were found dead; two in Kerinci regency and four in TNKS's area in neighboring Bengkulu province. Also in 2012, four tigers were caught by traps — two died and another two were rescued. The TNKS discovered 38 tiger traps, 36 of which were found outside the park.

Ema Fatma, from the Tumbuh Alami conservation group, said the Sumatran tiger population during 2001-2004 stood at 195 individuals. She explained that the decline could be attributed to poaching and the presence of wild boar and deer traps. The Indonesian Conservation Community (KKI) Warsi spokesman Rudy Syaf stressed that tigers were integral to the food chain; without tigers, wild boars would multiply very fast and would be difficult to curb. Wild boars are part of tigers' main diet in Jambi.

In Jambi, 776,652 hectares (ha) of protected forest had been converted into Industrial Forests (HTI) as of 2011. Another 574,514 ha was converted into oil palm plantations. Meanwhile, a Sumatran tiger at Surabaya Zoo in Surabaya, East Java, died on early Thursday after suffering from digestive and respiratory problems for two years.

Zoo curator, Penta, said that Rosek, a 13-year-old Sumatran tiger, was found dead in its cage by a zookeeper.

"We had been trying to treat Rosek and gave it enzymes to aid digestion. We also took the animal outside its cage for a walk and some sun," Penta told The Jakarta Post on Thursday.

Surabaya Zoo now has 10 Sumatran tigers, seven of which are females. One female tiger is currently undergoing treatment for an illness similar to Rosek's. Internal conflict since 1998 has plagued Surabaya Zoo and peaked in 2007, when a number of animals allegedly died as a result of poor treatment.