



## A letter from the editor

Dear Reader,

Welcome to Frontline.

For the past 37 years Frontline has been practising a journalism that is committed to a brand of journalism that calls a spade a spade, tells the and speaks truth to power.

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Editor, Frontline

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**T**he unique location of the Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve, straddling the valley where the Western Ghats and the Eastern Ghats meet, holds great potential for the recovery and restoration of the tiger population in south India.

“Tyger, tyger, burning bright, in the forests of the night”— William Blake’s famous lines resonate in the mind as one watches the mysterious black-and-yellow striped form

making its way through the forest. Stalking a deer, it steps gently on the twigs of the forest floor so as not to produce any

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~~biodiverse habitat. Other species in the forest also thrive~~  
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lost forever. While cataloguing and understanding every single unit within a biodiverse ecosystem is next to impossible, we seed the hope of a balanced ecosystem simply by ensuring that there are tigers in the forest.

Being an apex predator, the tiger keeps the food chain in the forest intact. Grass grows on the forest floor; it is consumed by grazing herbivores like the deer; the deer is hunted down

by the tiger; when the tiger dies, it is consumed by the same forest floor where it was born. Essentially, the tiger ensures

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announcing on branches and tree stumps to ward off intruders.

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several times in a day. The pair stay together for a couple of days and then part ways.

A tigress gives birth to a maximum of five cubs and takes care of them at least for 10 to 12 months. Both the mother and cubs are extremely vulnerable during this time. Lone bachelor males often hang around close to the territory, looking for an

opportunity to take over from the resident male. It is not good news for the cubs as the new male usually kills all the cubs

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a protected area along the Western Ghats, under the Sathyamangalam and Gobichettipalayam taluks, in Erode district, Tamil Nadu. It is a stronghold of tigers in southern India. Initially declared a wildlife sanctuary in 2008, it was expanded to include more area in 2011. The forest covers an area of 1,411.6 square kilometres and is currently the largest

wildlife sanctuary in Tamil Nadu. In 2013, it became the fourth tiger reserve in Tamil Nadu as part of the “Project

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## Unique ecosystem

Sathyamangalam is well served by the two perennial rivers, Moyar and Bhavani, which form a unique ecosystem. The rich diversity of flora attracts a host of dependent fauna all year round. This area is also an important elephant corridor, among the 88 identified in India. The elephants of the

Eastern and Western Ghats stock have a healthy exchange and passage through this area. Other than the tiger, the forest

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Kollegal and Chamarajanagar in Karnataka, which represent the Eastern Ghats. The Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve is bound by the Chamarajanagar Forest Division to the north and the Nilgiris North Division, which is a part of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve, to the east. Elephants migrate from the Mudumalai Tiger Reserve in different seasons in search of fodder and water and use it as a part of their home range. The

eastern part of the sanctuary falls in the rain-shadow area of the Western Ghats and receives poor rainfall. so the animals

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region in the night, where the drug takes immediate effect.

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treetop machan. The dosage varies depending on the age, weight and health of the animal. In case of an overdose, reviving the tiger will become problematic and severely stress the animal. If the dosage is less, chances are that the tiger could awaken well before the parameters are taken by the researcher and is then likely to attack or flee. The parameters to be observed include weight, condition of teeth, claws and

signs of any injury. Blood samples can be drawn if required. Then the tiger is fitted with a radio collar, a battery-operated

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## CONSERVATION

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... by the British and by Indian maharajas. They were brutally massacred in huge numbers. Marked as endangered in 1975, the tiger population has been declining rapidly in its natural habitat, and has disappeared altogether in areas where it once roamed freely. It is estimated that only 3,000 tigers are left in the wild. While several State governments have taken action to protect India's vanishing wildlife, some



species are already extinct. The last sighting of a wild cheetah in India was several years ago. though there are references to

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~~is as large as the habitat and prey remained intact. While~~  
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so is the size of the prey. The difference between surviving and thriving is the availability of larger prey in sufficient numbers; tigers cannot survive and reproduce solely on small prey, even if they are quite abundant. There is an urgent need to develop ways of enumerating prey density and determining tiger diet.

The tiger landscapes in the country are vast and hold great potential for recovery or restoration of the tiger population.

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provides carbon sink areas and feeds us and our families. But

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habitat they live in so that they can breed and exist peacefully. Tigers are one of nature's magnificent creations. Nature has also created forests and humans. It is now man's responsibility to become the guardian of the forest and the tiger because when they thrive, all other life forms around them flourish.