

The Roar Of Progress: How Reintroducing Tigers Signals Hope For Climate, Forests, and Indigenous Communities

Dr. Suwanna Gauntlett, founder of Wildlife Alliance, writes in Forbes Magazine

PHNOM PENH, CAMBODIA, June 12, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Dr. Suwanna Gauntlett, founder of Wildlife Alliance and a Contributor to Forbes on sustainability issues, writes about the reintroduction of 11 tigers to Cambodia. The article, originally published on the [Forbes website](#), is reproduced in full here.

The upcoming reintroduction of tigers into the Cardamoms Rainforest is more than just a prospective triumph for wildlife conservation; it is a promise of hope in our fight against climate change, the preservation of our forests, and the protection of indigenous communities.



Dr. Suwanna Gauntlett conversing with one of the tigers cared for at the Phnom Tamao Wildlife Rescue Center

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Dr. Suwanna Gauntlett

For centuries, the tiger has been a symbol of strength and resilience. Its anticipated return to the Cardamoms Rainforest will be a testament to the dedicated efforts of many stakeholders, including, the Government of India, Wildlife Alliance, the Government of Cambodia, and local people. However, this initiative is not just about saving a species from the brink of extinction. It represents a holistic approach to conservation that benefits the environment and the people who depend on it.

India will be sending four tigers to Cambodia this year in a historic bid to revive the kingdom’s big cat population. The last sighting of a tiger in Cambodia was in 2007, and they were declared

“functionally extinct” in 2016. These new arrivals will be acclimatized in a 90-hectare forest enclosure inside the Cardamoms Rainforest before being released into the wild. Extensive preparations have been made, including the installation of over 400 cameras, the establishment of 16 ranger stations, and setting up monitoring devices for the tigers’ safety and the safety of nearby villages.



Deforestation and poaching have devastated tiger populations across Asia. Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam have all lost their native tiger populations, while Myanmar is thought to have just 23 tigers left in the wild. India’s wild tiger population now exceeds 3,600, thanks to a massive conservation campaign.

Forests are our planet's lungs, absorbing carbon dioxide and producing oxygen. Healthy forests store more carbon, helping to mitigate the effects of climate change. The Cardamoms Rainforest, one of Southeast Asia’s last remaining major forests, plays a critical role in this process. By protecting and rehabilitating this forest, we are contributing to the global fight against climate change. The presence of tigers will be a sign of a healthy ecosystem. Their return will indicate that efforts to protect and restore the forest are working.

The reintroduction of tigers necessitates the preservation of vast tracts of forest land. Tigers require huge territories to thrive, which means protecting great swathes of their habitat from deforestation and degradation. This, in turn, safeguards biodiversity, ensures water regulation, and maintains the ecosystem services that millions of people rely on. Wildlife Alliance’s work through the REDD+ program has already helped to save 1.7 million hectares of the Cardamoms Rainforest, and the return of tigers underscores the importance of continuing these efforts.

Conservation is not just about wildlife; it is about people. The indigenous communities that live in and around the Cardamoms Rainforest have been the forest’s stewards for generations. Their traditional knowledge and sustainable practices are invaluable to our conservation efforts. By protecting the forest, we are also protecting their way of life. However, these communities face significant threats from land grabs, illegal logging, and other forms of exploitation. By securing their land rights and involving them in conservation efforts, we not only preserve their culture and livelihoods but also enhance the effectiveness of our conservation strategies.

The upcoming success of the [tiger reintroduction](#) will be a vivid illustration of how interconnected our environmental challenges are. Tackling climate change, protecting forests, and defending indigenous rights are not separate issues; they are deeply intertwined. Our holistic approach recognizes this interconnectedness. By addressing these issues together, we can create a sustainable future for both people and wildlife.

The roar of a tiger in the Cardamoms Rainforest will be more than a sound; it will be a call to action. It will remind us that when we come together to protect our planet, we can achieve remarkable things. The success of this project will show that with dedication, collaboration, and a commitment to holistic conservation, we can turn the tide for our planet's future.

As we prepare for the return of the tigers, let us also commit to continuing our efforts to combat climate change, protect our forests, and uphold the rights of indigenous peoples. The challenges are great, but the rewards—for our planet, for wildlife, and for future generations—are even greater.

[About Wildlife Alliance](#)

The international NGO Wildlife Alliance was founded by Dr Suwana Gauntlett to offer direct protection to forests and wildlife through cutting-edge conservation programs. Wildlife Alliance provides technical assistance and critical thinking to governments, and strives for stakeholder consensus in achieving solutions to multiple environmental threats, including animal trafficking, economic land concessions for agro-industrial plantations and mining, and community encroachment on forestland. Wildlife Alliance is the leader in direct action in the Southeast Asian tropical belt.

Please visit the Wildlife Alliance website for more information on the tiger reintroduction.

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