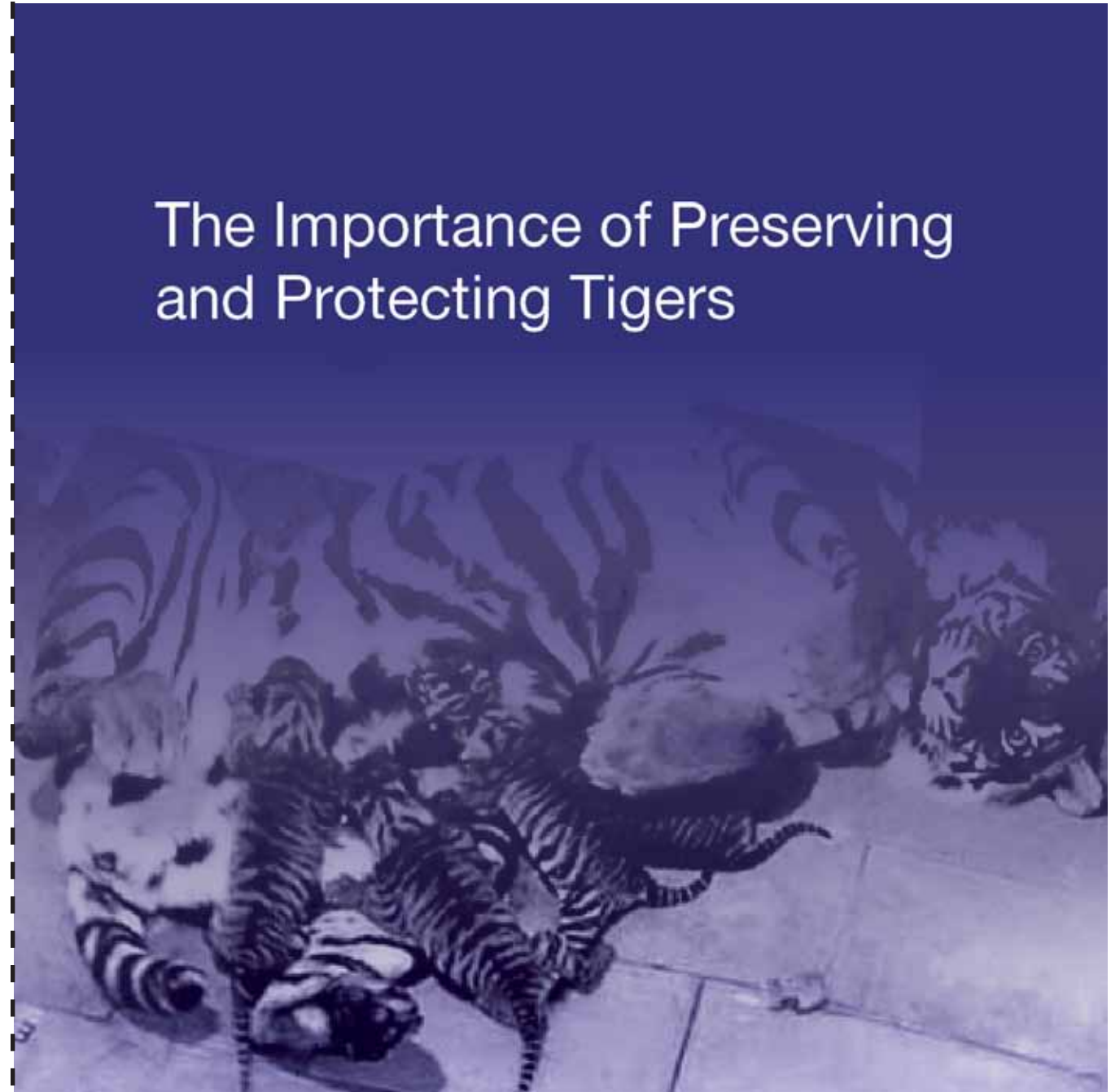


The Importance of Preserving and Protecting Tigers



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Damai, a Sumatran tiger, lives at the National Zoo in Washington, D.C. Photo courtesy of Megan Murphy.

Since the 1970s, there has been a growing effort to preserve the number of tigers in the wild and increase the numbers in captivity. One of the most important acts, the Species Survival Plan (SSP), was formed as a joint effort by the American Zoo and Aquarium Association and conservation organizations, whose main goal was to establish and manage healthy endangered animals in captivity.



This Amur tiger cub was born in captivity at the Great Plains Zoo in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Photo courtesy of the Great Plains Zoo.

The SSP created a master plan for managing tigers with recommendations for mate selection, shipping conditions for breeding animals, and supporting programs that protect the species in the wild. In 1992, it was decided that 100 tigers from each subspecies should be kept in captivity. These tigers have been raised in zoos across North America in cooperation with tiger conservation programs in Europe, India and Southeast Asia. Other international tiger programs also exist, including the Tiger Global Animal Survival Plan (GASP), which devised several areas of scientific study, such as molecular DNA studies, that are thought to be critical for the survival of tigers worldwide. There have also been advances in other scientific programs, such as in the fields of genome banking, *in vitro* fertilization and contraception.



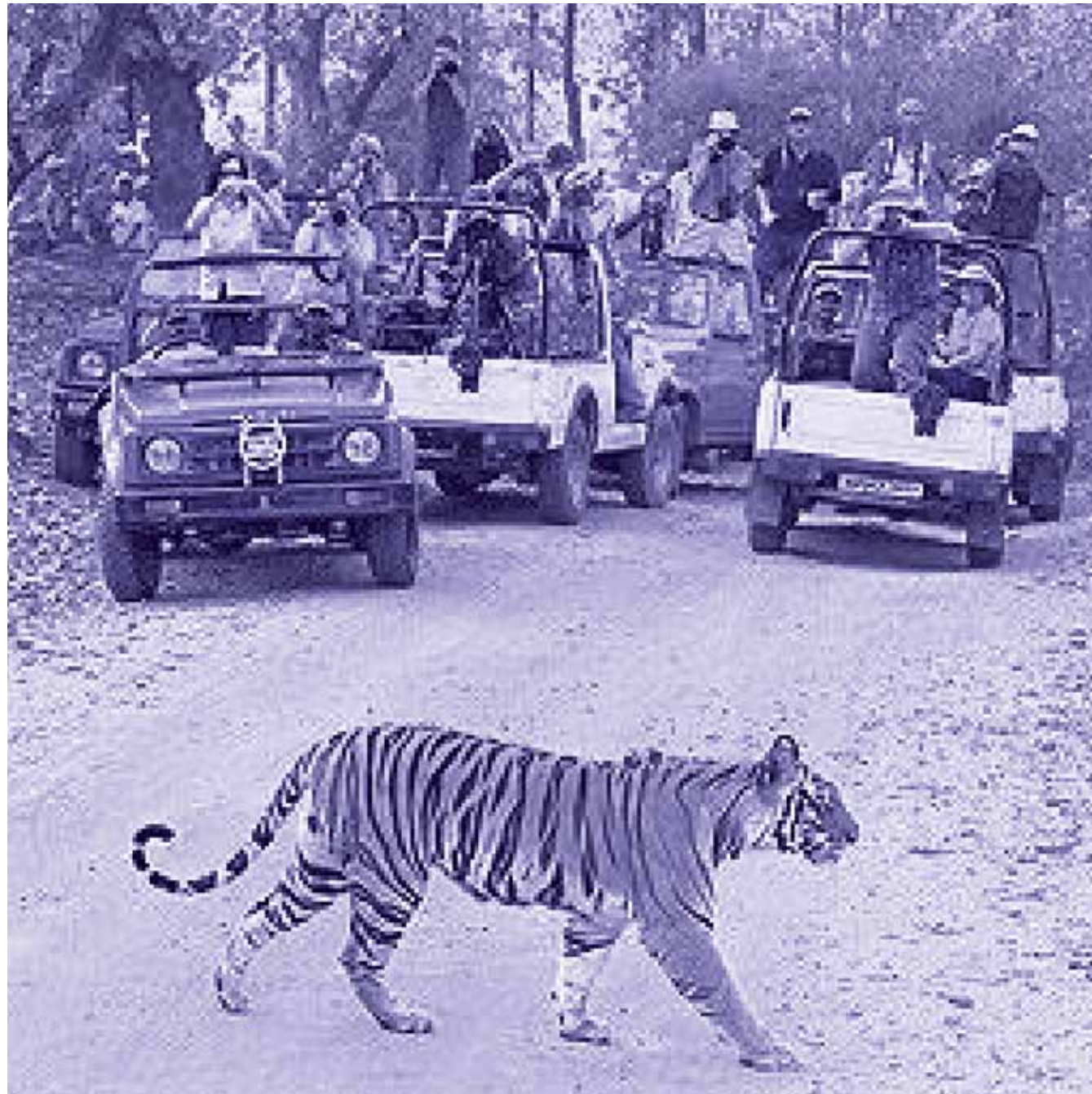
World leaders attend the International Tiger Forum in St. Petersburg, Russia, in 2010. Photo courtesy of the Environmental Investigation Agency.

For the past 40 years, there have been many international and national laws, guidelines and regulations for the protection of tigers. The most fundamental of these is the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), which specifically bans the international trade of tigers and tiger body parts. To date, 175 countries have signed the CITES agreement. Many regional conservation programs also exist, such as the Global Tiger Forum in India, whose main goals are to eliminate the trade in tiger parts, support efforts to preserve tiger habitat, and promote local training and research in tiger conservation. Several local governments in Asia have also enacted laws to protect tigers.



One key tool toward saving tigers in the wild is to educate the public about these great animals. The Bali Safari and Marine Park launched a campaign in 2010 called “Safari Goes to School,” teaching children about the preservation of tigers and other wild animals.

However, despite these efforts, much work still needs to be done to protect tigers. Local governments must work to help villagers who have lost property due to wild tiger attacks, who rely on the natural resources in tigers’ habitats, and who think that tiger parts are essential in their medicine. Educating these local villagers about the benefits of tiger conservation is crucial. In addition, collaborative work must be carried out between those who are helping to protect tigers in the wild and those who are raising tigers in captivity. The overall global goal is that by 2022, the Chinese Year of the Tiger, the population of wild tigers will have doubled.



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