

FOR TIGERS



# ANNUAL REPORT 2023







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# FROM THE CHAIRWOMAN

We are about to put 2023 behind us and look back at a year filled with progress and collaboration. As planned, the construction of the last three enclosures started in 2022 was completed at Khao Son DNP. This project was a milestone as it meant all tigers housed at Khao Son now have access to an outdoor enclosure.

In 2023, WFFT rescued 12 tigers from a recently closed tiger farm in northern Thailand. For Tigers funded transport costs as well as materials for new enclosures, and it was heartwarming to see these tigers relocated to significantly improved conditions where their health and welfare will be in focus. Another budding collaboration is set up with the venue Tiger World, where we have had fruitful discussions with management about how we can assist in providing training and informational materials to their keepers and managers. This collaboration has the potential for us to make real and lasting changes to how facilities think about their management and husbandry practices, and we are looking forward to developing this further.

We also value our connection to the broader animal welfare community. A part of connecting with the scientific community is publishing peer reviewed papers, which we accomplished in 2023, when our director and founder, Tanya Erzinclioglu published her paper titled “Using qualitative behaviour assessment (QBA) to investigate the effect of tourist presence on the welfare of captive tigers in three tourism facilities in Thailand” in the journal, Zoo Biology. By sharing the scientific outcomes of our years of work, we can bring our tools to a wider audience, and make sure that the data we collect can be assessed and used by both scientists and animal keepers.

In 2023 we were again able to visit and assess 33 public facilities holding captive tigers in Thailand. Every year, we continue implementing improvements and updates to the scoring system and rating criteria of our basic animal welfare assessment form. During this research campaign, we hosted our second intern who participated in the welfare assessments as well as performing their own research on the use of ponds in tiger enclosures. Having interns join us gives us a chance to provide hands on learning to a new generation of welfare minded students.

When looking towards 2024, we are hoping to continue funding projects at DNP facilities. We hope 2024 will be another productive year, where we can build lasting relationships with key players in the tiger welfare realm in Thailand.

**Annie Vera Hunnestad, Chairwoman**

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# FOR TIGERS' VISION AND MISSION

Though small, we are aiming high. Our vision is to see a Thailand where all captive tigers have a life worth living. In order to achieve this, we strive to collaborate, educate, inspire and secure a high standard of welfare for all captive tigers in Thailand.

There is a long journey ahead of us to achieve this vision but we are currently working alongside a growing number of like-minded organisations with the same vision in mind. In addition to this, we are building partnerships and collaborations with facilities and organisations within the South East Asian area in order to work alongside venues that have lower welfare standards. Through building relationships with these facilities, we aim to help them improve their tigers' welfare. As part of this, we do not advocate closure of sub-standard facilities, but rather encourage change and improvement.

We also challenge ourselves, constantly updating and improving our tiger welfare materials through the latest literature on tiger husbandry and welfare.

## OUR AIMS

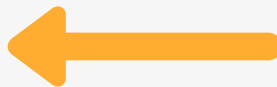
- To provide educational services and support in matters pertaining to animal welfare in general and the prevention of cruelty and suffering among animals at facilities housing captive tigers in Thailand
- To work with locals toward better ethical treatment and approaches toward animals, wild and captive
- To educate the public in matters pertaining to animal welfare and the prevention of cruelty and suffering among amongst captive tigers
- To analyze and assess the welfare, care, treatment, and housing conditions of captive tigers in facilities across Thailand that are open to the public
- To engage the public to support positive changes for improving conditions of animals in captivity
- To create and distribute information on responsible wildlife tourism



# HIGHLIGHTS OF 2023

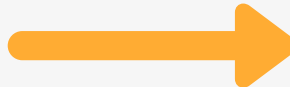
This year For Tigers has continued to build on the work started in 2022 moving forward with researching facilities and encouraging new partnerships and providing direct aid to the DNP specifically.

- 33** Facilities visited and assessed
- 3** Collaborations
- 3** Conferences/workshops attended
- 1** Interns



The three enclosures started in 2022 were completed this year in May. This means that all tigers kn Khao Son have access to enclosure. Medicines and deworming pills were donated to both facilities.

Our first scientific publication was released in September of this year. The paper was a novel application of Qualitative Behaviour Assessment in captive tigers.



[Zoo Biol. 2024 Jan-Feb;43\(1\):42-54. doi: 10.1002/zoo.21804. Epub 2023 Sep 25.](#)

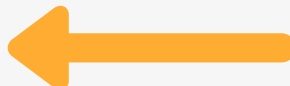
**Using qualitative behavior assessment to investigate the effect of tourist presence on the welfare in captive tigers (*Panthera tigris*) in three tourism facilities in Thailand**

Tanya S Erzinçioğlu <sup>1, 2</sup>, Kenny M D Rutherford <sup>3</sup>

Affiliations + expand  
PMID: 37746904 DOI: 10.1002/zoo.21804

**Abstract**

Numerous facilities around the world offer tourists interactive experiences with captive tigers. Yet, the animal welfare implications of this practice have not been widely studied. This study aimed to investigate whether qualitative behavioral assessment (QBA) could: (i) provide a valid indicator of tiger's emotional state and (ii) be applied to assess whether unfamiliar human presence with hand-raised captive tigers had an impact on the emotional state of those tigers. To investigate this, QBA



Our sixth Walk for Tigers event was very popular with a large number of participants heading out to Shepreth Wildlife Park.

The 31st SEAZA conference, EAZA Enclosure Design Workshop and the Animal Training Fundamentals workshops were attended by For Tigers representatives.





## THE IMPORTANCE OF TIGER WELFARE

Good welfare should address the needs of captive tigers; both their physical and mental requirements. However, this is often hard to achieve in a captive setting as improving welfare in some areas can actually reduce welfare in others. For example, creating a completely natural outdoor enclosure can result in a greater chance of injury, though it does afford the tiger the ability to perform natural behaviours – the welfare conundrum here is to balance risk versus benefit. This is where more recent welfare ideas focus on what the animal wants as well as what it needs..

It can also be hard to know what exactly constitutes adequate conditions for an animal. Failing to adequately provide for captive tigers can result in negative behaviour occurring. Stereotypical or abnormal repetitive behaviours such as pacing are the result of a poor environment that lacks stimulation. These behaviours are mechanisms that help the tiger cope with its environment. To reduce abnormal repetitive behaviours, a complex environment should include enrichment, a variety of levels, substrates, hiding places, feeding methods and appropriate interaction with members of the same species (conspecifics) and positive human-animal relationships.. This helps recreate as natural an environment as possible, thus better meeting the tiger's physical and mental needs.

- **A complex environment promotes a tiger's mental and physical stimulation**
- **Providing the right environment and stimuli help promote natural behaviours in captive tigers**
- **By providing for a tigers' needs, we can reduce the likelihood of abnormal behaviours occurring**

# DIRECT AID IN 2023



This year, For Tigers continued its collaboration with the Department of National Parks (DNP). Three more enclosures were finalised as per the plans of 2022 providing all tigers within Khao Son DNP facility access to an enclosure. Each enclosure contains trees, grass and a pond. In the future, Additional funding projects within the DNP facilities will incorporate more enrichment items such as the provision of tyres, barrels and balls. Medication including deworming pills was donated to both DNP facilities.



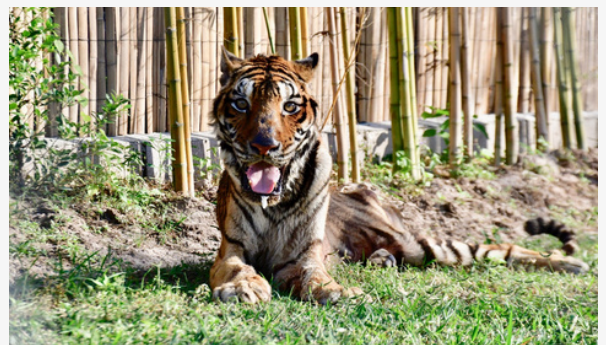
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# DIRECT AID IN 2023



Our collaboration with Wildlife Friends Foundation Thailand (WFFT) continued. This rescue and rehabilitation facility within Thailand began the process of rescuing a further 20+ tigers from Mukdahan Tiger zoo, a recently closed tiger farm in northern Thailand. For Tigers funded transport costs as well as materials for enclosures for the tigers to move into.

In 2023, For Tigers was able to collaborate with WFFT in the rescue of 12 tigers, part of one of the largest non-governmental tiger rescues in Thailand. This collaboration will continue in 2024 as there are still 12+ tigers in need of rescue from this tiger farm, and enclosures still need to be built.



Photos courtesy of Wildlife Friends Foundation Thailand





# RESEARCH & RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT IN 2023

During this financial year, our staff attended the South East Asian Zoo Association (SEAZA) Annual conference, as well as taking part in an Enclosure Design workshop from EAZA, and various training workshops by Animal Training Fundamentals in order to gain a better understanding of welfare issues, discuss potential steps that could be taken and to network with like-minded organisations and NGOs.

During May 2023, we visited and assessed 33 public facilities holding captive tigers in Thailand, doing so from a tourist's point of view. For this assessment, we continued to use the basic animal welfare assessment form created and implemented in 2019. This welfare assessment form underwent further improvements and updates to the scoring system and rating criteria in accordance with the latest animal welfare literature.

Our second intern joined this data collection field trip, working with us from May to August 2023. The role of the intern was to participate in the welfare assessments and to perform their own tiger welfare research on the use of ponds in tiger enclosures. The internship culminated in a Masters thesis awarded a distinction.

Finally, a paper entitled "Using qualitative behaviour assessment (QBA) to investigate the effect of tourist presence on the welfare of captive tigers in three tourism facilities in Thailand" by For Tigers director, Tanya Erzincioğlu, was published in Zoo Biology (DOI: 10.1002/zoo.21804). It is a novel application of QBA and provides a new method for assessing captive tiger welfare.

> Zoo Biol. 2024 Jan-Feb;43(1):42-54. doi: 10.1002/zoo.21804. Epub 2023 Sep 25.

## Using qualitative behavior assessment to investigate the effect of tourist presence on the welfare in captive tigers (*Panthera tigris*) in three tourism facilities in Thailand

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# PARTNERSHIP NETWORK IN 2023

As mentioned above, we continued to maintain our positive working relationship with the Department of National Parks (DNP) despite only providing minimal aid.



Talks with tiger venue, Tiger World, were successful in 2023 regarding tiger welfare and potential management practice changes. This has resulted in the moving forward of a working relationship with the venue, starting with providing training material, and access and provision of tiger welfare information for the keepers. The working partnership will begin in 2024.

For Tigers has continued its collaboration with other NGO's namely, Wild Welfare for research and dissemination of materials and workshops, and Wildlife Friends Foundation Thailand, to further aid in the rescue of confiscated tigers in Thailand.

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# PUBLIC AWARENESS (EDUCATION) IN 2023

For Tigers always strives to provide clear and objective information regarding tiger welfare at the facilities across Thailand. This is disseminated via regular newsletters, a website blog and the responsible use of various social media channels.



The process to translate the website into Thai began in 2023. A small portion of the website is now available in Thai in an effort to reach out and engage a wider audience.



In addition, we held our sixth fundraising event, which was key to communicating many of the welfare issues prevalent across Thailand's tiger facilities. Again, this was in-person, and included a wide range of ages all participating in the event. All of our communication with the public is designed to raise effective awareness of welfare issues, elicit positive change and also to secure on going income for our work. Social media is particularly pertinent in these areas so we are continuing to grow our audience and interaction in these areas.



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# WHAT'S NEXT FOR 2024?

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As we move into the Year of the Tiger, For Tigers will continue to pursue each of the outlined activities: Direct Aid, Research and Resource Development, Partnership Network and Public Awareness (education). We are hoping to be able to add training to our future activities as we continue to pursue potential partnerships in the coming year.

Below are some of the objectives we hope to achieve in 2024:

- Continue to improve and upgrade the Department of National Parks through additional enrichment, enclosures and cage upgrades
- Identify additional facilities willing to accept support and aid
- Revisit all the facilities visited and assessed in 2023 updating our report on their welfare score
- Create an enrichment guide/manual that can be delivered to staff working with tigers in Thai venues.
- Attend and present at SEAZA 2024 to continue networking and liaising with other organisations, both NGO and tiger venues
- Development of additional research opportunities with zoos and NGO partners
- Create further educational material to aid tourists in choosing welfare-friendly venues
- Translate all educational and training material into Thai (for venue staff), and various other languages including Mandarin, Russian, Hindi and French in order to reach, and educate, a wider range of tourist groups

## **THANK YOU!**

For Tigers is very grateful to all its donors, for without your support, none of this work would be possible!





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