

FOR TIGERS



ANNUAL REPORT 2019







FROM THE CHAIRWOMAN

2019 has been a successful year for For Tigers, but also a year filled with disappointing news. Starting with the positive, we have used this year to build on the momentum from 2018. In particular, this has meant another extensive report – Stalking Thailand’s Tourist Tigers – going in depth into the different facilities keeping captive tigers in Thailand. This year, each facility was awarded with a welfare score, based on a basic animal welfare assessment form developed by For Tigers board members. With this assessment form being available to the general public, we have made it easier for the layperson to be able to assess the welfare in the facilities they visit, and potentially even report back to us with what they observe.

This year also brought with it more upgrades to the cages and enclosures at DNP facilities. Several more of the previous Tiger Temple tigers now have access to enclosures containing large ponds and trees, and we’re hoping to continue the upgrades as our collaboration with DNP is still strong entering 2020. We are simultaneously continuing our collaboration with one of Thailand’s larger tiger venues, and moving towards a goal of reducing human-tiger interactions at that facility.

On a more somber note, the sad news of the death of a large number of the previous Tiger Temple tigers affected all of us throughout the year. In a way, it put a damper on some of the positive changes we have managed to make as we were hoping to see as many of these tigers as possible out in their new and improved enclosures. However, moving forward we can only focus on the remaining tigers, and hope to continue making steps to improve their welfare situation.

There is no doubt that animal welfare is getting more focus from the public in South East Asia in general, and in Thailand in particular, and we are hoping to use this momentum to keep moving forward with education and outreach throughout 2020. We are already seeing the first changes happening, and we are confident more will follow.

Annie Vera Hunnestad, Chairwoman

HOW WE IMPROVE TIGER WELFARE

As a small team of like-minded individuals, we consistently work toward improving animal welfare of, and promoting humane behaviour toward, captive tigers in Thailand. To do this we aim to work alongside venues that have poorer welfare, choosing to to partner with them in order to improve their welfare standards. Through these efforts we are able to reach venues that others cannot, building important relationships that see an improved quality of life for the tigers under that venue's care.

Along this line, we do not advocate shutting down facilities, but choose to find ways to work with them. The closure of a venue often leads to the tigers leading poorer lives and this must be taken into consideration if these steps are to be taken. Throughout all our collaborations, we are also consistently updating and improving our own captive tiger welfare standards. We do this through extensive research and the latest literature, ensuring that we are informed on the latest husbandry and welfare findings with regards to captive tigers.

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 2019

This year For Tigers has continued to build on the work started in 2018, moving forward with creating educational material, researching facilities and encouraging new partnerships and providing direct aid.

- 32** Facilities visited and assessed
- 15** Enclosures provided with trees and ponds
- 1** Captive tiger welfare resource published
- 1** Conference attended



Our second report - Stalking Thailand's Tourist Tigers, breaks down each facility allocating it a welfare score.



The 27th SEAZA conference was attended by For Tigers representatives in Phu Quoc, Vietnam. Each year the focus on animal welfare is growing, which is hugely positive.

Upgrades to enclosures built by the DNP included providing trees and grass seed, as well as the building of 13 large ponds. We also upgraded one of the concrete cages to become a more species-appropriate living space.



Our second Walk for Tigers Event is a success with walkers starting in Cambridge and finishing 9 miles later at Shepreth Wildlife Park



Why is Animal Welfare Important?

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 2019



This year, For Tigers continued its collaboration with the Department of National Parks (DNP). Unlike previous years, 2019 saw the DNP facilities able to fund and build a total of 20 new enclosures – ten in each facility. However, while the DNP could fund the enclosures, their budget did not stretch to providing vegetation, ponds or other species appropriate enclosure furniture to promote natural tiger behaviour.





In light of this, and with the facilities' permission, For Tigers continued to provide direct aid to the DNP. This year, as there were enclosures already underway, our contribution involved buying trees and grass to add vegetation to these enclosures.





For Tigers also funded the building of ten ponds in one facility and funded three in the second.

Additional aid was also provided in the form of donations of chicken when requested for help.





For Tigers also upgraded one 10x4m concrete-floored cage by combining it with a second, building a larger pond, covering one half in an earth substrate and placing logs for scratching.

The aim behind this upgrade was to find ways to improve the pre-existing cages that are built in such a fashion that enclosures cannot be joined to them. By utilising the 3D space in these pre-existing areas, we hope to improve the quality of life of the tigers that have to live in those cages.



RESEARCH & RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT IN 2019

During this financial year, our staff attended the South East Asian Zoo Association (SEAZA) 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.

We visited and assessed 33 public facilities holding captive tigers, doing so from a tourist's point of view. For this report we developed and implemented a basic animal welfare assessment form that could be used by the layperson to help them determine the differences between good and bad welfare. This report aims to provide an easy "cheat sheet" guide to each of the facilities holding tigers in Thailand. The report comes complete with short breakdowns of each facility, listing the positives and negatives and gives a welfare score using the traffic light system for easier understanding and comprehension.



PARTNERSHIP NETWORK IN 2019

As mentioned above, we continued our working relationship with the Department of National Parks, continuing to maintain a positive working relationship promoting better quality of life for the tigers.



We continued to pursue the next step in working with other tiger venues within Thailand. This was continued on from our research compiled throughout 2018 when visiting all the tiger venues in the country, and determining which venues might be interested in a working partnership and to improve welfare.

At the end of 2018, we had been invited by a well-known tiger venue in Thailand to participate in their latest, more welfare-friendly programme for tourists. The venue expressed their interest and desire to transition from a hands-on venue to a more welfare-friendly tourism model. Following on from this, For Tigers was invited to give a presentation to the venue's Board of Directors outlining the importance of prioritising their captive tigers' welfare, while simultaneously working to find a welfare-friendly business solution. Currently talks are on going.

PUBLIC AWARENESS (EDUCATION) IN 2019

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. Our latest report was distributed throughout these platforms.



In addition we held our second fundraising event, which continues to be key in communicating many of the welfare issues prevalent across Thailand's tiger facilities. All of our communication with the public is designed to raise effective awareness of welfare issues, elicit positive change and also secure ongoing 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.





WHAT'S NEXT FOR 2020?

-

As we move into the new decade, 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 pursue potential partnerships in the coming year.

Below are some of the objectives we hope to achieve in 2019:

- Continue to improve and upgrade the Department of National Parks through additional enrichment and cage upgrades
- Identify facilities willing to accept support and aid
- Continue moving forward with the tiger venue and support their progress and transition
- Revisit all the facilities visited and assessed in 2019 updating our report on their welfare score
- Create educational and/or training material such as enrichment guides that can be delivered to staff working with tigers in Thai venues.
- Attend SEAZA 2020 and the Animal Welfare Symposium in Singapore 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!



This work and all photographs copyright ©For Tigers 2019

www.fortigers.org

For Tigers is a Registered Charity
Charity Number: 1176840
Registered as a foundation charitable
incorporated organization (CIO)
(Wales & England)