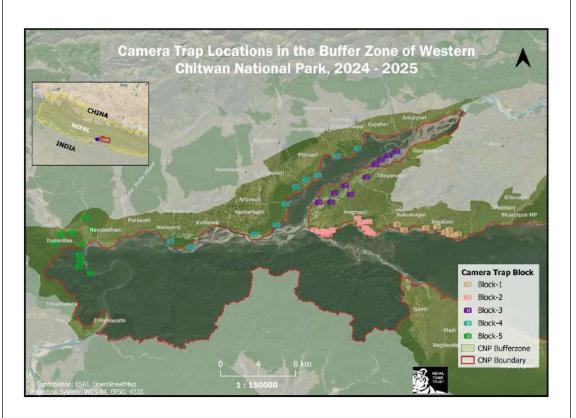
# LONG TERM TIGER MONITORING: CAMERA TRAPPING IN THE BUFFER ZONE OF WESTERN CHITWAN NATIONAL PARK, NEPAL

An Annual Report 2024-2025



Submitted to
Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation, Kathmandu
Chitwan National Park, Kasara

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#### **SUMMARY**

This report presents the final findings from the Long-Term Tiger Monitoring (LTTM) project conducted in the Buffer Zone Community Forests (BZCFs) of western Chitwan National Park (CNP) during the 2024–2025 monitoring season. The area was systematically divided into five camera trapping blocks, encompassing 71 camera stations and yielding a total trapping effort of 1,535 trap nights. Camera trapping efforts resulted in the photo capture of 29 individual tigers, including: 9 resident tigers (5 females, 4 males), 14 transient or non-resident tigers and 6 cubs, associated with three of the resident females. The classification of residency was based on photographic recapture history from previous data set and females with cubs. Most transient individuals were photographed for the first time, making it difficult to determine their residency status without long term data. The presence of a substantial number of tigers, including breeding females and cubs, within the BZCFs strongly indicates habitat expansion, population growth, and territorial extension beyond the core protected area. This is further supported by the documentation of diverse prey species within the same habitats, suggesting improved ecological conditions conducive to tiger conservation. While a few incidents of human-tiger conflict were recorded, these events also highlight the dispersal dynamics of tigers through BZCFs into the broader landscape. Such interactions underscore the importance of maintaining a delicate balance between human livelihoods and tiger conservation. Continued longterm monitoring through camera trapping remains essential for understanding tiger population trends, movement ecology, and for informing coexistence strategies in human-dominated landscapes.

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#### BACKGROUND

Chitwan National Park (CNP), a UNESCO World Heritage Site, has the longest history of tiger monitoring in the world, dating back to its establishment in 1973 (McDougal et al., 2016). Renowned for having one of the best tiger breeding habitats globally, CNP became the focal point for pioneering tiger research.

In 1980, following the conclusion of the Tiger Ecology Project, Dr. Charles McDougal initiated the Long-Term Tiger Monitoring (LTTM) project in collaboration with the Smithsonian Institution and the International Trust for Nature Conservation (ITNC). The project aimed to continue tiger research with a focus on understanding the life histories and reproductive contributions of individual resident tigers.

From 1980 to 1995, the LTTM project employed a reliable pugmark identification technique, meticulously analyzing all four pugmarks of individual tigers (McDougal, 1999). The study area spanned approximately 100 km<sup>2</sup> of prime tiger habitat, from Kasara (the park headquarters) in the east to Lendaghat in the west, within the western part of CNP.

With the advent of Trail guard cameras in 1995, the project transitioned to camera trapping, which offered a more efficient and accurate method for identifying individual tigers. This phase, lasting until 2010, was supported by ITNC and The Fund for the Tiger (TFFT).

In 2010, local LTTM associates, with support from CNP management, established the Nepal Tiger Trust (NTT) to continue the project. Digital camera traps were introduced, enhancing data collection. In 2016, LTTM associates published a

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comprehensive analysis of 40 years of data (1974–2015), detailing tiger density, territory, reproductive status, and the longevity of breeding females (McDougal et al., 2016). The findings revealed a stable density of breeding females since the early 1990s, contributing to a stable tiger population in the study area.

Also in 2010, Nepal joined 12 other tiger range countries in committing to the ambitious goal of doubling the Nepal's tiger population by 2022 (DNPWC, 2016). Nepal achieved this milestone, becoming the first country to double its tiger population between 2009 and 2022 (DNPWC, 2023).

In CNP, the stable tiger population in the western region, as confirmed by LTTM, suggested a balance between tiger numbers, prey base, and habitat capacity (DNPWC, 2020; Dahal et al., 2023). However, efforts by CNP and Buffer Zone User Committees (BZUCs) successfully re-established tiger habitats in buffer zones and adjacent forestlands. The increase in tiger numbers was largely attributed to these expanded habitats, as evidenced by a steady rise in tiger photo captures during national tiger surveys. Thus, conservation efforts beyond CNP boundaries significantly contributed to the overall growth of the Chitwan tiger population.

Recognizing the importance of these areas, LTTM has focused its monitoring efforts since 2018 on the western BZCFs of CNP. Both camera trapping and pugmark tracking techniques were employed. Pugmark tracking, used across a larger portion of the study area, provided detailed insights into tiger movement and associations. Camera trapping was initially concentrated in the Meghauli BZCF and expanded throughout the western buffer zone in the 2024–25 season.

The objectives of this project are to:

- 1. Understand long-term population dynamics and interactions of tigers in the western BZCFs of CNP.
- 2. Build capacity among community forest guards and park game scouts.
- 3. Assist in mitigating human-tiger conflict.
- 4. Promote tiger conservation through community participation.

#### METHODOLOGY

#### Study Area

The study was conducted in the north-western buffer zone of CNP, covering BZCFs from Kerunga/Jagatpur in the east to Daunne Hills/Dumkibas in the west. The area was divided into five camera trapping blocks:

- Block I: Kerunga/Jagatpur BZCFs along the Rapti River from Jagatpur to Budhanagar Ghat.
- Block II: Meghauli Along the Rapti River from Budhanagar Ghat to the Rapti-Narayani confluence.
- Block III: Kalabanjar/Siswar BZCFs along the eastern channel of the Narayani
   River from the Rapti-Narayani confluence to Ganjapur Post.
- Block IV: Lamichour/Amaltari BZCFs along the western channel of the Narayani
   River from Amaltari to Kujauli.
- Block V: Daunne Hills/Dumkibas BZCFs west of Seri along the Narayani River to Daunne Hills.

#### **Camera Trapping**

Camera trapping was conducted from June 2024 to May 2025, divided into two seasons based on the monsoon period.

- Season 2023–24: Camera trapping was carried out only in Block II, (Meghauli BZCF) from June 12 to June 27, 2024, using 11 camera sets. This resulted in a total of 165 trap nights (see Table 1).
- Season 2024–25: Camera trapping was conducted from September 18, 2024, to
   May 19, 2025, covering all five blocks. Due to flooding, Block II (Meghauli) was
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surveyed twice. The initial trapping began on September 18, 2024, but was halted after 10 days. The area was re-surveyed from April 25 to May 18, 2025.

The sequence of camera trapping in other blocks was as follows:

- Block I (Kerunga): November 18 December 10, 2024
- Block V (Daunne Hills): December 16, 2024 January 6, 2025
- **Block IV (Lamichour)**: January 9 February 10, 2025
- **Block III (Kalabanjar)**: February 17 March 19, 2025

In each block, 9 to 11 camera locations were established. At each location, two camera traps were installed and operated continuously (24 hours per trap night). Cameras were regularly monitored for tiger tracks, photo captures, battery status, and SD card storage. GPS coordinates of all camera locations were recorded and mapped (Figure 1). The camera trapping efforts, tiger's photos obtained during the study period are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Season wise camera trapping effort and success rate of tigers photo.

SEASON	LOCATION	TRAP NIGHT (TN)	РНОТО	TN/PHOTO	INDIVIDUAL	TN/INDIVIDUAL
2023-24	11	165	64	2.6	6	27.5
2024-25	60	1370	424	3.2	29	47.2
Total	71	1535	488	3.1	35	74.74

Individual tigers were identified based on their unique stripe patterns and facial markings. Photographs were compared with previous years' records. Tigers were classified as residents if they were observed with cubs or recorded in the area for more than two seasons. Others were categorized as transients included adults and sub-adults.

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#### **Camera Trapping Participation**

During the 2024–2025 camera trapping season in the BZCFs of western CNP, the monitoring efforts actively involved park rangers, game scouts, and community forest guards. Their inclusion aimed to foster local engagement in wildlife monitoring, enhance capacity building, and improve the effectiveness of long-term tiger conservation through shared stewardship and knowledge exchange. This collaborative approach strengthened field operations and promoted community-based conservation practices. List of participants are in Table 2.

**Table 2 Field Personnel Participation in Camera Trapping 2024-25** 

SN	Name	Designation	Institution/Location
1	Ramesh Basnet	Ranger	CNP/Meghauli Post
2	Amrita Pudasaini	Ranger	CNP/Meghauli Post
3	Kabi Raj Praja	Ranger	CNP/Tamaspur Post
4	Jagdish Chaulagain	Game scout	CNP/Meghauli Post
5	Jagdish Chaudhary	Game scout	CNP/Bhutaha Post
6	Sunil Chaudhary	Sr. Game scout	CNP/Bhutaha Post
7	Dinesh Pandey	Game scout	CNP/Dibyapuri Post
8	Biraj Mohan Chaudhary	Game scout	CNP/Dibyapuri Post
9	Suresh Bumi	Game scout	CNP/Dibyapuri Post
10	Govinda Chaulagain	Game scout	CNP/Dibyapuri Post
11	Dhan B Sunar	Game scout	CNP/Baguban Post
12	Santa B Kumal	Boatman	CNP/Siswar Post
13	Gautam Bote	Boatman	CNP/Siswar Post
14	Budhi Ram Bote	Boatman	CNP/Bhutaha post
15	Sikandar Chaudhary	Elephant Staff	CNP/Siswar Post
16	Jhilake Mahato	Elephant Staff	CNP/Siswar Post
17	Nirajan Mahato	Elephant Staff	CNP/Siswar Post
18	Tas B Khangha Magar	Chairperson	Daunne Devi CF
19	Kosh B Khangha Magar	Member	Daunne Devi CF
20	Binod Bogati	Forest guard	Rapti Niyantaran CF
21	Ram Deb Mahato	Forest guard	Jogi Kuti CF
22	Babu Ram Mahato	Forest guard	Bardha 4-6 CF
23	Budhi Ram Musahar	Forest guard	Namuna Cf
24	Jiba Nath Lamichhane	Forest guard	Namuna Cf

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25	Tirtha B Rai	Forest guard	Kumarbarti CF
26	Durja B Gurung	Forest guard	Pragati CF
27	Dil B Sunar	Forest guard	Narayani CF
28	Birkha B Magar	Forest guard	Krisna Sar CF
29	Bir B Gurung	Forest guard	Krisna Sar CF
30	Laxman Bote	Forest guard	Gundarahi Dhaka CF
31	Bal B Shrestha	Forest guard	Gundarahi Dhaka CF
32	Ratan Bote	Forest guard	Gundarahi Dhaka CF
33	Min Parsad Adhikari	Forest guard	Gundarahi Dhaka CF
34	Arjun Chhetri	Forest guard	Santi Kunja CF
35	Asok Lama	Forest guard	Pan Bari CF
36	Suk B Lama	Forest guard	Pan Bari CF
37	Sali Ram Neupane	Forest guard	Tinchuli CF
38	Bir B Kumal	Sr. Tiger Tracker	Nepal Tiger Trust
39	Bishnu Mahato	Admin	Nepal Tiger Trust
40	Ashok Kumal	Jr. Tiger Technician	Nepal Tiger Trust
41	Kali Das Kumal	Boatman	Volunteer
42	Bharat Kumal	Boatman	Volunteer

#### **RESULTS**

From June 2024 to May 2025, camera trapping efforts successfully photographed 29 individual tigers across the western BZCFs of CNP. Of these, six tigers were photographed in the 2023–24 season at Meghauli Community Forests. Five of those six were re-photographed in the 2024–25 season. Therefore, a total of 29 individual tigers were recorded: 28 in 2024–25 and one additional individual from 2023–24 (Table 3).

Table 3 Breakdown of Tigers by Categories Meghauli (2023-24) and Western BZCFs CNP (2024-25)

SEASON	RESIDENT FEMALE	RESIDENT MALE	TRANSIENT	CUB	TOTAL
2023-24	1	2	1	2	6
2024-25	5	3	14	6	28

#### Definitions:

- Resident adults were identified based on prior photo records or presence with cubs.
- Transients included adults and sub-adults photographed for the first time.
- Cubs were defined as individuals under two years of age, still associated with their mothers.

The blockwise categorized tigers are shown in Table 4, Table 5 and Appendix – Photos.

Table 4 Camera Trapped Tigers at Meghauli BZCFs, CNP (2023-24)

2023-24	RESIDENT FEMALE	RESIDENT MALE	TRANSIENT	CUB
Block II	MPD2 pothi	MT03 bhale	Sub-adult pothi 1	MDP2 pothi cub1
Meghauli		MT14 bhale		MDP2 pothi cub2

Table 5 Camera Trapped Tigers at Western BZCFs, CNP (2024-25)

2024-25	RESIDENT FEMALE	RESIDENT MALE	TRANSIENT	CUB
Block II	MPD2 pothi	MT03 bhale	Sub-adult pothi 1	MDP2 pothi cub1
Meghauli	Meghauli Pothi			MDP2 pothi cub2
Block I			Sub-adult pothi 2	
Kerunga			Sub-adult bhale 1	
			Sub-adult bhale 2	
			UK adult pothi 1	
Block III	Camera chor pothi	Pithauli bhale		Camera chor pothi cub1
Kalabanjar	Bardaha pothi			Camera chor pothi cub2
Block IV	Pithauli pothi	Pithauli bhale	Sub-adult bhale 3	Pithauli pothi cub1
Lamichour	Bardaha pothi		Sub-adult bhale 4	Pithauli pothi cub2
			UK adult bhale 1	
			UK adult pothi 2	
			UK adult pothi 3	
Block V		Baguban bhale	Sub-adult bhale 5	
Daunne			Sub-adult bhale 6	
			Sub-adult pothi 3	
			UK adult pothi 4	

#### ASSOCIATED MAMMALIAN SPECIES AND DOMESTIC ANIMALS

During the 2024–25 camera trapping season, various mammalian species - including tiger prey were photographed (Table 6, Appendix E). Domestic animals such as humans, dogs, cattle, buffalo, and goats were also frequently captured. Several photos obtained of the species were categorized as 'common' and photos obtained fewer than twice is 'rare'.

Table 6 Mammalian species photographed in the Western BZCFs, CNP (2024-25)

Sno		III CNI CLAI	2024-25
	Mammal Species	IUCN Status	Common / Rare
1	Tiger	Endangered	Common
2	Hog deer	Endangered	Common
3	Rhino	Vulnerable	Common
4	Leopard	Vulnerable	Rare

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5	Sloth bear	Vulnerable	Rare
6	Sambar	Vulnerable	Rare
7	Terai grey langur	Near Threatened	Common
8	Jungle cat	Least Concern	Common
9	Golden jackal	Least Concern	Common
10	Indian grey mongoose	Least Concern	Rare
11	Large Indian civet	Least Concern	Rare
12	Wild boar	Least Concern	Common
13	Rhesus Macaque	Least Concern	Common
14	Barking deer	Least Concern	Common
15	Chittal	Least Concern	Common
16	Indian hare	Least Concern	Rare
17	Indian porcupine	Least Concern	Rare

#### **Tiger Population Structure and Residency Patterns**

During the 2024–2025 camera trapping survey across BZCFs in the western CNP, a total of 29 individual tigers were recorded. These comprised 9 breeding residents, 14 transients, and 6 cubs. Residency status was determined based on photographic recapture history. At Meghauli (Block II), with continuous camera trapping for the last 5 years enabled identification of resident individuals. In contrast, tigers photographed for the first time in other blocks were provisionally categorized as transients due to insufficient long term data.

The home ranges of resident tigers extended from the core protected area of CNP into the buffer zone forests, which are not independently large enough to sustain resident tiger populations. Notably, three resident females were documented with cubs, indicating that the buffer zone functions as a breeding and cub-rearing habitat, thereby contributing to population stability and expansion.

#### **Transient Tigers and Habitat Use**

The 14 transient tigers included both adult and sub-adult individuals. While some adults may eventually establish residency, their current classification reflects the absence of prior photographic records. Most sub-adults were photographed around at the same time. The high number of transients suggests that the buffer zone is extensively utilized for dispersal, territory exploration, and potentially for future settlement. The presence of diverse prey species, as documented in previous studies (e.g., Gurung et al., 2023), supports the hypothesis of improved habitat quality in these areas.

An unusual behavioral observation was made wherein three tigers physically displaced camera traps, suggesting a need for further investigation into tiger interactions with anthropogenic objects. Understanding such behavior is critical for ensuring safe and effective monitoring in human-dominated landscapes

#### Spatial Distribution of Tigers by Management Blocks

#### 1. LTTM Area – Blocks I (Kerunga) & II (Meghauli)

This area spans from Jagatpur to the Rapti-Narayani confluence, where Rapti River forms the northern boundary of CNP. It provides supplementary habitat for tigers residing within the park. Total tigers recorded: 11 (Residents: 4 (2 females, 2 males), Transients: 5, and Cubs: 2)

#### **Resident Females:**

• Meghauli Pothi has been a long-term resident since 2016–17. She shifted her territory into the park following the vacancy of her mother's territory Baghmara Pothi in 2020. MPD2 Pothi, Meghauli Pothi daughter from the second litter, has now established a territory in the Meghauli BZCF and was photographed with her first litter of two cubs.

#### **Resident Males:**

 MT03 Bhale and MT14 Bhale were previously recorded in the 2022 national camera trapping survey and appear to have replaced the former resident male MT08 Bhale (2018–2023).

#### **Transients:**

• Five individuals (1 female, 4 sub-adults) were photographed for the first time,

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primarily in Block I. These sub-adults are likely dispersing and a lucky one may establish territories in subsequent seasons if vacancy is available.

#### 2. BandarJhula Island – Blocks III (Kalabanjar) & IV (Lamichour)

BandarJhula Island, formed by the bifurcation of the Narayani River, represents a high-quality riverine forest habitat. The BZCFs on both sides of the river are managed separately by Park management but tigers share this habitat. Total tigers recorded: 13 (Residents: 4 (3 females, 1 male), Transients: 5, and Cubs: 4)

#### **Resident Tigers:**

- Pithauli Bhale, Pithauli Pothi, and Bardha Pothi were identified through photographic matches with previous records.
- Camera Chor Pothi was classified as a resident due to her association with two cubs.
- Pithauli Pothi was also documented with cubs, reinforcing the role of this area as a breeding habitat.

#### **Territorial Observations:**

• *Pithauli Bhale* and *Bardha Pothi* were photographed on both sides of the island, suggesting their core territory lies within the BandarJhula island.

#### **Transients:**

 Five individuals (1 male, 2 females, 2 sub-adults) were recorded for the first time in Lamichour block. Their residency status will be reassessed in future monitoring efforts.

#### 3. Daunne Devi BZCF – Block V

Located along the western bank of the Narayani River, Daunne Devi BZCF recorded total tigers: 5 (Resident: 1 male (*Baguban Bhale*), and Transients: 4 (1 female, 3 sub-adults). *Baguban Bhale* was identified through photographic recapture, while the remaining individuals were classified as transients due to lack of prior documentation.

#### **Ecological Significance:**

Daunne serves as a critical corridor linking tiger populations in Chitwan with those in western Nepal. Despite intensive camera trapping efforts in 2016 (262 trap nights) and 2017 (332 trap nights) yielded no tiger records, however, the presence of five individuals in the current season suggests increased tiger use of this forest block.

#### **Connectivity Potential:**

Recent findings by Subedi et al. (2021) of tiger presence in Rupandehi and Palpa districts northwest of Butwal city further support the potential for landscape level connectivity between Chitwan and Bardia tiger populations.

#### **Human-tiger conflict - Case Story: the western BZCFs CNP 2024-25**

On 18 October 2024 around 11 am in the morning, a tiger attacked and killed a man in the Madhya Bindu Tinchuli Community Forest, Nawal Parasi District in the western part of CNP. The NTT senior technician Mr. Baburam Mahato was informed, who then sent technician Raju Kumal, accompanied by Bishnu Mahato to the incident site for investigation. Based on the track measurement of all four feet, it was determined to be a sub-adult male tiger.

On October 20, 2024, Raju Kumal and Bishnu Mahato, coordinated with Park
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Ranger (Mr. Kabi Raj Praja) stationed at the Tamaspur Post and chairman (Mr. Chandra Bahadur Malla) of the Madhya Bindu Tinchuli Community Forest and visited the incident site.

The victim was 62 years old man, who had gone to cut grass with one more person in the community forest. Around 11 am, they had encountered a tiger, that attacked the victim by the throat and knocked him down. At that time the other person was able to climb the tree and started screaming and shouting. The tiger hearing the noise left the victim and did not eat. Later, the Park ranger from the nearby Tamaspur Post, Army, Police, local people came and took care of the dead body. But no action was taken for the tiger, because the location was in close proximity to CNP and also terrain was hilly. There were no further incidents reported from that area following this.

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#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We express our sincere gratitude to the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC) for granting permission to conduct the Long-Term Tiger Monitoring (LTTM) project. We are especially thankful to the Chief Conservation Officer of Chitwan National Park for their continued collaboration and coordination, and for facilitating the involvement of Park Rangers and Game Scouts from various range posts throughout the study area.

We also acknowledge the valuable support provided by the Buffer Zone User Committees across the respective survey blocks. Their cooperation and the active participation of forest guards and community members in camera trapping fieldwork were instrumental to the success of this project.

Our appreciation extends to the local residents, Nepal Army personnel, Ranger posts, and Buffer Zone User Committees for their ongoing support, collaboration, and commitment to tiger conservation efforts in the buffer zone areas.

Finally, we gratefully acknowledge the long-term financial support from our partner organizations: *The Fund for the Tiger*, *International Trust for Nature Conservation*, *World Charity Foundation*, *McDougal Foundation*, and numerous online donors, whose contributions have sustained this monitoring initiative over the years.

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### **FIGURES**

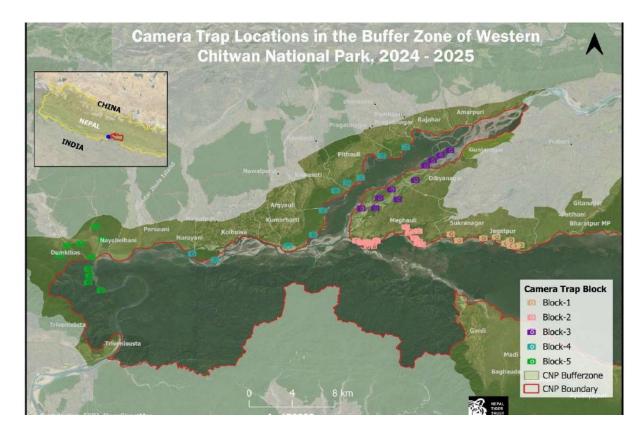


Figure 1: Block wise camera trap locations in the western Buffer Zone Community Forests of Chitwan National Park 2024-25.

#### **APPENDIX - Photos**

TIGERS PHOTOGRAPHED IN THE WESTERN BUFFER ZONE COMMUNITY FORESTS OF CHITWAN NATIONAL PARK DURING 2024-25.

## **Appendix A (Resident Female)**

(1): MPD2 Pothi (bII) photographed (2023-25)



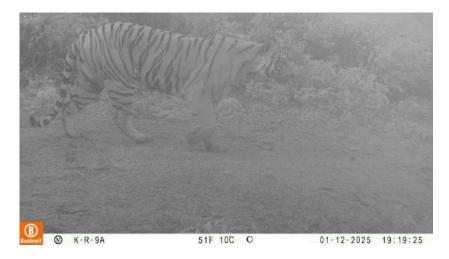
(2): Meghauli Pothi (bII) photographed (2024-25)



(3): Bardha Pothi (bIII & IV) photographed (2024-25)



## (4): Pithauli Pothi (bIV) photographed (2024-25)



## (5): Camera Chor Pothi (bIII) photographed (2024-25)



## **Appendix B (Resident Male)**

## (1): MT03 Bhale (bII) photographed (2023-25)



## (2): MT14 Bhale (bII) photographed (2023-24)



(3): Pithauli Bhale (bIII & bIV) photographed (2024-25)



(4): Baguban Bhale (bV) photographed (2024-25)



## **Appendix C (Transient Tigers)**

(1): Sub-adult Pothi 1 (bII) photographed (2023-24)



(2): Sub-adult Pothi 2 (bI) photographed (2024-25)



(3): Sub-adult Pothi 3 (bV) photographed (2024-25)



## (4): Sub-adult Bhale 1 (bI) photographed (2024-25)



(5): Sub-adult Bhale 2 (bI) photographed (2024-25)



(6): Sub-adult Bhale 3 (bIV) photographed (2024-25)



## (7): Sub-adult Bhale 4 (bIV) photographed (2024-25)



(8): Sub-adult Bhale 5 (bV) photographed (2024-25)



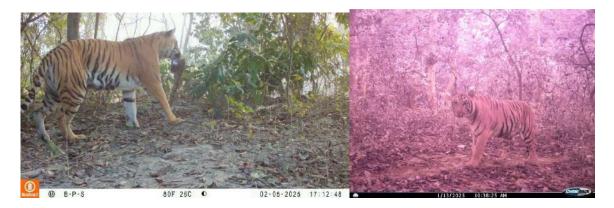
(9): Sub-adult Bhale 6 (bV) photographed (2024-25)



## (10): UK Adult Pothi 1 (bI) photographed (2024-25)



(11): UK Adult Pothi 2 (bIV) photographed (2024-25)



(12): UK Adult Pothi 3 (bIV) photographed (2024-25)



## (13): UK Adult Pothi 4 (bV) photographed (2024-25)



(14): UK Adult Bhale 1 (bIV) photographed (2024-25)



## Appendix D (Cubs)

## (1): MPD2 Pothi cub 1 (bII) photographed (2023-25)



(2): MPD2 Pothi cub 2 (bII) photographed (2023-25)



(3): Camera Chor Pothi cub 1 (bIII) photographed (2024-25)



## 4): Camera Chor Pothi cub 2 (bIII) photographed (2024-25)



## 5): Pithauli Pothi cub 1 (bIV) photographed (2024-25)



6): Pithauli Pothi cub 2 (bIV) photographed (2024-25)



# PREY AND OTHER ASSOCIATED SPECIES PHOTOGRAPHED IN THE WESTERN BUFFER ZONE COMMUNITY FORESTS OF CHITWAN NATIONAL PARK, 2024-25.

Appendix 1 (E): prey and other associated species photographed during 2024-25



Leopard



Rhino



Sloth bear



Sambar



Chittal



Hog deer



Golden jackal



Wild boar



Rhesus macaque



Jungle cat





Large Indian civet

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Barking deer



Terai grey langur



Indian porcupine



Indian grey mongoose