

Thai wildlife group says tiger missing a leg needs help

By Jerry Harmer
The Associated Press

BANGKOK — Forest rangers in western Thailand are searching a remote jungle on the Myanmar border hoping to rescue a wild tiger with a missing leg from an area where poachers have recently been operating.

Staff from the wildlife protection organization Freeland spotted the animal in early February on video recorded by a remotely operated camera trap in Kanchanaburi province's Khao Laem National Park as it was feeding on the body of a water buffalo.

Its missing hind leg was clearly visible as it paced awkwardly around the carcass in the thick forest. Freeland's experts fear the slow-moving female — nicknamed "I-Douan," which means "the amputated one" — is at risk from hunters or of starvation due to its likely long-term inability to catch prey.

Freeland, working with staff from Thailand's Department of National Parks, Wildlife, and Plant Conservation, hopes to waylay the tiger with a tranquilizer dart and move it to a government facility where it can be provided with adequate food and security.

"We can find her, not difficult to find her," Freeland-Thailand's executive Petcharat Sangchai told The Associated Press. "We use the body of the dead buffalo or cow and sit and wait for her to eat the remains, and we can use the sniping gun to shoot her."

It isn't clear how the tiger lost the limb. Freeland suspects the animal was a victim of poaching. The use of snares is common in jungles throughout Southeast Asia.

In early January, rangers arrested five men in the forest with two tiger carcasses in their possession. Three weeks later, in the same district, a man said he was attacked by three tigers that killed his two dogs. He escaped by climbing a clump of bamboo.

Video cameras were installed following reports of tiger activity in an area not previously known to support the animals.

The Indochinese tiger is in peril throughout its range, with Thailand home to the biggest population. In 2021, Thai wildlife authorities put the country's wild tiger population at 177 individuals.



TIGER IN TROUBLE. In this photo taken by a remotely operated camera trap, a three-legged tiger walks through the jungle on February 6, 2022 in Khao Laem National Park in Kanchanaburi, western Thailand. Staff from the wildlife protection organization Freeland spotted the animal as it was feeding on the body of a water buffalo. Its missing hind leg was clearly visible as it paced awkwardly around the carcass in the thick forest. Freeland's experts fear the slow-moving female — nicknamed "I-Douan," which means "the amputated one" — is at risk from hunters or of starvation due to its likely long-term inability to catch prey. (Freeland/IUCN via AP)

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