

# Live Baiting in Tiger Reserves

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## Live Baiting in Tiger Reserves: Conservation or Interference?

A 23-month-old tigress named **Kankati** in **Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve** killed two people within a month. Experts link this to her being raised on **live bait**, which led to her **habituation to humans** and a loss of natural fear—making her and her siblings potential threats to forest staff and tourists.

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### What is Live Baiting?

Live baiting involves **offering live prey (like goats or calves) to a predator.**

### Historical Context:

- **Colonial Era:** Used by British hunters to lure tigers for shooting.
- **Post-Independence Tourism:** Popular in tiger reserves (e.g., Sariska) to attract tigers for tourists.
- **Ban:** Banned for tourism use in **1982** by PM **Indira Gandhi**.

### Current Use:

- Still used in:
  - **Conflict scenarios** (e.g., capturing problematic leopards).
  - **Feeding injured, old, or orphaned tigers**, especially those unable to hunt.
- **Not banned** for medical/emergency use under **NTCA SOPs**, though "**not advisable**."

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## NTCA's Standard Operating Procedure (SOP):

- **Conservation Principle:** *Minimal human intervention.*
  - Emphasizes “**survival of the fittest**” — feeding disrupts **natural selection**.
  - Baiting should be **limited, emergency-based**, and **strictly time-bound**.
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## Risks of Live Baiting & Over-Intervention:

| Issue                         | Impact                                                                  |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Habituation to Humans         | Increases risk of tiger attacks on people and livestock                 |
| Loss of Hunting Skills        | Tigers raised on bait struggle in the wild (e.g., Simba, Guda cubs)     |
| Unnatural Survival            | Weaker/older tigers live longer, increasing competition and conflict    |
| Dependency Culture            | Encourages tourists to demand aid for every limping or injured tiger    |
| Interference in Natural Order | Undermines core wildlife ethics; nature's course is altered unnaturally |

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## Case Studies:

- **Guda Cubs (2008):**  
Orphaned cubs fed with bait — **male (T36)** killed by rival; **female (T37)** survived.
  - **Simba:**  
Raised on bait, died from injuries after failed hunting attempt — lacked survival instincts.
  - **Machhli (Ranthambhore Icon):**  
Fed with bait for **7 years** — lived unnaturally long. Sparked debate: **compassion vs conservation**.
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## Emerging Culture of Over-Intervention

| Intervention                    | Examples                                           |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| Trucking in prey animals        | To feed aging/injured tigers                       |
| Creating artificial water holes | Corbett, Bandipur, Kanha, Pench during dry seasons |
| Tourist pressure                | Demand for medical attention to limping tigers     |
| Frequent tranquilisation        | For minor injuries; stresses the animals           |

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## Expert Opinion: “Protect, Don’t Pamper”

- **Goal of conservation** is to **maintain natural ecosystems**, not simulate sanctuaries.
- **Compassion**, if unchecked, leads to **dependency**, **unnatural survival**, and **increased conflict**.
- Best approach:
  - **Preserve natural habitats**,
  - **Ensure prey abundance**,
  - **Allow nature to regulate populations**.

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## Conclusion

While **live baiting** may be justified in emergencies, its **unregulated or emotional use undermines conservation ethics**. The focus must shift from **short-term sympathy to long-term sustainability** — ensuring that India's iconic species like the tiger thrive **as wild animals**, not **as dependent subjects** of human intervention.

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