



Panthera Statement on Thailand's Tiger Temple and the Illegal Wildlife Trade

Contact for Panthera: Susie Weller Sheppard, (347) 446-9904, or sweller@panthera.org

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New allegations and discoveries in the past week have brought Thailand's Tiger Temple to the center of one of the country's largest-ever wildlife trafficking investigations.

Long embroiled in controversy and suspicion, the Tiger Temple or Wat Pha Luang Ta Bua Temple has served as a popular tourist destination outside of Bangkok offering visitors hands-on contact with tigers. Evidence uncovered since May 30 suggests Buddhist monks operating the Temple have been actively involved in the illegal trafficking and unethical treatment of endangered tigers.

In response, Panthera's CEO Dr. Alan Rabinowitz shared:

"The horrific discoveries made at Thailand's Tiger Temple and the latest round of illegal trafficking allegations yet again underscore the tremendous scope and threat of the illegal wildlife trade for tigers."

"If allegations of illegal activity are confirmed, the Tiger Temple will be another example of a potentially illicit wildlife trafficking organization operating brazenly and openly for hire. Yet, the slaughter of wild tigers for their skins and parts is happening every day behind closed doors at a far greater scale. In the marketplaces of southeast Asia, where tiger bones and parts are ground for wine and traditional Asian medicines, we are losing one of our planet's most iconic species."

"To survive, tigers need the conservation community and governments across Asia to double down on law enforcement efforts that are dismantling poaching supply chains and investing in sophisticated conservation technology to outsmart poachers."

"We congratulate the Government of Thailand for initiating their investigation of this highly contentious operation. If the allegations of illegal trafficking prove true, we hope those involved are prosecuted to the maximum extent of the law, setting an example of what is to come for the individuals and syndicates targeting this magnificent and highly endangered species."

Today just 3,900 wild tigers remain across Asia. Classified as 'Endangered' by the International Union for Conservation of Nature, tigers are severely threatened by poaching for the illegal wildlife trade, deforestation and conflict with people when tiger prey is overhunted. Better law enforcement and rigorous scientific monitoring of tigers, their prey, and even of human effort, are all needed in order to protect wild tigers.

Panthera's Tigers Forever program is leading or supporting conservation efforts at key sites across six tiger range states. [Learn more.](#)

About Panthera

Panthera, founded in 2006, is devoted exclusively to preserving wild cats and their critical role in the world's ecosystems. Panthera's team of leading biologists, law enforcement experts and wild cat advocates develop innovative strategies based on the best available science to protect cheetahs, jaguars, leopards, lions, pumas, snow leopards and tigers and their vast landscapes. In 50 countries around the world, Panthera works with a wide variety of stakeholders to reduce or eliminate the most pressing threats to wild cats—securing their future, and ours. For more information, visit Panthera.org.