

Born to Be Wild: Tiger Persecution and Advocacy
From 1800 to the Present

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ABSTRACT

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The tiger (*Panthera tigris*) was once abundant in many of Asia's forests. The entire species now hovers dangerously close to extinction. Population declines within the last two centuries are blamed largely on loss of habitat, reductions in prey species, poaching, and human-tiger conflict. Modern tiger conservation efforts focus on reintroducing formerly captive tigers to designated protected wild areas. Re-wilding and reintroduction programs teach survival skills to tiger cubs raised in zoo collections. Merging *in situ* and *ex situ* research collaborations is the twenty-first century's interdisciplinary answer to the tiger's plight in the wild. The zoo is viewed in terms of its role as an institution that represents societal values that shift in concurrence with shifting paradigms.

This thesis studies the human-tiger relationship and analyzes three defining periods that occurred between 1800 and the present. The first period occurred during the nineteenth century, the second took place from the early through the late twentieth century and the third picked up where the second left off and is the one we are presently engaged in. The tiger is investigated in two different ways throughout – for its importance in human history and culture conceptually, and in the biological sense in terms of its importance as umbrella species within its own ecosystem.