

Tiger footprints cause panic in Bagerhat locality

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Online Desk: Panic has gripped residents of Sonatala village in Sarankhola upazila of Bagerhat district as tiger footprints were seen in their locality.

Locals said the presence of tigers in the area is rare but occasionally the big cats make their way into the villages in search of food.

They spotted tiger footprints in a half km area of the upazila and alerted the local Village Tiger Response Team (VTRT).

According to forest officials, a Royal Bengal tiger entered the locality after crossing the Bhola River from the Sundarbans some time on Sunday.

Local people spotted the footprints of the tiger on Monday morning.

Though the VTRT team, forest department officials and community patrolling group along with locals have been searching for the tiger since Monday morning, the animal was not seen till Monday evening.

The authorities concerned of the local forest department have asked the villagers to remain alert.

In the past 16 years, some 50 tigers have entered the locality in search of food.

During a recent visit to Sonatala village, this UNB correspondent found that a number of tiger footprints were spotted in the village.

Forest officials suspected that the tiger might have entered the locality and returned to the Sundarbans, said Alam Hawladar, facilitator of Sharankhola Wild Team.

Meanwhile, forest officials have started the tiger census through camera trapping. Already a number of cameras were installed in different parts of Sharankhola and Chandpai range of the Sundarbans East Zone on November 5.

The report of the tiger census will be known after July 29 next year.

According to government sources, the number of Royal Bengal Tigers in the Bangladesh part of the Sundarbans has increased to 114 from 106, as per the tiger census in 2018.

Mahamud Hasan, Assistant Forest Conservator of Sharankhola Range, said a team of VTRT and staff of forest department are on alert after spotting the footprints of tigers in the locality.

Kazi Muhammad Nurul Karim, Divisional Forest Officer of Sundarbans East Zone, said the VTRT team and forest officials will remain in the village.

The tigers are under threat here now due to poaching activities, climate change and increasing salinity.

According to the information from the Forest Department, between 2001 and 2022, 28 tigers died in various ways in the Sundarbans East Division. Of them, 14 were killed by miscreants, five by mob lynching, eight natural deaths and one in Cyclone Sidr.