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MAIL BAG

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Tigers as pets in the US

Nowadays much hue and cry is being made about the imminent extinction of the tiger from the world. No doubt, the future of the tiger is bleak in Asia. According to a recent book, "Tigers in Red Weather", tigers once inhabited 20 countries of Asia, but by 2000 they survived in 12 only. In fact, about 20 tigers are poached every month in India. But the extinction of the tiger from the world is not that imminent as being portrayed by wildlife enthusiasts.

According to the American Zoo and Aquarium Association, the US has 12000 tigers as pets. In fact, for every tiger in the wild two are kept as pets in the US. The World Wildlife Fund (WWF) estimates that just 5000-7200 tigers remain in the wild whereas there are 4000 pet tigers in Texas alone — more than the number roaming free in India. Most of these are surplus cubs bred and sold by zoos.

So, rather than jumping to a conclusion about the imminent extinction of the tiger from the world, we should analyse the current situation of the tiger in totality. The fact is that even if all the tigers from the wild disappear, the tiger will not become extinct from the world, thanks to our dear Americans who are spending enormous amounts to maintain their 12000 pet tigers.

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