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Abstract: Korean tiger is an endemic subspecies inhabiting our country. Before 1900 it often occurred in the mountainous regions covered with primaeval forests. Even now our country has many places named after tiger. According to the records of 1908, every year our country exported 30 to 40 tiger skins. But as a result of random hunting during Japanese colonialist rule (1910-1945), its number rapidly decreased. Korean tiger disappeared from South Korea, and now a few are found only in the forests of Mt. Baekdu and the neighbouring mountain regions. Today the range of Korean tiger covers the forest regions north of the line similar to parabola passing through Chongju, Kusong, Taechon, Dokchon and Nyungwon along the Rangrim mountains on the north-west, and Sinhung, Duksong and Kimchaek on the southern edge of the Bujonryung and the Machoryung mountains.



## STATE OF KOREAN TIGER AND ITS SPECIFIC FEATURE

Song Gil Son

Korean tiger is an endemic subspecies inhabiting our country.

Before 1900 it often occurred in the mountainous regions covered with primeval forests. Even now our country has many places named after tiger, such as "Tiger Valley," "Tiger Cavern," "Tiger Rock" and "Tiger Pass," which accounts for frequent appearance of tigers there in the past. According to the records of 1908, every year our country exported 30 to 40 tiger skins. This also supports the fact that at the time tiger was very common in our

country.

But as the result of random hunting during Japanese colonialist rule (1910-1945), its number rapidly decreased. In 1933 alone 12 tigers were caught besides rare and useful animals such as deer and roe deer. For this purpose 2,344 policemen and officials and 26,030 local inhabitants were mobilized.

Such a thoughtless hunting seriously affected the fauna status of our country.

Korean tiger disappeared from South

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Korea, and now a few are found only in the forests of Mt. Baekdu and the neighbouring mountain regions—the Machonryung and the Rangrim mountains. In South Korea no tiger has been captured since 1900 when some were caught in Mt. Bulgap in Ryunggang county, South Cholla Province.

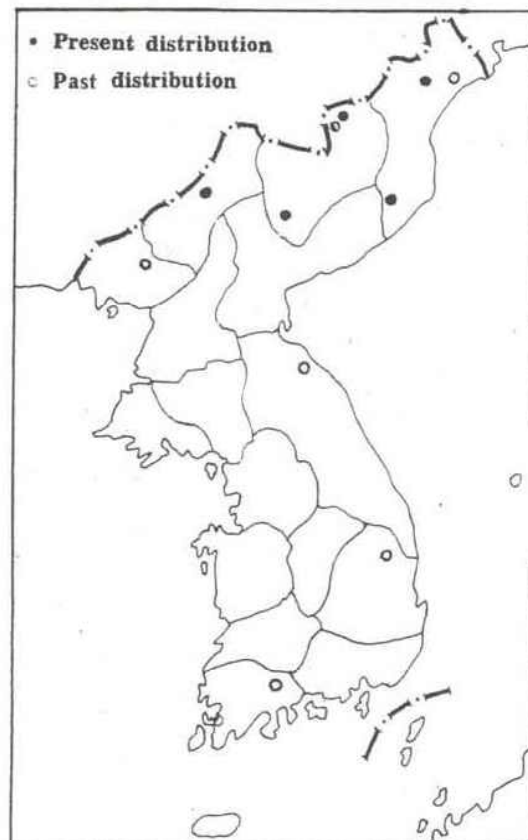
Many facts show that after liberation the number of tiger has increased, though, slowly. In the winter of 1957 a female with three cubs came down to a village in Woonhung county, Ryunggang Province, and then ran away to the mountains. In the same year two tigers raided animals on a stock-farm in Musan county, North Hamkyung Province; they were put to flight by the threat shooting of the tenders. Two years later a male fell into a trap set for wild boar in Bupyung county, North Hamkyung Province (see the article by Won Hong Gu, p.5). In August of 1964 the rotting body of a tiger which had died a natural death was found in the forests near Lake Bujyun. And this year it was reported that a farmer met a tiger in the deep mountain of Rangrim county, Jagang Province, and had a narrow escape.

A number of similar facts give us a clear idea of its present distribution and its number. Today the range of Korean tiger covers the forest regions north of the line similar to parabola passing through Chongju, Kusong, Taechon, Dokchon and Nyungwon along the Rangrim mountains on the north-west, and Sinhung, Duksong and Kimchaek on the southern edge of the Bujonryung and the Machonryung mountains.

What are the characteristic features of Korean tiger?

In build it belongs to a comparatively small type, but is well known for its fierceness and agility. Striped markings of Korean tiger are broader and more vivid compared with those of Chinese and Amur tigers. The number of bandings on the tail varies by subspecies. Bandings on the tail of Korean tiger are eight.

It is nocturnal in habit, and in daytime it sleeps in hiding until evening. At night it preys on wild boars, deer, roe deer, and sometimes raids livestock of stockfarms or villages. Besides, it feeds upon wild hare, fish, and sometimes even fruit. It happens that it preys on men or livestock when it becomes too old to catch agile wild animals, and attacks men when driven into a blind alley. It is very uncommon for a tiger to attack a man first. When feeding, it eats its fill, and sleeps two or three days near the place. When attacking animals, it hides in ambush or crouches in a high place and leaps at them when the latter approach. It has sharp claws at the digits of forelegs and knocks down even a horse by one strike.



Distribution of the Korean tiger  
(*Felis Tigris Coreensis* Brass)



It has keen eyes and ears and perceives a faint sound in the distance. Besides, it emits odious smell. It often happens that hunting dogs become chilled by its smell in the course of chase. It does not climb trees as leopard does. It does not like hot season, consequently it becomes rather more active in spring and winter than in summer. In these seasons it travels 80 to 90 kilometres a night.

Tiger is solitary by nature and makes couple only during the mating period. It copulates between December and January, and at that time its attentiveness to the surroundings becomes dull. It does not reach sexual maturity until 4 years old and breeds every two or three years. A female brings forth two to four cubs at a time, rarely five or six. Its gestation period lasts between 98 and 105 days, and the rut between five and seven days. Early summer every year it sheds hair. Every week tiger eats at least one wild boar or one roe deer. It means that in a year a tiger destroys 50 to 60 head of wild boars, roe deer or deer of high industrial value. This is its harmful aspect. It also has a useful aspect as well, such as the exterminating of wolves.

Every part of tiger, from its skin to flesh, bones and the entrails, is appreciated highly as a valuable medicine. Its whiskers are used for needles in acupuncture to cure an ailing tooth or boil.

Tiger's skin is fine and splendid as the saying goes: "Man leaves his name after death, as the tiger leaves its skin." For its rarity and biological value, the hunting of tiger is prohibited by law in our country.

It has so far been known that the black-faced spoonbills nest in Japan. But it is said that nowadays very few of them are to be found there: they can be seen rarely at the habitats of cranes in Kagoshima Prefecture. (Source: Yamashina, 1941).

Black-faced spoonbills inhabit Korea and the coast of Fukien Province of China only. Endemic species of the Far East, they are one of the rare birds.

In Korea they breed in flocks at nesting places, but they fly about singly or by twos when looking for food. On the Dukseum Island, South Pyongan Province, I observed them breeding in a flock of scores, on June 10, 1958. Their nests were built of dried twigs and grass in the crevices of the cliff. In each nest there were found 4 to 6 eggs and each of them measured 63-67×41-42 mm. They were white and of prolonged ellipsoid shape with some dotted markings.

In the seasons when they were not breeding, they search food in the shallow waters along the seashore at dawn or late evening (frequently in creeks and streams of tidewater). According to my investigation in Wonha-ri village, Kwaksan county, North Pyongan Province in August, 1951, small crucians accounted for 90% of their food, shrimps 9% and tiny crabs 1%. Another check-up on the Dasa Island, North Pyongan Province in May, 1954 showed their food consisted entirely of snails. In Hakson-ri village of Yomju county it was discovered that larvae