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Nagarhole National Park

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Nagarhole National Park

Practice: 6 MCQs
Nagarhole National Park in Karnataka was once a hunting ground of the Maharajas of Mysore.

It now has the third-largest tiger count in India. This page covers its place, history, tigers, elephants, wildlife, and the Kabini area.

- **State:** Karnataka.
- **Other name:** Rajiv Gandhi National Park.
- **Tiger reserve:** 2003.
- **Tigers, 2022:** 185, third in India.
- **Elephants, 2023:** 831.

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1. Where Nagarhole stands

1.1 Where is Nagarhole, and what are its names?

Nagarhole lies in the Mysore and Kodagu districts of Karnataka. It was earlier called Rajiv Gandhi (Nagarahole) National Park.

Today it is a tiger reserve. The Kabini river and its reservoir lie between Nagarhole and Bandipur.

1.2 Where does the name come from?

The name comes from Kannada. “Nagara” means serpent and “hole” means river or stream.

The streams curve through the forest like snakes, and that is why the name fits.

1.3 What water sources does it have?

The park has many streams and rivulets. The Kabini reservoir lies on the west. The Taraka reservoir lies on the south-east.

Big Cats India lists four perennial streams, 47 seasonal streams and four small perennial lakes.



Teak forest, Nagarhole National Park, Karnataka. Photo: Timothy A. Gonsalves (Tagooty), Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0.

Sources:

- Nagarahole Tiger Reserve (Forest Department)
- Vajiram & Ravi: Nagarhole National Park
- Big Cats India: Nagarhole

2. From hunting ground to tiger reserve

2.1 How did the protection begin?

The forests were once hunting grounds of the Maharajas of Mysore. In 1955, about 285 sq km was declared a wildlife sanctuary.

In 1983, the sanctuary became a national park.

2.2 What did 1986 and 2000 add?

In 1986, Nagarhole joined the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve along with Bandipur. This was India’s first biosphere reserve.

In 2000, it came under Project Elephant. It became part of the Mysore Elephant Reserve.

2.3 When did it become a tiger reserve?

In 2003, 71.84 sq km was added. The park then covered 643.392 sq km.

The same year it joined Project Tiger as an extension of Bandipur. In 2007, it became an independent tiger reserve. In 2012, a buffer zone of 204.589 sq km was notified.



Nagarhole National Park, in Karnataka’s Kodagu and Mysore districts. Map: based on India location map, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 3.0. Boundaries shown as per the Government of India.



Four steps in the reserve's growth. Original explanatory diagram.

Sources:

- Nagarahole Tiger Reserve (Forest Department) (section 2)
- WildTrails: Kabini
- Big Cats India: Nagarhole (section 2)
- Vajiram & Ravi: Nagarhole National Park (section 2)

True or false: Nagarhole became a national park in 1983, long before it became a tiger reserve.

3. The tigers

3.1 How many tigers does Nagarhole have?

The 2022 estimate counted 185 tigers in Nagarhole. In 2018 the count was 164.

Nagarhole ranked third in India. Corbett had 319 and Bandipur had 191.

3.2 How does it rank in Karnataka?

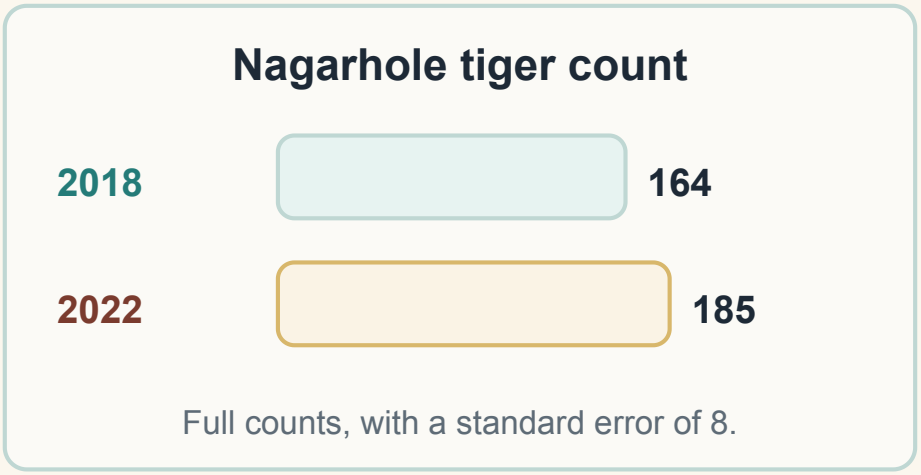
Nagarhole is second in Karnataka and third in India. Only Bandipur holds more tigers in the state.

More than two dozen cubs were found with their mothers.

3.3 Why are there so many tigers?

The forest supports large numbers of prey. Chital, sambar, gaur and wild pig live here.

The forest department calls it one of the high-density tiger areas of the country.



Tigers counted in Nagarhole. Original explanatory diagram.

Sources:

- Star of Mysore: Bandipur second, Nagarahole third
- Times of India: With 191 tigers
- Nagarahole Tiger Reserve (Forest Department) (section 3)
- Vajiram & Ravi: Nagarhole National Park (section 3)

True or false: Nagarhole had 141 tigers in the 2022 estimate.
Think it through: why does a park with many deer also hold many tigers?

Tigers hunt chital, sambar and wild pig. Plenty of prey lets more tigers live in the same forest. That is why Nagarhole is called a high-density tiger area.

4. The elephants

4.1 How many elephants live here?

The 2023 Karnataka count found 831 elephants in Nagarhole. Bandipur had 1,116.

Karnataka as a whole had 6,395, up from 6,049 in 2017.

4.2 Which landscape is Nagarhole part of?

Nagarhole, Bandipur, Mudumalai and Wayanad form a large protected block of about 2,183 sq km. It is the biggest protected area in southern India.

The forest department calls Nagarhole a key link to the Western Ghats and the Eastern Ghats.

Sources:

- Star of Mysore: 1,116 elephants
- The South First: Karnataka elephant numbers
- Vajiram & Ravi: Nagarhole National Park (section 4)
- Nagarahole Tiger Reserve (Forest Department) (section 4)

True or false: Nagarhole had more elephants than any other Karnataka reserve in the 2023 count.
True or false: the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve was India's first biosphere reserve.
Think it through: why do Nagarhole and Bandipur matter more together than apart?

Tigers and elephants roam across park borders. Together with Mudumalai and Wayanad they form about 2,183 sq km of connected forest. Animals can move, feed and breed across it.

5. Plants and animals

5.1 What forests grow here?

Moist and dry deciduous forests grow here. Rosewood, teak, sandalwood and silver oak are the main timber trees.

The reserve sits where the north-western Ghats meet the Deccan plateau.

5.2 Which animals live here?

The main predators are the tiger, leopard, dhole and sloth bear. The striped hyena also lives here.

Prey animals include chital, sambar, barking deer, four-horned antelope, gaur and wild pig.

Sources:

- Big Cats India: Nagarhole (section 5)
- Vajiram & Ravi: Nagarhole National Park (section 5)
- Nagarahole Tiger Reserve (Forest Department) (section 5)

6. Birds, panthers and Kabini

6.1 Is there really a black panther?

Yes. A black panther is a leopard with dark colouring. Nagarhole is known as one of the best parks in India to spot one.

6.2 How rich is its birdlife?

The park has over 250 bird species. Big Cats India puts the figure at 270. It is recognised as an Important Bird Area.

The critically endangered Oriental white-backed vulture is also seen here.

6.3 What is the Kabini area?

The southern part of Nagarhole lies on the banks of the Kabini river. It is called the Kabini Jungle.

It is popular for wildlife sightings and photography. A boat safari goes upstream to where Bandipur and Nagarhole meet.

6.4 Where does the Kabini river come from?

The Kabini is also called the Kapila. It begins in Wayanad district, Kerala. There the Panamaram and Mananthavady rivers meet.

It flows east into Karnataka. It joins the Kaveri at Tirumakudalu Narasipura. Near Sargur it forms the Kabini Reservoir.

6.5 Why do animals crowd the backwaters in summer?

The backwaters are a famed habitat of their own. They are rich in wildlife, most of all in summer.

Then the water level falls. Grassy meadows appear at the edge. Animals come for water and grass.

Sources:

- Big Cats India: Nagarhole (section 6)
- Vajiram & Ravi: Nagarhole National Park (section 6)
- WildTrails: Kabini (section 6)
- Evolve Back: Kabini, a brief introduction
- IndiaNetzone: Kabini River

7. The people of the forest

7.1 Who lived here before the reserve?

The Jenu Kuruba are an Adivasi community of Nagarhole. The forest is their homeland.

The reserve was created in 1983. It was made from the ancestral land of the Jenu Kuruba and other tribes. Their grazing lands were absorbed into the park. Authorities then barred the community from using them.

7.2 What does the Forest Rights Act have to do with it?

The Forest Rights Act, 2006, recognises the relation of Adivasis with the forest. It gives community and individual rights to use forest produce. Some Nagarhole claims were rejected by the Kodagu district administration. Statewide, nearly 84 percent of claims were rejected by November 2022.

Sources:

- Survival International: Tiger reserve relocations
- The News Minute: Adivasis of Nagarahole
- The Quint: Adivasis of Nagarahole protest

8. A quieter corner: dry forest and antelope

8.1 Is there an antelope in Nagarhole?

Yes, one. It is the four-horned antelope. It is the only antelope of the park. It is rarely seen.

Its favourite habitat is the drier forest. The Nainji Katte waterhole sits in such a zone. It tends to dry up in summer, so jeeps often skip it.

Sources:

- Evolve Back: Kabini, a brief introduction (section 8)
- Vajiram & Ravi: Nagarhole National Park (section 8)

Your understanding checks

Your 4 quick checks Answered 0 of 4 · Correct 0

This score resets when the page reloads.

Practice: 6 MCQs

Practice MCQs

1. How many tigers did the 2022 estimate find in Nagarhole Tiger Reserve?

A. 185

B. 164

C. 191

D. 319

See answer ↓

2. Where did Nagarhole rank in India in the 2022 tiger estimate?

A. Fourth

B. Third

C. Second

D. First

See answer ↓

3. How many elephants did the 2023 Karnataka count find in Nagarhole?

A. 706

B. 619

C. 831

D. 1,116

See answer ↓

4. In which year did Nagarhole join Project Tiger and become a tiger reserve?

A. 2012

B. 1955

C. 2003

D. 1983

See answer ↓

5. What does "hole" mean in the name Nagarhole?

A. Snake

B. River or stream

C. Forest

D. Hill

See answer ↓

6. In 1986 Nagarhole became part of which biosphere reserve?

A. Panna Biosphere Reserve

B. Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve

C. Sundarbans Biosphere Reserve

D. Nanda Devi Biosphere Reserve

See answer ↓

Answer Key

1. **A.** The answer is **185**. In 2018 the count was 164. Why the others fail: 164 was the 2018 figure. 191 is Bandipur. 319 is Corbett. Memory hook: 164 in 2018 rose to 185 in 2022. ↑ Q1
2. **B.** The answer is **third**. Corbett was first with 319. Bandipur was second with 191. Why the others fail: Bandipur holds second place. Corbett holds first. Memory hook: Corbett, Bandipur, Nagarhole. ↑ Q2
3. **C.** The answer is **831**. It was the second-highest in Karnataka. Why the others fail: 1,116 is Bandipur. 706 is MM Hills. 619 is BRT. Memory hook: Bandipur first, Nagarhole second. ↑ Q3
4. **C.** The answer is **2003**. It joined Project Tiger as an extension of Bandipur. Why the others fail: 1955 made it a sanctuary. 1983 made it a national park. 2012 added the buffer zone. Memory hook: sanctuary 1955, park 1983, tiger reserve 2003. ↑ Q4
5. **B.** The answer is **river or stream**. "Nagara" means snake or serpent. So the name means serpent river. Why the others fail: "nagara" is the snake. "Hole" is not a forest or a hill. Memory hook: nagara is snake, hole is stream. ↑ Q5
6. **B.** The answer is the **Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve**. It was India's first biosphere reserve. It also covers Bandipur, Mudumalai and Wayanad. Why the others fail: Nanda Devi is in Uttarakhand. Sundarbans is in West Bengal. Panna is in Madhya Pradesh. Memory hook: Nagarhole sits in the Nilgiris. ↑ Q6

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