

The available evidences indicate that this palm is on the verge of extinction, mainly because of the selective removal as well as habitat clearance for cultivation. Conservation measures, including the protection of the habitat, are urgently called for. *Ex situ* conservation and multiplication in botanic gardens and their rehabilitation in the natural habitat or other similar localities at a later date may bring about an increase in the genetic diversity which is so essen-

tial for the species to continue and counteract the stochastic effects. Till such time the future of this interesting palm is uncertain.

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White tigers need more water

White tigers have a chalky white coat marked with black or chocolate stripes; these mutants are not albinos¹⁻³. They have pink nose and paw pads, icy blue eyes and are generally bigger in size than the normal-coloured tigers⁴⁻⁶. The first ever white tigers from normal-coloured parents were born in Nandan Kanan Biological Park⁷.

On observing the white tigers in the open-air Zoo of Nandan Kanan, we were struck by the fact that they spent significantly more time in water in comparison to their normal-coloured counterparts. This study was carried out for over a period of 7 months (November 1992 to May 1993).

Table 1. Mean cooling time in normal- and white-coloured tigers. For each set, 5 observations were taken into account and in total 6 sets of observations were made ($n = 6$)

Tiger type	Mean cooling time (in min) \pm S D.
White	58.67 \pm 21.36*
Normal	5.5 \pm 7.2

* $P < 0.001$ compared to normal-coloured tigers. Studies were made from 9:00 hours to 16:00 hours.

It is evident from Table 1 that the mean time period spent in water by white tigers (58.67 min) is significantly higher in comparison to that of normal tigers (5.5 min) even though facilities such as water-filled moats are equally accessible to normal-coloured tigers.

Of all the members of the cat tribe, the tiger and the jaguar are the most water-loving. We now note that the white tiger prefers to cool itself more often or for a longer time as compared to the normal-coloured tiger. These observations have an applied value for the zookeeper, for they suggest that plenty of shade and bathing facilities should be provided for white tigers.

We can also speculate as to why white tigers are more water-loving. The amount of heat radiation depends on the surface area of the body and the skin temperature. In warmer climates animals tend to decrease in size because an increase in the evaporation surface per unit of mass helps to dissipate heat⁸. White tigers being larger in size may gain more heat and so also require more time in dissipating it. It is possible that being larger in size, the white tiger may be forced to spend more time in water in order to maintain thermal balance.

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