

## PRESS NOTE

### Poonam Avlokan of Asiatic Lions in the Asiatic Lion Landscape

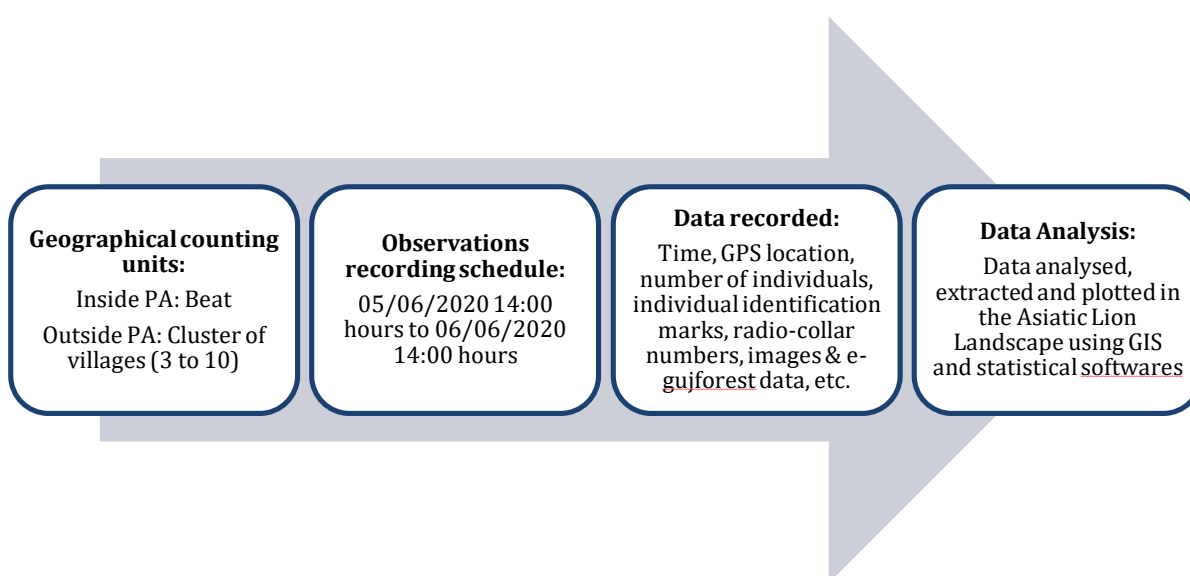
(05-06 June, 2020)

#### Introduction

- The Asiatic lion, once faced with imminent extinction has shown a population recovery which has been acclaimed as a global conservation success story, thanks to the timely intervention by the erstwhile Nawab of Junagadh and protection regimes of the Gujarat Forest Department in the post-independence era.
- Today, Asiatic lions are present in Protected Areas and agro-pastoral landscape of Saurashtra covering **nine districts** in a sprawling expanse of over **30000 sq. km** which is termed as the **Asiatic Lion Landscape**.
- Understanding the population and distribution status of Asiatic Lions is imperative for their long term conservation and management.
- The population estimation of Asiatic Lions is conducted at an interval of five years. The last population estimation exercise was conducted in May 2015 which pegged the lion numbers at 523, a 27% increase from the estimation of 2010.
- The 15<sup>th</sup> Asiatic Lion Population Estimation was scheduled during 05-06 June, 2020, but owing to the present COVID-19 situation, it was not conducted as planned.

#### Methodology

- In order to develop an understanding of the current population status and distribution of Asiatic Lions in the Asiatic Lion Landscape, the Gujarat Forest Department conducted an exercise familiarly called Poonam Avlokan on 05-06 June, 2020 using the **Direct Beat Verification also known as the Block Count method** (Figure 1).
- The exercise was conducted exclusively by the forest staff of **thirteen administrative divisions** (Figure 2) under the supervision from the respective administrative authorities involving a total manpower of **around 1400 personnel**.



**Figure 1:** Flow chart explaining the Direct Beat Verification/Block count method.



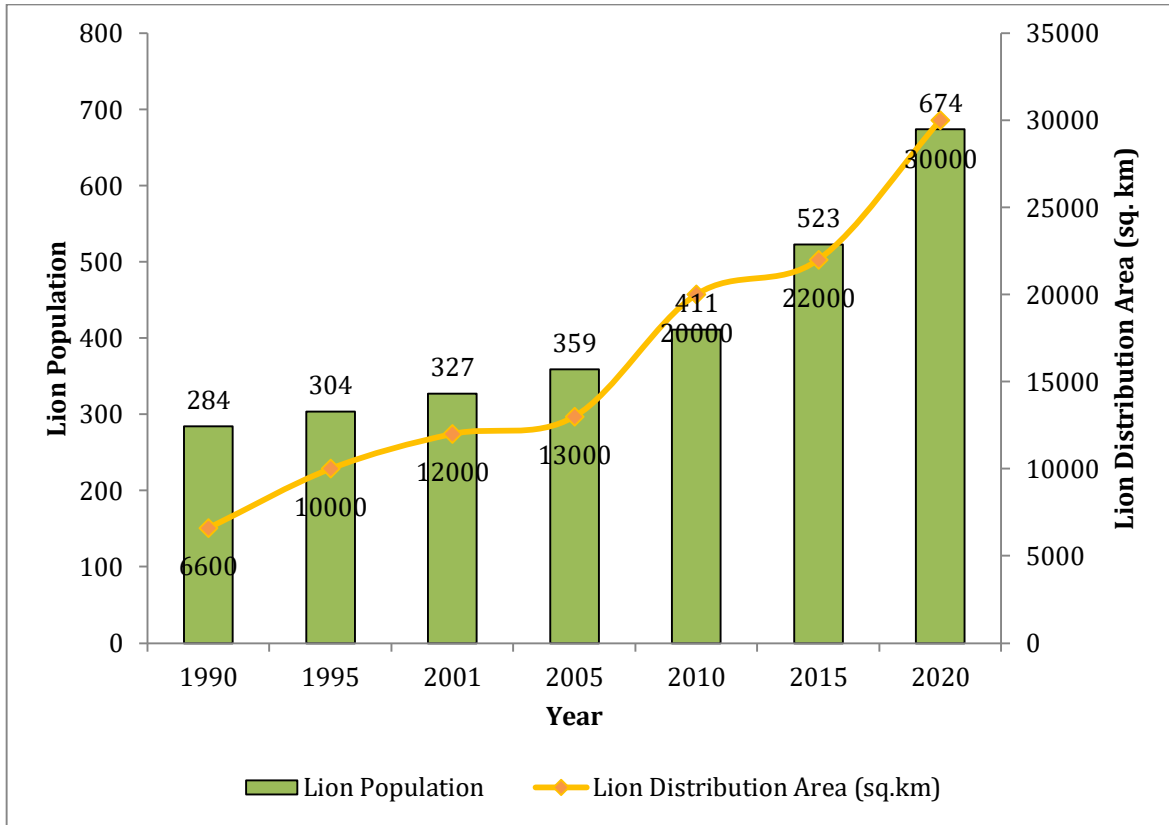
**Figure 2:** Administrative units in the Asiatic Lion Landscape for the Poonam Avlokan of Asiatic Lions (June 2020).

### Outcome of Poonam Avlokan

- The population of Asiatic Lions has thus shown a steady increase with a **population of 674 individuals** with an **increase rate of 28.87% (one of the highest growth rate so far)** from the previous growth of 27% during 2015 (523 lions).
- The distribution of the lions has increased from an area of 22000 sq. km in 2015 to 30000 sq. km in 2020 thus **increasing the distribution area by 36%**.
- There has been a consistent increase in the population and distribution area of Asiatic Lions mainly owing to the effective conservation and management by the Gujarat Forest Department.
- **Multiple strategies and interventions** have been implemented in the Asiatic Lion Landscape that have majorly contributed to the current conservation success of the Asiatic lions viz. **people’s participation, use of modern technology, wildlife health care including as import of CDV vaccine, habitat management, increase in prey base, human-lion conflict mitigation**, etc.
- The Gujarat Forest Department remains cognizant and committed for the long term conservation Asiatic Lions.

**Table 1:** Population structure of Asiatic Lions in the Asiatic Lion Landscape (June 2020).

Adult		Sub adult			Cubs	Total
Male	Female	Male	Female	Unidentified		
161	260	45	49	22	137	674



**Figure 3:** Population and distribution trend of Asiatic Lions.

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