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WWF Mongolia Programme Office
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Amur/Heilong Eco-region Complex Newsletter Issue 5&6, July to December 2007

Onon River, playground of Chingis khaan

Onon River, a river of narrow bed and rushing water, a river of silver, glinting and flowing, is also the river where Chingis khaan enjoyed his childhood. Legend says Mongolia gets its name from Onon River because the river symbolizes Mongolian people's spirit just like the great Genghis khan.



The statue of Chingis khaan was built on the bank of Onon River in Dadal soum of Khentii aimag, which is his birthplace, in 1962, in light of the 800th anniversary of Chingis khaan according to the resolution of the Government of Mongolia

*Genghis khan statue
(by Gankhuyag.B,
WWF Mongolia)*

Onon River sometimes suddenly becomes very quiet, and then you can hear surging, which reminds you Chingis khaan is coming back with his warriors and eagles' silent warm welcome.

In the following one thousand years, we human beings have done a lot on this beautiful and glory land. Some of them have dramatically changed wildlife's life in a negative way: Onon River acted as a weak old man. Lively fishes did not swim happily as before and even eagles, the King of birds, frowned. One thousand years later, eagles still glide in the upper air above the vast and noiseless grassland but they are interested in what we are doing there and they learn that: we are giving back a beautiful homeland to them, even a more beautiful one - Onon River, Headwater of Amur.



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Amur Headwater Initiative Conservation Programme

The Onon River originates on the northeast slope of the Khentii Mountain range with a total river basin of **94,000km** while **30,000 km²** is located within Mongolian territory and the total length is 808km with 298km in Mongolian territory. Onon River basin is an important catchments area forming the headwaters of the Amur/Heilong River.

In the framework of the Amur Headwater Initiative conservation programme, there are three projects being implemented in the eastern region of Mongolia with the local residents, herders, and governmental and non-governmental organizations.



Beautiful Onon River (by Gankhuyag.B, WWF Mongolia)

- “Conservation of the Onon River Basin Project” to involve local community in the conservation
- “Improving the management of the Onon-Balj NP and capacity building of the NP Administration”
- “Gap Analyses in Eastern Mongolia”



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Achievements:

1. WWF Mongolia developed a Conservation Action Planning (CAP) for the Onon River Basin with the involvement of local communities.

From July 1st to August 1st, 2007, WWF staff and representatives of seven soums in Onon River Basin met in Dadal Soum to conduct a CAP for the Basin. They identified eleven important conservation targets (species, plant communities and eco-systems), main threats to their long-term persistence, as well as strategies to combat those threats.

A draft document of the workshop results will be submitted to a larger group of stakeholders and scientists for review. As a result of this planning, an assumption on what activities need to be implemented in the Basin in the next ten years and what results can be expected in the process of upgrading the current situation of the eco-system, was developed with the assistance of all participants.

2. Amurskaya Province Fully Achieved Gift to the Earth Commitment

Within joint action plan between the Amurskaya province administration and WWF Russia, the Amur branch, the total area of nature wildlife refuges has increased by **126 000 ha**. Thus, the protected area network in the province has been enlarged to 10 percent of its territory. Such was the conservation commitment of the Head of Amurskaya province administration taken in 2002.

The area of the oldest Tashinskii refuge has been at once increased by **98600ha**. When 40 years ago an agreement on its creation was signed the specialist did not assume that the area would not be enough. Later scientist discovered that within the refuge territory ten nests of oriental white stork were located but outside there were 13 more. Then it was decided to enlarge the area of Tashinskii to protect all nests of the rare bird. So, to date, more than 5 percent of the nests located in Russia are under protection.



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3. WWF Facilitate Eco-net Construction

PA establishment is a very important means to enforce eco-system protection. Since its establishment in 2006, Harbin Office attached great importance to new protected areas establishment and protected areas enlargement. Up to now, Harbin Office has supported 5 new protected areas' establishment, which amount to **124,418 ha**:

Name of PA	Level	Area(ha)
Songjianghe	Small PA	8150
Changbai	Small PA	6081
Baishan	Provincial	12453
Xiaobeihu	Provincial	39774
Suibinliangjiang	Provincial	57960

4. Forests Certification Promotion in Northeast China

Up to now, **716,490 ha** forests in Baihe, Youhao and Dongfanghong Forestry Bureaus/Farms have been certified by FSC. Meanwhile, Muling Forest Farm is applying for FSC certification, hopefully get certified early next year. HCVF Identification and pilot programs at the forest management unit (FMU) level have been developed in Hunchun and Dongning which are the important habitats for Amur tigers. Their technical scheme for HCVF identification and method for geographical information system (GIS) establishment has been learnt and applied in the other two FMUs -Dongfanghong and Muling Forest Farms.

5. Green Ambassador Campaign in Northeast China

In summer of 2007, 20 volunteers from different universities of NE China took part in "Green Ambassador Campaign" supported by WWF Harbin Office. After trained by 6 wetland experts for prior preparation, ambassadors started their 14 days' campaign on Aug. 6, with the theme of "love nature, protect wetland".



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Volunteers talked with leaders of the nature reserves, conducted questionnaire survey, organized communication activities, and picked rubbish etc. in Zhenbao Island National Nature Reserve, Naolihe Nature Reserve and Dadingshan areas. Their activities moved local villagers, who began to understand what WWF and environmental conservation is. Volunteers came back with the current information of nature reserves and local people's voice for environmental protection. A series of activities after the campaign have been held, such as publishing their articles, exhibiting their pictures and awarding their excellence. This green ambassador campaign greatly improved conservation awareness and learning ability of college students and local people.



Wetland ambassador campaign (By ambassador)

6. WWF Mongolia organized a conservation tour for students and local residents

On August 5th, 2007, Ecology-knowledge conservation club provides constant supports to students who are studying ecology, biology, and environment conservation. During this tour, more than 20 students benefited from conservation activities, which help a lot in scientific researches. With the motto "our homeland – our pride", this tour lasted for 3 weeks, covered 10 soums of Tuv and Khentii aimags that are located in the Onon River Basin. Tour members erected signboards in Batshireet, Binder, and Dadal. They also conducted meetings with local communities and cleaned up garbage in some areas.



Conservation tour for students

(by Gankhuyag.B, WWF Mongolia)



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7. Developed AHEC Freshwater Ecosystem Conservation Strategy Outline

In 2006, Harbin Office hosted an expert workshop for the startup of Freshwater Program in Amur/Heilong River Basin in NE China, had a primary understanding on the major environmental problems and program needs facing Amur/Heilong River Basin, and established new partnership.

To follow up, in August and October of 2007, Harbin Office held expert workshop and government-related meeting in Changchun and Harbin, tangible output was the draft AHEC Freshwater Ecosystem Conservation Strategy Outline, which is now in modification and will be finished in March 2008.

8. Leopard's Future Depends on International Cooperation

From September 17th to 19th, 2007, at a conference organized by the Pacific Institute of Geography of the Russian Academy of Science and WWF-Russia scientists from Russia and China discussed future of the Far Eastern leopard. The conference was aimed at analysis of the social and economical cooperation of the three neighboring countries: China, Russia, and North Korea in the framework of the GEF project.

According to Yurii Darman, head of the WWR-Russia, the Amur branch, "The Far Eastern leopard could be regarded as a flag for international cooperation in the Tumen River area. Non-profit and governmental organizations have already joined their efforts in the animal research and protection having signed agreement on cooperation and undertaken obligations to annually invest 0.5 million USD to meet them. So to date, our primarily task is to do all possible so that these programs receive federal status and support from local business."



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9. Festival in Favor of the Far Eastern Leopard

From September 21st to 23rd, the traditional “Land of the Leopard” festival took place in all villages in southwest Primorye. About 2000 kids and grown-ups participated in the event organized by WWF and supported by the Khasanskii district Department for Education.



Leopard protection admits no borders (by E-Starostina, WWF Russia)

This year, at its fifth anniversary, the festival became international.

With the support from WWF Harbin Office, 40 kids from China (the city of Hunchun) came to Slavyanka, the district center to take part in the festival and open international exhibition of kid’s creativity “Leopard and tiger through the kids’ eyes”.

A bit later, children from US and Germany virtually joined the exhibition – they have sent beautiful drawings of leopard to express their concern and exchange emotions with Russian kids.

Representative from WWF-Japan’ forest department came to the festival to greet kids, their parents, teachers, local authorities and thank all of them for the effort in leopard conservation. All this has become possible due to cooperation between WWF-Russia, China, Germany, US, and Japan. The Far Eastern leopard connects people.



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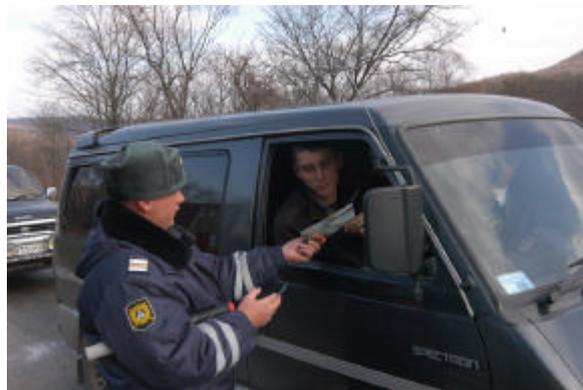
10. Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Ministry of Nature and Environment Mongolia (MNE) and WWF Mongolia for the Implementation of Programme of Work on Protected Areas.

On September 28th, WWF Mongolia signed a MoU with Ministry of Nature and Environment Mongolia (MNE), which justifies the rights of organizing activities in Onon river basin. Being aware of the decision VII/28 of COP 7 of the Convention on Biological Diversity in regard to the Programme of Work on Protected Areas, recognizing the importance of Protected Areas as an important instrument for meeting the Convention's targets of significantly reducing the rate of biodiversity loss by 2010, MNE and WWF Mongolia have agreed to cooperatively work for implementation of Programme of Work on Protected Areas. The purpose is to support the implementation of the Programme of Work on Protected Areas within the framework of the Agreement between the Government of Mongolia and World Wide Fund for Nature from 23 August 2003.

According to the MoU, WWF has support the implementation of Onon-Balj National Park management to increase its effectiveness through improving human capacity and basic infrastructure, including bettering working condition for rangers and NP staff, establishing sustainable partnership with local communities, developing management plan, and improving international cooperation.

11. Number of Forest Fires will be reduced in Leopard's Land

This fall WWF spends huge efforts protecting southwest Primorye, the land of the Far Eastern leopard, from forest fires. In cooperation with students from Agricultural University and Barabashevskii state forest management bureau staff, 12,5 km of larch firebreaks were created. It is one of new techniques for effective protection of the leopard's land from destruction.



State road inspector helps WWF in distributing forest fire prevention leaflets among guests of the leopard's land (by V_Fedorchenko, WWF Russia)



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Since this fall, in leopard's habitats all burnings by juridical persons and individuals in agricultural purposes are prohibited. The decree imposing such a ban was signed by local administration in September this year. The legal document based on WWF-suggested project provides opportunities to decrease forest fires number.

From now on, each organization working in the land and in the forest must take measures against beginning and spreading of fires in their territory. The necessary condition for the decree implementation is fires detection and calling guilty to account. To involve local people and guests of the leopard's land in the project popularized leaflets and stickers were published and distributed.

12. Training courses and equipment provided to award professional rangers by WWF Mongolia

One of the project achievements is – under the support of the Eco-Asia Institute in Ulaanbaatar from October 20th, 2007 to November 10th, 2007, a training was organized to award professional rangers, all Soum environmental inspectors along the river basin and Onon-Balj National Park and the 24 officers who are in charge of the border defense near Onon river.



Rangers training (by Gankhuyag.B, WWF Mongolia)

The training curricula contained the following parts such as, environmental conservation, conservation biology, basic concept of ecology, government policy on conservation, the basis of the legislations for conservation, public relations methodology and skills of using techniques and equipments for self-defense. Participants have quite positive feedback about the training. Two participants passed the exam excellent, 14 people of good, and five of moderate. Therefore all of them are provided necessary winter - uniforms and equipments by now.



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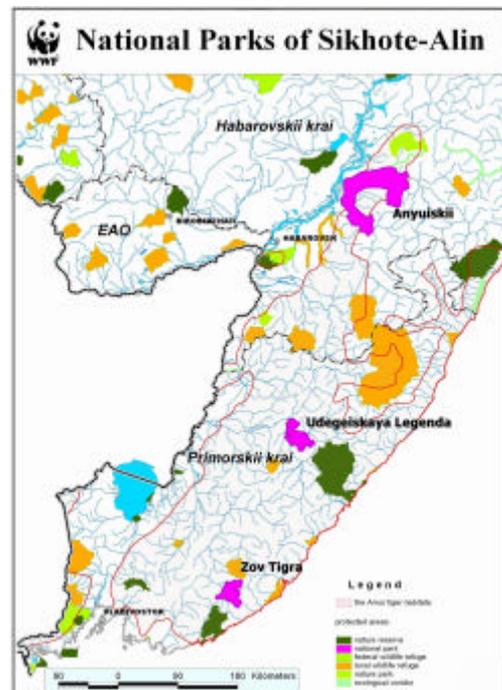
13. WWF Mongolia signed a collaborative contract with the Onon-Balj NP Administration and submitted it to the MNE for approval.

On November 11th, 2007, the OBNP Administration has agreed to conduct all the activities in compliance with the Mongolian Law on Environmental Protection, Law on the Protected Area, Law on the Buffer Zone and other relevant legislation; effectively and sustainably utilize the investment invested by the WWF Mongolia for the purpose of improving OBNP management; Support other WWF activities being implemented in the frame of the Onon River Basin protection (i.e., grant permissions for research expedition, donor trip, and other trips); and keep the MNE and local residents of the OBNP and its Buffer Zone updated on the WWF activities.

14. Anyuiskii National Park Declared in the Russian Far East

On the eve of the New Year, the Russian Government has made a present to the Amur tiger and environmentalists. On December 15, the Government signed a decree on creation of a new national park in Khabarovskii province.

Anyuiskii National Park is the third one established in the Russian Far East this year. It is located in Khabarovskii province on the right bank of the great Amur River covering the least disturbed by human **429 000 hectares** of forest in the middle Sikhote-Alin mountain. The highest protective status of the park is regarded as a writ of protection for the northern group of the Amur tigers.





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Tiger's habitats occupy more than two third of the newly created national park. From now on, five to seven tigers out of 20 specimens living in Nanaiskii district will receive protected habitats.

At the same time, the Anyuiskii Park serves as ecological corridor that connects animals from the Anyui River basin with the rest population; it will become a link in the chain of "the tiger econet", a network of protected areas being created by WWF.

15. Cooperation with WCS has been speeding up in NE China

Based on the cooperation of FY07 Hunchun Monitoring Survey Training, WWF and WCS strengthened cooperation in FY08 by co-drafting Amur tiger conservation plan, applying SttF jointly, co-hosting Monitoring training, modifying Amur Tiger and Its Ungulate Monitoring Methodology etc. Instant communication is strengthened with good understanding of cooperation.



Monitoring training in Hunchun (by Luo Xingbi, WWF China)

Others

1. AHEC Steering Committee FY08 Meeting was held in Changchun, China in October.
2. AHEC Programme Evaluation was carried out in November.



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3. WWF Mongolia established an Onon River Basin Conservation and Information Center in Dadal Soum.

4. Gap Analysis on the Onon River Basin and Daurian steppe eco-region under implementation from July. Information on species and eco-systems of the Daurian Forest Steppe eco-region was assembled, which includes the Onon River Basin and the Mongolian-Manchurian Grassland Eco-regions.



WWF info Center in Dadal Soum (by Gankhuyag.B WWF Mongolia)

5. RFE Wood Enterprises of the Russian Far East Appraised in Primorskii and Khabarovskii provinces. Results showed that the level of ecological responsibility of seven companies allows them to get international forest certification

6. Expert Consultancy Workshops on HCVF Identification and Demonstration Project in Dongning County and Hunchun City held in Changchun and Harbin respectively

7. Harbin Office started next three year internal planning in accordance with Network Standards.

To be coming

1. WWF China & SFA will co-host HCVFs Concept Promotion and Training Workshop in January 2008. Experts of ProForest will participate.

2. AHEC Programme Planning Meeting will be held in Vladivostok in March 2008.