

## Amur/Heilong Eco-region Complex Newsletter

### BIG NEWS

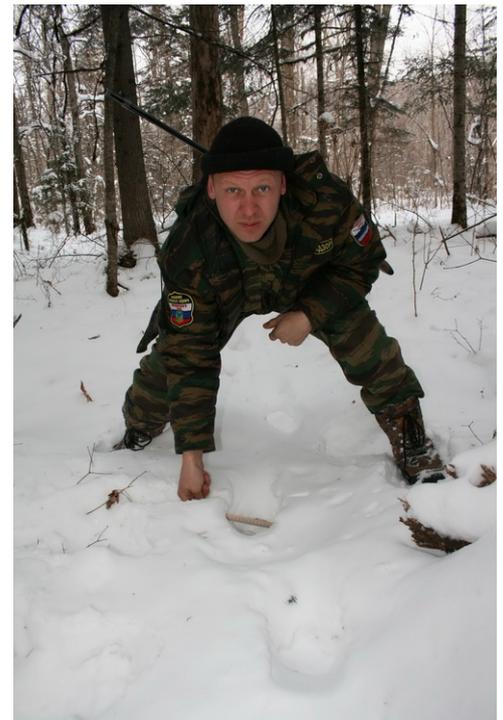
#### Tiger Monitoring Results Finalized

The data of tiger monitoring turned out to be more reassuring than the results of 2009 and showed that the tiger number in Primorsky and Khabarovsk Provinces are comparable with the results of the year of 2007.

Amur tiger monitoring working group under supervision of the Wildlife and Hunting Management Department of Primorsky province has discussed the results of tiger monitoring conducted in winter 2010. We would like to remind, that the results of last monitoring (2009) had registered the lowest density level of tiger tracks over the whole 13-year history of monitoring and, undoubtedly, provoked a serious concern of specialists of the Far Eastern Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences, NGOs and specially authorized bodies. In this situation the next monitoring on the model plots was very important to realize the true situation and to make timely decisions.

In this situation, for the first time, the specialists of the Wildlife and Hunting Management Department of Primorsky Province took the responsibility of the supervision over the implementation of an important field work and strict compliance with the monitoring methodology on the monitoring plots located within hunting estates, while the Special Inspection “Tiger” monitored strictly nature protected areas. Specialists checked about 250 routs, having inspected the area of 23,555 km<sup>2</sup> (15-18% of the total tiger habitat). In Khabarovsk Province a part of activities was financed by provincial Government, the other part of financial support both in Khabarovsk and Primorsky Provinces was provided by WWF.

As it was assumed, the gained data on density of tiger tracks is considerably higher than the density registered last year and can be compared with the monitoring results of 2007. Specialists explain such discrepancy in numbers by the fact that exceptionally heavy snowfalls in north-western part of Primorye in 2009 did not allow to count tigers and ungulates fully. Track density of ungulates – the main tiger prey – was also registered to be at the level of 2007.



*measuring tiger print, © WWF-Russia / Pavel Fomenko*

However, in general, the specialists of the Wildlife and Hunting Management Department, Special Inspection “Tiger”, WCS and WWF came to a consistent opinion – there is a tendency of a decrease of Amur tiger tracks density.



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## FEATURE STORY

### From Hunter to Rrotector

from Hunchun Tiger Festival by Qi Xiao, reporter of China Daily Newspaper

The man mauled by a rare Amur tiger and later found responsible for its death, is now a volunteer with a pilot conservation project in Jilin Province. Eight years after being attacked by a wild tiger near his village in Hunchun, Jilin Province, Qu Shuangxi has been chosen to pilot a wildlife protection initiative by the government,” he says.

The attack occurred on the afternoon of Jan 29, 2002. “The snow was almost knee high,” Qu says. He and another villager were on their way back home after catching a red deer. They were about 3 km from their village, talking about how they were going to enjoy the game, when a wild Amur tiger appeared behind them, just a few dozen meters away. His companion escaped, but Qu was not so lucky. The tiger slammed its paw onto Qu’s right shoulder and clawed his right arm. “I ran like mad, but the tiger was too quick for me even though it was injured and still strapped in a broken snare,” added Qu. “I then pretended to be dead.” Fortunately, the red deer saved him as the tiger turned its meat and walked way after finishing its meal.



Qu Shuangxi is showing his tiger injured arm

© WWF-China / Yang Ming

The 55-year-old farmer suffered multiple fractures in the right shoulder and a broken bone and orn muscle in the right arm, permanently disabling him. The next day, a woman forest worker was killed by the same tiger before the staff of Hunchun nature reserve covering Qu’s village managed to move in and captured the animal.

The injured tiger died after eight days despite intensive efforts to save it. Qu was charred with poaching protected wild animals and handed a two-year jail term. It was only later that it was revealed that the snare which eventually killed the tiger had been laid by Qu.



Qu Shangxi (left) & Li Zhixing (right)

© WWF-China / Yang Ming

Amur tiger is one of the world’s 10 most endangered species. They are found predominantly in the Northeast of China and the Far-east of Russia. There are currently an estimated 500 Amur tigers in the wild, of which only 20 or so can be found live in Jilin and Heilongjiang provinces.

Poaching, deforestation, the general destruction of their natural habitat, and illegal trade are among the biggest threats to the species. Tiger parts are still used in traditional medicine in many places and a tiger’s body can sell for as much as \$150,000, experts say.



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*“Hunchun has a very long tradition of hunting that endures to this day,”* explains **Li Zhixing**, secretary-general of the Hunchun Tianhe Siberian Tiger Protection Society, a local conservation NGO. - *Although many residents never meant to hunt tigers, their activities encroached on the tigers’ habitats.”*

*“They (the attaches) were an avoidable tragedy,”* says **Wu Zhigang**, a researcher from the Jilin Provincial Institute of Forestry Science and one of the foremost scholars in Amur tiger protection. - *Both the tiger and the farmers would have been safe if not fore the snares. Snares are indiscriminate, which means even if tigers are not the target, they could easily get trapped. Snares also threaten the tiger population by killing their prey. A tiger will usually not attack humans. Only when it is crippled and its ability to hunt natural prey is significantly impaired it will search for food in nearby villages and resort to attacking livestock and humans.”*

Qu can easily testify to the pervasiveness of snares as he and his six fellow volunteer-rangers cleared scores of snares and traps during last winter’s patrol in the area around his village. Across the border neighboring Russia seems to offer a much safer haven for these animas. While only 20 wild Amur tigers are thought to be living in China there are 480 in Russia.

*“The living area for a single wild tiger usually ranges from 20,000 t 30,000 ha but the entire nature reserve Hunchun is only 89,000 ha, Wu Zhigang* says. - *Coupled with another reserve in Jilin which is less than 40,000 ha, we get to see just four to six tigers in the province. Wild tigers can easily cross the border (into Russia)”*.

*“Snares are never used in Russian hunting culture, adds Sergey Aramilev*, a biodiversity conservation coordinator at the WWF-Russia’s Amur branch. He says that during a field trip along the Russia-China border, he did not see a single snare for more than 200 km on the Russian side. *“That may explain why tigers sometimes come to Russia,”* he says.

But thanks to a project of the China office of WWF, the big cats are returning. Qu’s village Guandaogou was chosen to pilot the conservation project of the Hunchun nature reserve in October 2009. Since last year, WWF’s China branch has sent 12 beehives to seven households – including Qu’s – as part of a project to provide an alternative source of income.

*“The local government and the villagers are very supportive of the project,”* says **Dr. Jiang Guangshun**, senior program officer from WWF Chuangchun Office. - *We hope the chosen households can earn more money through this project,”* he says. *“Whether they hunt for fun, for meat or for trade, we hope raising bees can help them change.”*

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### MAIN RESULTS

#### China and Russia Agree to First Transboundary Network to Protect Amur Tiger

Jilin province of China and neighboring Primorsky Province in Russia agreed to collaborate formally in working towards the first transboundary Amur tiger conservation network amidst celebrations for the second annual Amur Tiger Cultural Festival in the northeastern Chinese city of Hunchun.

The signed agreement will help wildlife authorities eventually establish a transboundary network in the border provinces that are home to the world's largest big cat. The population of the highly endangered Amur tiger is currently estimated at 500.

In the agreement signed by Jilin Provincial Forestry Department of China and three Russia agencies – the Wildlife and Hunting Department of Primorsky Province, the Federal Service on Supervision over Natural Resources Exploitation, and Special Inspection “TIGER” of Russia (official name of the Bureau on Protection of Rare and Endangered Species of Flora and Fauna), the two sides will work together in establishing tiger conservation networks in both provinces, as well as partner to restore the endangered species.



Tiger Conservation Worksho, © WWF-China / Yang Ming

*“A new transboundary network would provide a wider and healthier habitat for Amur tigers and other endangered species, such as the Far East leopard, musk deer and goral,”* said **Yu Changchun**, Director of Conservation Department of Jilin Forestry Department.

*“While tigers – the species at the top of the eco-system – are better conserved through the Network, other species, the forest habitat and all the bio-diversity resources will also benefit from this Network,”* said **Dr. Zhu Chunquan**, WWF-China’s Conservation Executive Director.

As part of the agreement, Jilin and Primorsky Provinces will increase information sharing on Amur tiger and Far East leopard protection, work to adopt identical monitoring systems for tigers and their prey, and conduct joint ecological surveys and develop plans to launch an anti-poaching campaign along the China-Russia boarder.

Destruction or fragmentation of habitat, poaching and lack of prey have reduced the number of wild Amur tigers. One of six remaining subspecies of tigers, (and sometimes referred to as Siberian tiger), the Amur tiger is primarily found in eastern Russia, with a small number in northeastern China. Among that population, 20 tigers have been periodically spotted within the borders of China’s Jilin and Heilongjiang provinces.



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*“This agreement is a great boost for Amur tiger habitats in Russia and China. Since both countries play a crucial role in terms of global tiger recovery, a future transboundary network would also represent a big step in WWF’s global tiger conservation effort, said **Sergey Aramilev**, a biodiversity conservation coordinator at the WWF-Russia’s Amur branch, which is also involved in promoting the agreement. - There’s a lot of work to be done to implement this agreement, such as making sure it receives proper government funding, but this is a major step forward nonetheless.”*

The agreement marks another milestone during the Chinese Year of the Tiger in 2010. WWF launched the TX2 campaign early this year, which seeks to double the number of wild tigers by the next Year of the Tiger in 2022. A groundbreaking tiger conservation declaration from the 13 countries that still have wild tiger populations was agreed upon in Bali, Indonesia in July this year, and is due to be signed before the close of Year of the Tiger at a tiger conservation summit hosted by Russia. The Declaration seeks to create a tiger recovery program that is global in scope while also promoting transboundary cooperation amongst the 13 tiger range countries.

### **Workshop for Amur Tiger and Ungulates Survey Methodology Guideline in China Held in Ha’erbin**

On July 10th -11th of 2010, workshop for Amur Tiger and Ungulates Survey Methodology Guideline in China was held successfully in Lvhai Hotel, Harbin City, which was organized by WWF. Fifteen persons including the experts and officials from Jilin and Heilongjiang provinces as well as representatives from Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) participated in the workshop.

The experts introduced the survey methodology used in China and internationally, such as route survey method, transect survey method, information network monitoring (similar to passive monitoring), occupancy survey method, sample plot survey etc., and the advantage as well as shortcomings of each method were also analyzed and assessed.

Considering the current population and distribution of Amur tiger and its ungulate prey in China, on the basis of the experience in practice, the participants went deeply into the discussion about which methodology is proper for research and survey on Amur tiger and ungulates in China at present.

Then the participants focused on discussion on the Amur Tiger and Ungulates Survey Methodology Guideline compiled by WWF. After passionate discussion and sincere revise/perfection, the guideline was accepted and passed.

All guys agreed that shortcomings still exist, in terms of the technique, in the technical regulations of transect survey on Amur tiger and ungulates used nationally at present, e.g. great error of the sample plot area due to subjectively decided transect width. It’s one of the major technical issues for effective tiger conservation to address the united technical regulations on Amur tiger and ungulates survey.

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Considering the low and non-settled population in large area, on the basis of the experience from 2009 winter survey with WWF united transect method and discussion result, the information network monitoring should be the suitable methodology for large-scale Amur tiger monitoring in China at present. However, in the area where Amur tiger show up more frequently, the transect method should also be used for further survey every 4-5 years.

The consensus was built that Sample Plot Survey is presently a scientific and suitable method for ungulate survey. We should train the technical team, meanwhile, demonstrate and popularize the method in survey and recovery of the ungulate prey.

### Taimen Open Day Event and Community Festival along the Onon River Soums

Taimen Open Day with the slogan “Set our king Taimen free” and the Community festival on “Development of Community-based organizations” have been held along the Onon River soums from July 30th 2010 to August 14th 2010.

Events covered various activities, including the selection and rewarding of the best Community-based organizations, exhibition of the best products and handicrafts made by community groups, different sport competitions such as volleyball, wrestling, horse rising, taimen fly fishing, chess and so on. As observed from the survey, many gave very positive feedbacks about the entire agenda which inspired community groups to act more for conservation.

Experience sharing platform was provided to enable herders to learn from each other and discuss best practices. Activities also made aware other participants about the advantages of becoming community group member and encouraging them to join the CBO.

Furthermore, taimen conservation initiatives were displayed including handmade handicrafts made from piece of wood, cotton, silk, ceramic and paper. Health check service was provided free of charge and health kits were donated which was highly appreciated by locals.

For the first time, the fundraising activity for taimen conservation was held among the local communities where totally around 170 USD collected. These funds will be dedicated to produce branding audio-visual materials on taimen.



*during the Taimen Open Day, © WWF Mongolia*



*Community Festival, © WWF Mongolia*

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During the festival, the community members organized a fair, where their products were displayed in the Gers erected by the communities from the soums. During fair, there were over 200 (in duplicated numbers) kinds of products e.g. dairy products including curds, butter, cream, cheese, berry contained sour cream, distilled vodka, baked products including bread, homemade pancake, ant's nest, fruits and berries including wild cherry, currant, redcurrant, and different kinds of jams, dried fruits, juice, fruit wine, mushroom preservations, and crafts including wooden bowls, embroideries, national dress and hats displayed. Among the products displayed on fair, there were some products attracted by its visitors and buyers. For instance, the products e.g. fire fuel made of animal dung and sawdust and dried with piece of birch-bark or wood, dried saltlicks made of naturally grown nitre and Aarz (bitter tasting dairy product), a pumpkin with 32 kg weight (planted in an open plot), bowls and plates made of tree swelling/galls, distilled juice made of fallen needles attracted the visitors. During the festival, the herder communities earned totally USD 2000 from their product sales. From the herder communities took place in fair, the herder communities from Umnudelger soum were the best sellers having earned USD 620 from their product sales. During fair, an auction of wooden Taimen was held. Its initial offered price was USD 15, but it was sold at USD 115 as the first price was increased by more than seven times.

The festival enabled the local communities have in-depth knowledge on conservation community groups and their benefits as the key tool to accelerate the rural development.

### Women in Onon River Basin Call for Conservation

WWF Mongolia Programme Office, in partnership with Hentii aimag's Binder soum Women's Council, organized a women's forum of Onon river basin. The forum, held on 31 July-1 August 2010, aimed at promoting national costumes, its everyday use, passing the tradition to younger generation as well as sharing experiences of river basin women. In addition to this, another key goal of the forum also targeted on stimulating joint efforts of

women for environment conservation. With more than 90 attendees, women organized wide variety of events like contests, national costume selection and environment conservation debates. As the final output of event, women in the river basin had extensive discussions on pressing issues and potential solutions followed by issuance of call for environment conservation addressing to local community and organizations, which was in the limelight of entire community. Having agreed to organize the forum every year, the next forum venue was appointed to be Umnudelger soum.



Women's Forum, © WWF Mongolia



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### Onon River Water Will Be Monitored Permanently

Second meeting of Onon River Basin Council was organized on 19 August 2010 with the goal of presenting baseline survey of Integrated Management of Onon River Basin, discussing structure and methodology of integrated management system and approving annual work plan. Attended by representatives of different stakeholders including Council members, administration of Onon-Balj National Park, soum buffer zone members, and WWF Mongolia Programme Office, the meeting revised presentations on Onon river pollution. The members were presented with preliminary findings of a Working Group for inspection of Onon river pollution caused by polluted water inflow from Ashinga River of Russia. The meeting also approved work plan with eight important points for implementation in the second half of 2010. Revision on findings of baseline survey for integrated river basin management plan was supported by comments and opinions from the members such as inclusion of permafrost survey findings, water reserve balance and tourism capacity and destinations linked with development trends; all to be integrated into the final baseline findings. The meeting also agreed to set up 7-member Working group to develop integrated management plan of Onon river basin with representatives of academics, water users, environmentalists, government and non government agencies and consultants. Plans for specific actions to ensure the community participation in planning process was also made. The meeting emphasized need for waiting for the test results on content of heavy elements in polluted water of Onon river for final decisions assigning the soum designated council to take actions, disseminate information and run permanent monitoring on river water based on the test findings.



*second meeting of Onon River Basin Council,*

© WWF Mongolia

### Local Communities Learn How to Plant and Take Care of Vegetable and Fruit

With the purpose to make contributions in livelihood improvement and poverty reduction among local communities residing Onon River Basin through development of farming business at household level, the second phase training was organized on July 14-29, 2010 and was attended by totally 169 individuals including 55 males and 114 females. Trainees learned about how to take care of vegetables and fruits during summer time, removing weeds, and preventing from pest distributions in their vegetable plots. In addition to taking cares of their vegetables and fruits, they were given with understanding on how to properly select and use a variety of fertilizers (organic and mineral), their norms, terms, methods of irrigation or watering, normative and terms of watering, and growing



*community members planting vegetables,*

© WWF Mongolia

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periods. For training, the posters, photos, videos (VCD), and physical materials showing and explaining different methods and technologies of planting and taking care of all types of vegetables including potato and fruits growing in Mongolia, removing weeds, and combating with damageable pests during planting and growing seasons were used. During training, trainees visited their household vegetable and gardening plots, were provided with appropriate recommendations and instructions on how to properly plant and take care of vegetables and fruits, and shared experiences particularly from more experienced farmers. These practical training methods and approaches included site visits were used for training organized in each Soum and resulted in many positive findings.

### **Training Deemed Helpful for Finding More Income Generation and Poverty Reduction Options**

A business training on “Cost Chains” was held for local residents and herder communities residing Onon River Basin on 12-31 August, 2010, with the purpose to assist in establishment of cost chains and collaboration for successful business running through reducing their actual costs and increasing incomes. The participants regarded the training much helpful for household members and private business people to learn about collaborative efforts in their businesses, potential options to reduce additional or extra expenses, and opportunities to use standard packages and labels/tags, where producers’ addresses are put, and supply healthy and safe products to domestic markets. As cost chains are appropriately identified, the producers are able to continue their businesses/ productions without any interruptions and supply their products to main or central markets through their collaborative efforts.



*“Cost Chains” business training, © WWF Mongolia*

### **Studies on Forests and Pastureland Completed**

Studies on forests and pastureland necessary for the development of management plan for Onon Balj NP and its Buffer Zone were completed. From the study findings, the current states of forests and forest pests, flora species, pastureland vegetations, useful plants and their distributions within five Soums in Onon Balj NP and its Buffer Zone were appropriately identified and the recommendations to be dealt and considered for future planning were made. The project implementing unit and Onon Balj NP administration were presented with the study report findings and submitted their comments to the study teams. Based on the comments submitted, appropriate changes and revisions are being made to the map produced.

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### Program AMBA

The 8<sup>th</sup> International Film Festival of Asian-Pacific Countries “Pacific Meridian” and WWF-Russia have presented for the first time a special program AMBA that encompasses the most significant documentaries on tiger conservation shot over the recent years.

The Festival and its guests from 150 countries (and not only from Pacific Rim) were lucky enough as authors of 6 “tiger” films came to Vladivostok from India, Great Britain, South Korea to show broad audience the beauty of tigers and their vulnerability.

In parallel to the tiger films demonstration, participants and guests of the Festival put their signatures under the Appeal that will be sent to the Tiger Summit to be held in St. Petersburg in November this year.

*“We are calling for the Governments of tiger range countries to joint efforts in saving tigers. Only interstate cooperation can stop the decrease of tiger number and improve the situation.*

*We are calling for the Governments of developed countries to assist implementing national and international programs on tiger conservation. Saving the biggest cat on Earth for future generations is a noble and safe investment.*

*Filmmakers make their own contribution by capturing on film the most beautiful, the most gracious, and the most amazing cat of the planet. But could a screen image replace a living tiger?”*

These words of the Appeal were signed by about 100 guests including such celebrities like Gerard Depardieu and Vincent Perez.



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### Protecting Nests from Fires

As part of *Keepers of Stork Nests* program run by WWF-Russia and Administration of Amurskaya Province game managers of provincial refuges treated 18 nest-trees with special chemical solution preventing wood from burning and mowed grass around these trees.

Oriental white storks make nests on tree tops; the nest becomes for a bird a home for many years. Practically every year in Amurskaya Province forest fires are registered with no chances for nest-trees to survive. For the southern part of the Province forest fires remain the main cause preventing increase in the stork numbers.



*treating nest tree with chemicals*

© Yury Gafarov

### Youth from Russian and Germany Walk along the Amur Tiger Trail

The purpose of the field expedition was to learn as much as possible about the rare cat to later spread the news and share gained knowledge with everybody interested in the name of Tiger Ambassadors. The expedition was split into three parts with one held in *Orlinoye* and *Tigrovoye* hunting estates and *Land of the Leopard* visitors center, and the second one took place in the Bikin River area, and Tiger Day in Vladivostok as a climax of the expedition.



*making salt licks for wild ungulates*

© WWF-Russia / Elena Starostina

Young people visited two reserves, a wildlife refuge, met specialists in charge of nature and tiger conservation like scientists, rangers, heads of reserves. Expedition team did practical things as well: they have planted Korean pine seedlings, made artificial salt licks for ungulates, dug topinambur to feed wild ungulates in the harsh winter conditions. Future Tiger Ambassadors have learned how to determine different prints and other signs of animals' life activity. Every expedition day was portrayed in Internet. Welcome here <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5nQQh1qHal0> those who speaks German. Next step on the Amur Tiger trail is to participate in the Youth Tiger Forum to be hosted by WWF-Russia in Vladivostok in November this year.

### Tiger Day

Saving Korean pine we save tiger – was a motto WWF column marched with on the traditional Tiger Day with each person bearing a pot with juvenile pines - a symbol of tiger habitat conservation. This year, active participants of the tiger marathon joined WWF's column. Marching along the main street of Vladivostok was the final point of a year-long marathon registered in the Amur ecoregion with different outreach activities.

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In Khabarovsk, the striped holiday bloomed from a kid's holiday at the local zoo into a Youth ecological festival and for the first time was celebrated in the central square of the city. Tiger Day in Khabarovsk became part of the Action Plan on tiger conservation in 2010-2015 approved by the Khabarovsk Province Governor.

Tiger Day was celebrated across the whole Amur ecoregion, in different cities and villages.



*Tiger Day is a favorite holiday for kids and grown-ups*

© WWF-Russia / Pavel Fomenko

### OTHER NEWS

#### **No More Fires on the Land of Leopards!**

Over 18,000.00 USD will be directed for purchasing fire fighting equipment, protective clothing, mini radio stations and other special facilities for *Kedrovaya Pad* Nature Reserve. The rangers of the nature reserve will be fully armed to struggle every possible fire outbreaks. The additional funds for covering fuel and field expenses during fire dangerous period will be allocated as well. This will certainly improve the effectiveness of rangers' work running fire fighting operations and preventive measures both on the territory of nature reserve and in *Leopardovy* wildlife refuge.

#### **Vice Prime Minister Sergei Ivanov Visits “Paternalized” Amur Leopard**

On August 29 Sergei Ivanov, vice Prime Minister of the Russian Government, visited *Kedrovaya Pad* nature reserve and hold a special meeting to check how his orders on leopard conservation in southwest Primorye are being executed.

The future of the Land of Leopard was one of the issues discussed. All present at the meeting including representatives of district and provincial authorities agreed with the necessity of reorganizing the unified PA into *Land of Leopard* National Park: only this PA type can ensure leopard protection and sustainable nature use. Economy-ecological feasibility study for *Land of Leopard* National Park creation has been already prepared by the Pacific Institute of Geography (The Far Eastern Branch of the Russian Academy of Science) in cooperation with WWF at the request of the Russian Ministry of Natural Resources. The planned national park will encompass *Kedrovaya Pad* reserve and *Leopardovy* refuge which is planned to be enlarged to the south for 40 000 hectares to form ecological corridor along the Sino-Russian border.

*“The most important task for today is receiving Governmental money by Kedrovaya Pad: the area of the reserve is enlarged 10 times but financing remains at the previous level, says Yuri Darman, head of WWF-Russia's Amur branch. – It is necessary to hire new staff to properly protect the area. It is necessary to create good infrastructure and move the management office from a remote village to Barabash which is planned to be the*



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*center of the future national park. This issue, I hope, will be solved as big money is needed, hundreds millions rubles, and this is the level of the Russian Government”.*

Sergei Darkin, Primorye Governor, came forward with the initiative – to make leopard as a symbol for APEC-2012 Forum to be held in Vladivostok. Let us hope this will help in leopard conservation.