



# SECURING A FUTURE FOR AMUR LEOPARDS AND TIGERS IN RUSSIA-V

Final Report

2017



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

BACKGROUND .....	2
PROJECT SUMMARY .....	9
PROJECT ACTIVITIES .....	10
Anti-Poaching Patrols in Five Protected Areas (SMART).....	10
Environmental Education and Outreach.....	14
Annual Workshop for Educators .....	15
Art Contest .....	17
Tiger Day Festival .....	18

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## BACKGROUND

The southern Russian Far East (RFE) is home to some of the rarest animals and plants on Earth. As many as 100 terrestrial endangered species live here, meaning that 30% of all endangered species in Russia are concentrated in only 1% of the country's vast territory. Up to 48 of these species (15% of all endangered species in Russia) occur nowhere else. This region is home to the Amur tiger (*Panthera tigris altaica*), also known as Siberian tiger, and to the Amur leopard (*Panthera pardus orientalis*), the northern-most of the nine extant subspecies. Amur leopards and tigers are at the top of the food chain. Conservation of these two umbrella species ultimately requires conservation of the forest ecosystem as a whole. Population size of these animals is an important metric by which conservation action can be measured.

Russia is a success story in the history of wild tiger conservation. In 1947, with few Amur tigers left, Russia became the first country to ban the hunting of tigers. It succeeded in halting the long-lasting decline in numbers of tigers and stabilizing the population. While numbers plummeted almost everywhere else across Asia, the Russian population showed a defiantly opposite trend. A survey in 2005 showed that the population recovered to 430-500 individuals, up from a mere 20-30 individuals in the 1940s. In 2008, Amur tiger numbers experienced a decline again. Russia committed itself to assisting in doubling the world's tiger numbers, and in Russia, expanding the wild population by signing St. Petersburg Declaration during the International Tiger Forum in November 2010. And the Phoenix Fund is assisting the Russian Government in carrying out those commitments. According to the 2015- full range Amur tiger count, about 523-540 Amur tigers occur today in RFE, including 417-425 animals in Primorsky krai, 100-109 in Khabarovskiy krai, four in Jewish Autonomous Province and two in Amurskaya Province.

The range of the Amur leopard originally extended across Northeast China, the Korean peninsula, and the southern third of Primorsky krai, Russia. In 2007, only an estimated 40 leopards remained in a thin sliver of habitat in Southwestern Primorsky krai, with a few individuals wandering into China. The Amur leopard numbers were reduced due to overhunting of prey and poaching combined with habitat loss from agricultural and urban development. The Russian Government is deeply concerned about the current state of Amur leopard population. In 2012, Land of the Leopard National Park was created. The park provides protection to more than two third of the present Amur leopard population as well as to a small but significant population of at least 20 Amur tigers. Intensive camera-trapping in both China and Russia (with scientists from both sides co-operating and comparing their databases) have resulted in a present estimate of 60-80 individuals. The upward trend in the Amur leopard population is very encouraging.





Despite sustained conservation efforts over recent years and encouraging recent monitoring results, the big cats still remain at risk due to poaching, logging, forest fires, and prey depletion. Every year the wild populations of Amur tigers and Amur leopards officially lose up to ten individuals due to poaching and other reasons, including collisions with vehicles. According to official statistics published by government agencies and trusted sources, in 2017 the population of Amur tigers has reportedly lost 19 individuals. This figure includes the remains of 10 tigers that were confiscated from different criminals in forms of derivatives (bones, skulls, skins). Brief description of the cases can be found below:

1) In late December 2016, Border Guard Service of the Frontier Department of the Russian Federal Security Service in Primorsky Krai initiated criminal case for smuggling derivatives and body parts of rare animals, including Amur tiger teeth. Law breakers were detained in late December 2016 at Russian-Chinese border checkpoint “Poltavka” in Primorsky kraï during their attempt to smuggle huge amount of body parts and derivatives of rare and endangered animals. According to specialists, the confiscated derivatives were estimated at a value of up to (\$1,461,314) 86.5 million roubles. The violators used a hidden compartment built in a truck. In all, the smugglers hid 1,000 of saiga antlers, 240 walrus tusks, about 300 teeth and over 100 claws of various wild animals, about 40 gall bladders and over 1 kg of velvet antlers, and about 700 kg of dried sea cucumbers.

2) In the night of January 28, 2017, Primorsky Hunting Management Department received information that an injured tiger was found lying on a forest road 60 km from Luchegorsk town, Pozharsky district of Primorye. A young tiger walked up to the road and hid under the logging truck’s semitrailer. A mobile team of wildlife managers immediately went to the scene. However, when the mobile team arrived, the predator was dead. The dead animal turned out to be a three-year-old tigress. The body of the tigress was taken to Wildlife Diagnostics and Disease Centre in Ussuriisk town for post-mortem examination. It was determined that the predator had been caught in a trap during severe frost with temperatures hitting minus 40 degrees Celsius. Extreme exhaustion due to traumatized leg and cold-related injuries did not leave chances to survive. The animal chewed its own paw off to escape from the trap. A thorough exam proved that the tigress had died because it was unable to get any real food.

3) On February 5, 2017, border guards of Frontier Department of the Russian Federal Security Service in Primorsky kraï seized wildlife derivatives from a Chinese national who was travelling by taxi in Pogranichny village at the border with China. Among the derivatives were Amur tiger bones and sika deer antlers. Seized bones belonged to at least two tigers that died long ago. Criminal prosecution against the smuggler was initiated.

4) On February 18, 2017, a 4-5-month-old tigress was found dead near the railway. The animal had probably been hit by a train.

5) On February 20, 2017, an approximately 2-year-old tiger was found dead by a local hunter in Lazo district of Khabarovskiy kraï. Specialists did not find any traces of death by violence. Nor, for that matter, were the signs of human presence. Tracks left by the tiger indicated that it was very emaciated and

hardly moved its legs. An exam showed that the tiger could have died due to some illness or internal injuries.

6) In March, 2017, a tigress (with four embryos) was found drowned in a river.

7) In March 2017, the tiger Uporny, which after successful rehabilitation was returned to the wild in Dichun Wildlife Refuge (Jewish Autonomous Province) on March 28, 2015, was found dead. The tiger supposedly died during a fight with other predator.

8) In April 2017, an Amur tiger skin was seized from an ex-deputy of Artyom city.

9) On April 25, 2017, a dead Amur tiger was found in the Bikin River, Bikin municipal district of Khabarovskiy krai. Specialists of Khabarovskiy Hunting Management Department and police officers went to the scene immediately. Visual examination of the body did not reveal any gunshot wounds. Indirect signs indicated that the dead animal had been in the water for a long time and it could have been carried by the current from Primorsky krai.

10) In April 2017, police officers confiscated 51 fragments of an Amur tiger skull from a 31-year-old Chinese citizen. During the search, 20 bear paws and dried sea cucumber were found in a freezer in a café in Vladivostok. The detainee confessed that he had been using the alcohol-bound tiger remains to make Chinese traditional medicine. The body parts were not intended for trafficking, but were used to make a tincture which the detainee was distributing mainly among the citizens of China, who work or live in Russia. Now the investigation is completed, the criminal case has been transferred to court. The defendant faces up to three years of imprisonment and a fine of up to one million rubles.

11) During public holidays in May 2017, border guards seized over 120 tiger bones, about 15 ginseng roots, 20 derivatives of sika deer and 20 grams of methamphetamine, a strong and highly addictive drug from a local of Kraskino village close to the Chinese border and the Land of the Leopard NP. The wildlife derivatives and the drug were confiscated from a Chinese citizen who has been living in Russia for a long time. As it was established in court, the defendant had acquired and illegally stored the bones of Amur tigers. In December, the Khasansky District Court found the defendant guilty and sentenced him to 3



years and 8 months of imprisonment in a correctional colony of the general regime. The verdict came into force; the defendant fully admitted his guilt.

12) In June 2017, a tiger cub was found extremely emaciated and died shortly in Lazovsky district of Primorye.

13) In June 2017, at a courtyard of a 33-year-old man in Lesozavodsk town the border guards discovered over 180 kg of wildlife parts and products. Among the seized goods, there were about 100 bear paws, over 50 kg of wildlife guts, five pairs of deer antlers, about two kilograms of sea cucumber, over 90 kg of bones, a mammoth tusk, and eleven sable skins. Moreover, there were two vessels with ginseng roots preserved in alcohol. All seized items were taken for expertise. It was determined that some part of seized bones – ribs, shoulder blades, pelvic bones, hind legs and forelegs - belonged at least to two Amur tigers. A criminal case is still underway.

14) On August 10, 2017, as a result of special investigation activities by police investigators of Dalnegorsky Inter-Municipal Department of Interior Ministry of the Russian Federation, a body of the Amur tiger and a 12-gauge IZH hunting rifle was found at 42-year-old man's apartment in Amgu village, Terneisky District of Primorye. The supposed criminal was taken to the police where he confessed to shooting a tiger in woodlands near Malaya Kema village. After killing the animal, he had frozen the dead body and hid it in his house. According to specialists of Sikhote-Alin Biosphere Nature Reserve, the dead body belonged to a one-year-old Amur tiger. Confiscated body parts were taken for postmortem examination. A criminal case is underway.

15) On September 12, 2017, during a truck search in Ussuriisk town the officers of Primorsky krai Border Service of the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation together with Far Eastern Customs officers seized derivatives of wildlife listed in Russia's Red Book: four fragments of the Amur tiger, including an upper jaw bone and a lower jaw bone, and parts of a knee joint. The truck was operated by a 55-year-old man. Specialists of ANO Amur Tiger Centre confirmed that all seized body parts belonged at least to one Amur tiger. The damage is about 1 million 100 thousand roubles. A criminal case was initiated.

*According to official statistics published by government agencies and trusted sources, in 2017 the Amur tiger population has lost 19 individuals*

Also, 70 kg of wildlife derivatives were discovered in Ternei town. The products (dried bones of Amur tiger - ribs, tail, and tail base) were lying around the attic of non-living premises of a citizen of Ternei town. At additional building, a freezing compartment was full of other wildlife derivatives. As many as 400 different fragments of wild animals (limbs and internal organs) were identified by experts. At present, the extensive and thorough investigation is going on.

16) On September 30, 2017, border guards of Frontier Department of the Russian Federal Security Service in Primorsky Krai found an Amur tiger skin at 'Tolochka' farm located near Kuguki village, Ussuriisky district of Primorye. Investigators are trying to identify the owner of the skin.

17) On October 15, 2017, a forester informed Hunting Management Committee about discovery of a dead Amur tiger near Birsky regional wildlife refuge, Khabarovskiy krai. During visual check of the dead animal, no signs of gunshot injuries were found. No signs of human presence on the scene were found either. The weight of the dead animal was 2.6 kg. According to postmortem examination, the cub died



due to severe exhaustion. The cub had congenital lung defects, and probably due to these anomalies a tigress had abandoned the cub.

Sadly, we have to report about a tragedy that happened this year. On October 30, 2017, fragments of the body of a 43-year-old man who had been reported missing were found near the village of Boytsovo, Bikinsky district of Khabarovsk Province. The nature of injuries on the body indicated that the man had fallen victim to a tiger, rather than any other predator. The man went to the forest without weapons to collect pine nuts and disappeared on October 28. For almost a month the specialists have been searching for the tiger and taking measures to capture the conflict animal. On November 29, 2017, experts of a tiger conflict resolution group of the Hunting Department of the Ministry of Natural Resources of Khabarovsk Province caught a tigress that might be responsible for a tragedy that occurred in late October and led to the death of the man. On November 30, another feisty tiger was captured in the Bikin District, Khabarovsk Territory, 10 kilometres from the village of Svetlogorye. The tiger was acting strange and was probably involved in attacking dogs in local villages. Both captured animals were placed in the Utyos Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre in Khabarovsk Province to find out if they could have attacked a man. The predators are in good physical shape and are behaving appropriately for captured wild animals. Experts say that predators could be prompted to attack domestic animals due to a lack or inaccessibility of food, that is, wild ungulates. The fate of the tigers will be decided by the Federal Service for Supervision of Natural Resources after receiving all the necessary data, including biological test results.

Recent uplifting news is that two Amur tigers were successfully released back into the wild in May 2017. The tigress Filippa, which was found in the winter of 2015, was successfully released in Dichun Wildlife Refuge (Jewish Autonomous Province), and the tiger Vladik that was captured in October 2016 was released in newly established Bikin National Park (Primorsky krai). Tiger specialists are constantly monitoring the whereabouts and travel patterns of the animals that have been fitted with GPS collars. According to specialists from the Tiger Centre, Filippa has demonstrated extremely good hunting skills. She has regular – every six to eight days – and diversified

prey, including Himalayan bears, wolves, roe deer, boars and Manchurian wapitis, on her menu. The tiger Vladik crossed the entire Primorye in search of a permanent home and returned to the southwest of the territory. Specialists tracked the predator with the help of a GPS collar put on Vladik before his release, regularly verifying points of his travel across the territory. Researchers note that Vladik looks like a healthy and well-fed animal and shows a normal reaction to cars and people, without getting into conflict with them. Also, the tiger has never attacked domestic animals.

Encouraging news we also would like to share with you is that the released tigress Svetlana produced a litter of cubs after meeting up with the released tiger, Borya! These tigers were orphaned in the wild, raised in captivity, and released back into the wild in 2014 in different protected areas: Svetlana in Zhuravliny Wildlife Refuge (Jewish Autonomous Province) and Boris in Zhelundinsky Wildlife Refuge (Amurskaya Province). Borya travelled over 300 km before he found Svetlana. Up to that moment, the tigers had seen each other only at the rehab centre. In December 2015, the tigers met again. Henceforth, they met frequently, stayed in close proximity to one another through the past two winters, and unique photos from camera traps proved that they made a couple. And finally in April 2017 the tigress Svetlana and the legs and shadow of at least one cub showed in camera trap. When passing by camera traps, the young ones hid behind their mother, but two little paws were visible. Up to late November, specialists did not know the exact number of cubs. New photos and footage from camera traps obtained during the monitoring trip to the Zhuravliny Wildlife Refuge in late autumn showed that Svetlana has three grown up cubs! Tiger cubs look healthy and cheerful. Just like their mother, they sniff the marking trees with curiosity. Now, specialists refer to the Jewish Autonomous Province as a “tiger region” because at least 11 Amur tigers live there, including five cubs born to previously released tigers. Five years ago, the region was home to only one tiger.



Speaking about the Amur leopard population, it was the greatest sensation when we learned that the leopardess Killi (Leo 8F) was found alive after car crash. The incident occurred in summer 2016 on a motorway running along the border of the Land of the Leopard National Park. A driver who knocked down the wild cat escaped from the crime scene. Traffic police officers found out about the accident only thanks to witnesses concerned about the fate of the animal. After a collision with a vehicle, the leopardess was lying motionless for a while on the road with stains of blood, then returned to consciousness and disappeared in the wood. Nothing was found in the search operation: neither a dead body of the animal nor confirmation that the leopard was still alive. It was impossible to assess the seriousness of injuries received in a crash judging by photos taken by the witnesses. Since then, the leopardess Killi has not been captured by camera traps. Specialists have given it up for lost, and were amazed when they saw the leopardess alive on the photos taken by camera traps in late 2017. The leopardess Killi was identified based on its unique rosette pattern. The animal looked healthy with no signs of injuries received in a car crash.



We have to admit that local law enforcement agencies are now working more efficiently than in previous years, and thanks to their hard work, poachers, smugglers and other violators are identified in a relatively short time and receive justly deserved punishment. For example, in March, a man who was accused of illegal transporting and storing Amur tiger body parts was sentenced to 7 months of community service. Another involvement was sentenced to 200 hours of unpaid community work.

Other good news is that in February 2017 a poacher was sentenced to a fine of as much as 9 million roubles (\$149,229), a new record for Primorsky Province, for killing Amur leopard cat, Black vulture, mandarin duck, 6 Amur tigers, 12 Brown bears, 34 Asiatic black bears, 4 white tailed sea eagles and 7 sika deer. The court established that from June 2011 through April 2012 this poacher, together with other unidentified individuals, poached in Lazovsky and Partizansky districts of Primorye, and killed many rare and endangered birds and animals listed in the Red Book. The man was arrested in April 2012 when large quantity of skins and wildlife derivatives were found in his refrigerator containers in Nakhodka. The case took so much time, because a local court in Nakhodka dismissed the charges. Fortunately, this verdict was overruled on 1 February 2017 by a regional court that found the poacher guilty on all charges. The camera-trap monitoring database with images produced by Linda Kerley of ZSL proved that at least some of the killed tigers had lived in Zov Tigra National Park, Lazovsky Nature Reserve and the Hunting lease that is located between these two protected areas. This essential evidence contributed substantially to the conviction.

*In 2017, four people involved in storage, handling and transporting of wildlife products received justly punishment*

On May 30, 2017, a man received a suspended sentence with 1 year and 10 months of community service and ordered to pay \$28,940 in restitution for killing a young tigress in August 2015.

The confiscations in 2017 show that professional trading networks are active and that tigers and other wildlife are being poached to meet their demand. It makes clear that it remains essential to have good law enforcement at key-protected areas so that they can function as source sites for surrounding forest areas that are less well protected. In light of the continued poaching threats, it is crucial to continue our activities aimed at protecting Amur tigers and leopards, their prey and habitat, and raising environmental awareness of local communities.



## PROJECT SUMMARY

Our project is being implemented in the range of the Amur tiger in Russia. The Amur tiger is listed as endangered in the IUCN Red List and Russia's Red Book, and Amur leopards have been classified as Critically Endangered by IUCN since 1996. The goal of the project is to stabilize and eventually increase Amur tiger and leopard populations through anti-poaching and environmental education activities. The project's objectives are:

- 1) to reduce poaching of Amur tigers, Amur leopards, and their prey species and improve protection of their habitat;
- 2) to improve law enforcement efforts within federal-level protected areas;
- 3) and to raise people's awareness about the state of, and the threats to, Amur tiger and Amur leopard populations and involve the public in nature conservation actions.

To conserve the Amur tiger, Amur leopard and prey populations the project aims to improve anti-poaching efforts and habitat protection in Primorsky and Khabarovsk krais. We selected seven protected areas, tiger "source" sites, as a basis for population recovery and intend to improve protection there. Successful introduction of SMART, a tool for monitoring and adaptive management of law enforcement, anti-poaching effectiveness should improve in these key-protected areas and this, in turn, should lead to reduced poaching levels and increased reproduction and survival rates of Amur tigers, leopards and their prey species, which will ultimately result in an increase in populations both inside and outside the protected areas. In addition, the project includes a number of education and outreach activities aimed at raising public awareness about the current state of big cats and the importance of their conservation.

The activities include support for three eco-centres (in Khasan, Lazovsky and Terneisky districts of Primorye), and the first Environmental Theatre in Vladivostok. Our target audience is mostly made up of schoolchildren ranging in age between 6 and 17 and their parents. Also, within the limits of the project, Phoenix held an annual art contest among children to promote careful and respectful attitude towards the Amur tiger and Amur leopard at a young age, an annual workshop aimed at increasing the level of teachers' knowledge and professional skills, and Tiger Day Festival in Primorye to educate local communities about wildlife conservation issues.

We strongly believe that combined efforts of the environmental law enforcement teams and continuous education and outreach will ensure protection of big cats and their habitat. Here, in our Final Report, we bring you highlights of Phoenix's efforts taken in 2017 to ensure a future for the Amur tigers and leopards in the Russian Far East.

We would like to thank Michiel Hötte, WCS SMART Project Leader, who provided valuable suggestions and materials for this report, especially the section devoted to work with SMART.

## PROJECT ACTIVITIES

### Anti-Poaching Patrols in Five Protected Areas (SMART)

One of the major strategies to combat wildlife crime and poaching identified at international level is the need to strengthen wildlife law enforcement capacity. Well-run protected areas are a safety zone for the Amur tiger and other wildlife populations, but with limited resources and lack of monitoring, conservation management is challenging. In most PAs, systems to assess threats, monitor performance, and evaluate success and failures were largely absent before SMART introduction. The Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool (SMART) is a tool for measuring, evaluating and improving the effectiveness of anti-poaching patrols and site-based conservation activities, and has already had a significant impact in a number of Amur tiger conservation sites. Overall, the Phoenix Fund in cooperation with the Wildlife Conservation Society and Zoological Society of London has jointly introduced SMART to seven sites in the Russian Far East.

SMART is rapidly becoming the global standard for protection monitoring and management in conservation areas (both terrestrial and marine). According to the SMART Partnership website (<http://smartconsrvationtools.org>), SMART is presently applied at over 400 conservation areas in 47 countries worldwide. In Russia, application has so far remained limited to the seven federal-level protected areas (PAs) where Phoenix has introduced the conservation tool. In other words, in comparison to global trends, application in Russia has remained very modest.

Before the introduction of SMART in Russia, the protected areas used a managerial system based just on paper reports written by rangers. Such a system has got a lot of drawbacks. It does not provide complete and trustworthy information on patrol efforts, and therefore it does not let managers assess patrol efforts and results and to compare patrol quality across teams, sites and time in order to increase patrol quality and results and make prompt and adequate decisions to fight poaching within a protected area. Phoenix, WCS and ZSL wanted to help the PA staff to become better at what they do to protect the Amur tiger, its habitat and prey. Between 2010 and 2012, we introduced SMART patrol monitoring and adaptive management in 4 federal-level PAs that form core Amur tiger breeding habitat, namely Land of the Leopard National Park, Sikhote-Alin Biosphere Nature Reserve and Zov Tigra National Park and Lazovsky Nature Reserve. In 2014, we introduced SMART at the Ussuriisky Nature Reserve, and in 2016 SMART at the Anyuisky National Park. In 2017, SMART was introduced at the newest and largest SMART site, Bikin National Park.

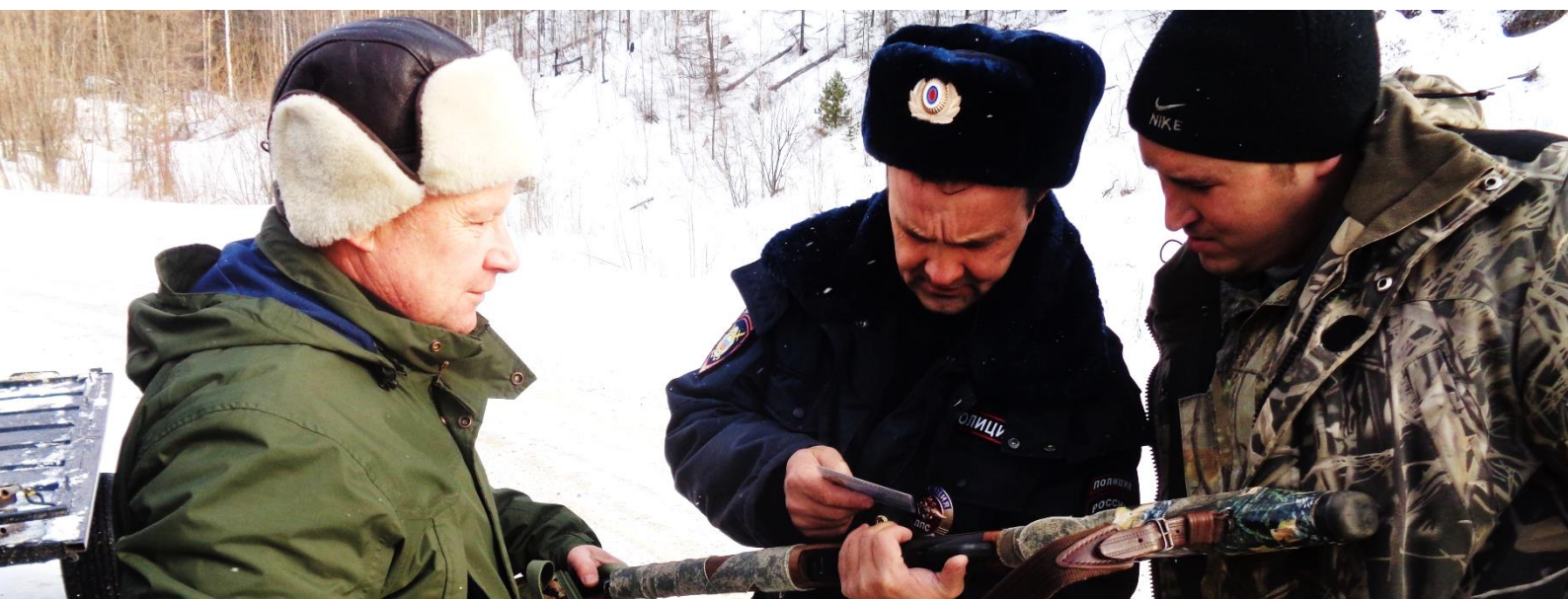


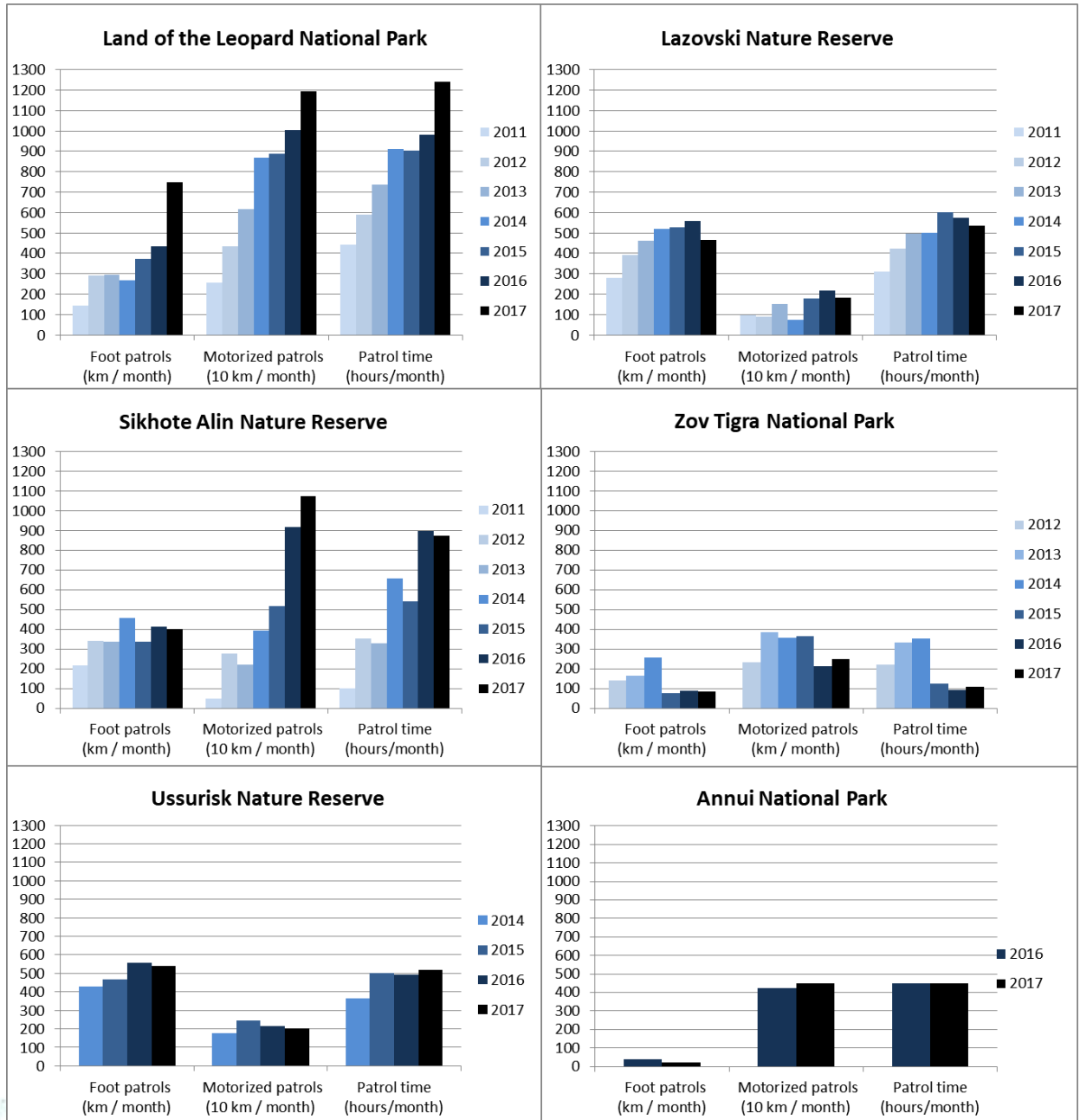
Since 2010, the situation in all our SMART sites has progressed from having undocumented patrols, driven in an uncontrolled and reactive manner to a state where management is using information from patrols on a quarterly basis to identify gaps and other deficiencies in patrolling, and ranger teams are competing to meet performance targets and reach threat hotspots. In 2017, rangers of the seven PAs continued carrying out regular anti-poaching and habitat protection patrols using SMART. Overall patrol quality at existing sites remains good and we witness a continuing diminishing dependency on technical and management assistance from us.

Patrol quality is good at Anuyisky National Park, but we will work hard to improve efforts in 2018 (see figure 1). Phoenix will test the use of small copter drones that make it possible to inspect nearby roads from the air when patrol teams travel by boat on rivers and, vice-versa, inspect rivers when teams travel in vehicles on roads. These drone flights can be uploaded into SMART databases as a new patrol type.

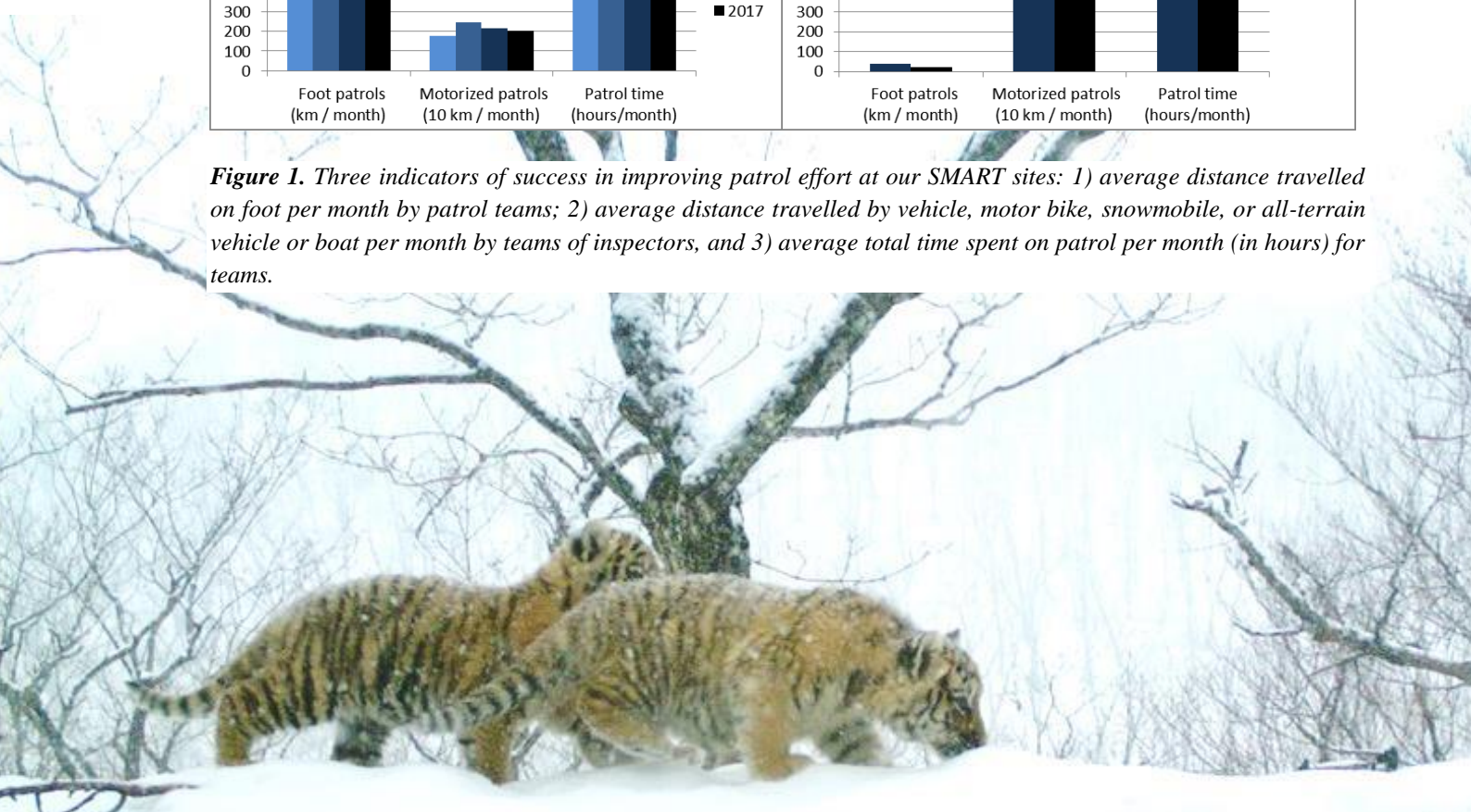
The continued increase in patrol efforts at Land of the Leopard National Park is amazing and it is also clear that poaching has been brought under control at this site (see figure 1). The Land of the Leopard National Park and Ussuriisky Nature Reserve are now almost fully independent from our technical and management support. We continue to participate in feedback meetings, and provide suggestions for improving presentations, but our input has become minor and it is clear that SMART would continue without major problems at these sites if we would no longer provide technical support.

At the Bikin National Park, we held a data collection training workshop in April 2017. The data collection trial period that followed in June and July, with further training during patrols, was successfully concluded and rangers now consistently collect good quality data. However, these data show that, due to a shortage of patrol transport means and fuel, the patrol intensity is very low at this park, which was established recently in 2016. In spite of the low initial patrol intensity, nine fire-arms were confiscated from poachers in 2017, indicating a need for good law enforcement. We do not yet present SMART data on this newest SMART site, as we have less than 6 months of data available.

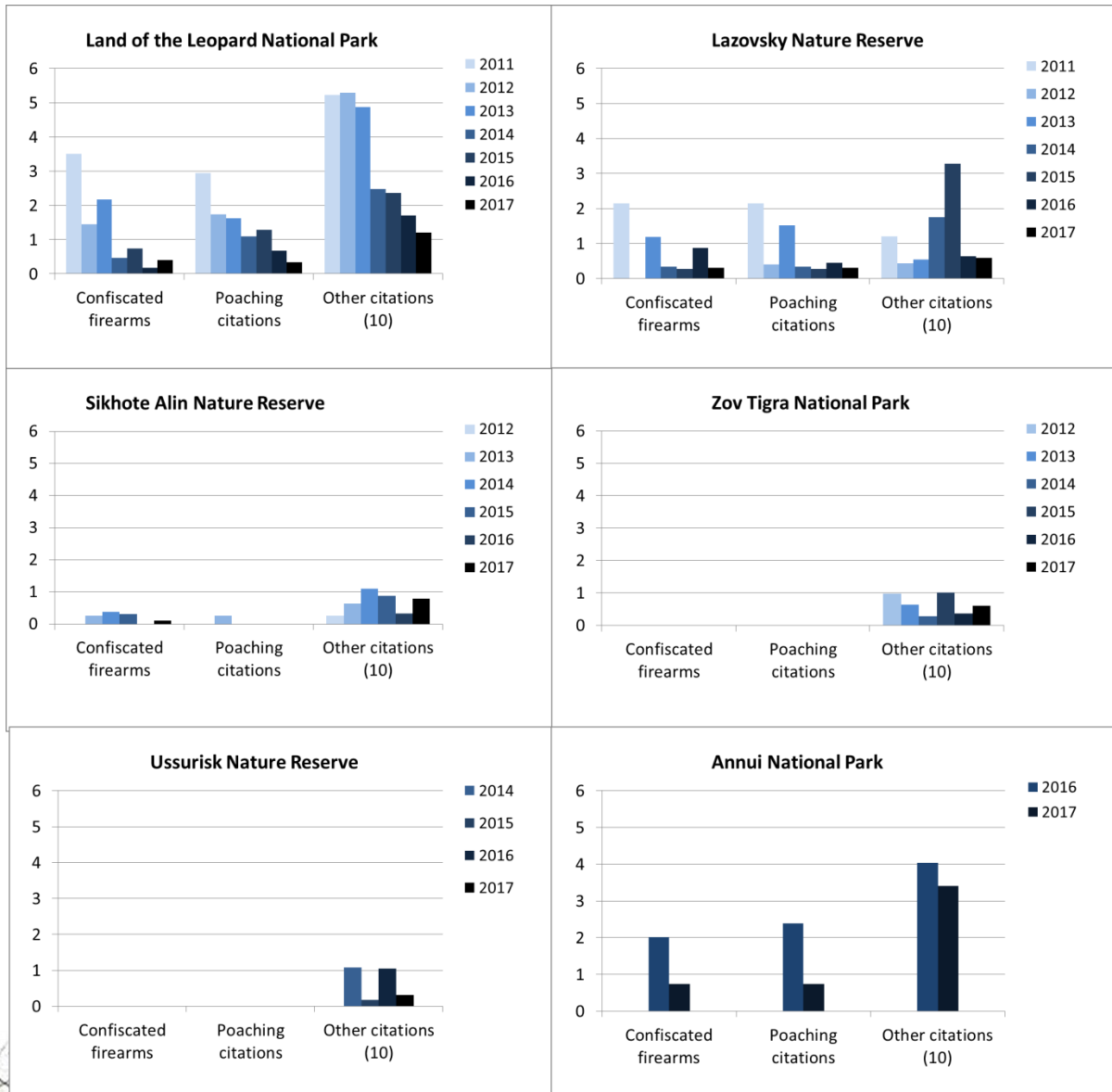




**Figure 1.** Three indicators of success in improving patrol effort at our SMART sites: 1) average distance travelled on foot per month by patrol teams; 2) average distance travelled by vehicle, motor bike, snowmobile, or all-terrain vehicle or boat per month by teams of inspectors, and 3) average total time spent on patrol per month (in hours) for teams.



**Figure 2.** Patrol results (confiscated firearms, citations for poaching, citations for other violations such as trespassing, logging, fishing and campfires) per patrol-effort unit (in this case per 1000 patrol hours) form an indication of poaching and other human pressures.



## Environmental Education and Outreach



We recognize that it is the education of the community that will ensure the survival of the Amur tiger and leopard as well as their prey species in the long term. Many damaging human activities often result from ignorance. The majority of people are unaware of the threats to tiger/leopard survival and other ecological problems of the region. The Phoenix Fund carries out a broad range of ecological education and outreach programs at schools, kindergartens, universities and eco-centres in Primorye. Our goals are to foster a positive attitude towards endangered wildlife and nature conservation among the region's youth and increase their environmental awareness and involvement in conservation activities. Our main target groups are local villagers, and especially schoolchildren, because it is easier to influence children's mentality than that of adults. Children's appreciation for nature develops at a young age; kids watch and imitate the attitudes and actions of the adults around them towards living things, therefore we also support educational activities designed for kindergarten children. We also aim to influence adults through the environmental education of their children.

Since 1998, Phoenix has been supporting a number of eco-centres in the region and initiated their creation in some cities. Experienced educators conduct ecological classes, lectures, slide presentations and other activities for children and adults. Every year over 25,000 children attend the eco-classes organized by the Phoenix Fund throughout Primorye. In some schools, senior students collaborate with teachers, prepare and conduct with great pleasure eco-lessons for junior schoolchildren. During the reported period, thanks to support from ALTA, the Phoenix Fund continued supporting the educators working in three administrative districts of Primorye, namely Lazovsky, Khasansky, and Terneisky, and in Vladivostok city. In all, from January through December 2017, the teachers gave 972 lessons and organised nature-oriented events for 18 948 children.

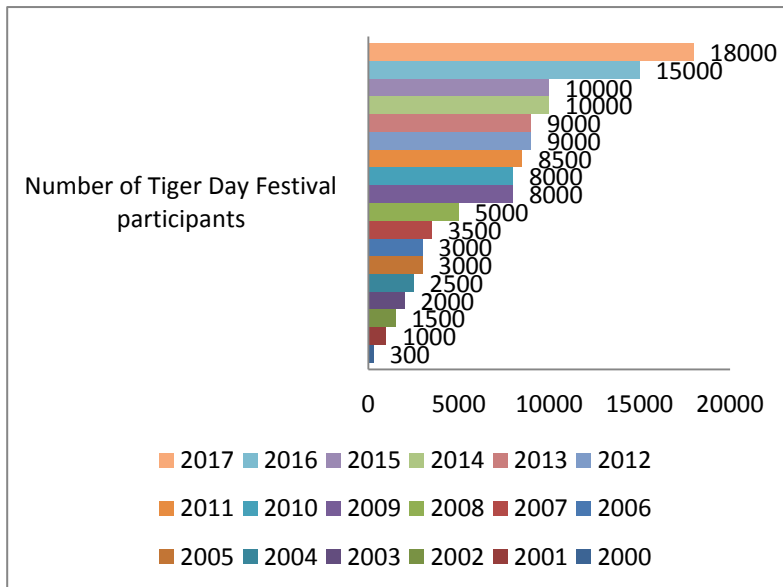
The knowledge and attitudes of local communities (level of children's and adults' knowledge about tigers, leopards and other wildlife) was measured based on the results of two opinion polls conducted before and after educational events. Data from opinion polls helped understand weaknesses and



strength of our educational program and lead to improved educational activities. Additionally, people were interviewed during Tiger Day Festivals in Primorye in order to assess how celebrating changes people’s views.

The main objectives of the survey were to determine among the children in Lazovsky, Khasansky, and Terneisky districts and Vladivostok city the level of knowledge on Amur tigers and the efficiency of eco-lessons given by our educators. The first (interim) opinion poll was carried out among the schoolchildren before they started to attend a series of eco-lessons devoted to the Amur tiger and the Amur leopard. The second opinion poll was carried out with the same schoolchildren after they listened lectures and attended various in-school and outdoor events devoted to Amur tigers and leopards. The questionnaire consisted of 18 questions. Over 450 interviews were conducted based on a questionnaire. We selected only children ranging in age between 10 and 17. Comparing the results of two opinion polls, one could see that the schoolchildren possessed good knowledge on tigers and leopards without attending special lessons. 49% is the average rate of correct answers among those respondents. But it is obvious that the lessons devoted to the big wild cats have significantly boosted children’s’ knowledge level (63% of correct answers). An opinion poll carried out during Tiger Day Festivals showed that festival participants (330 people were surveyed) have good knowledge about the Amur tigers, its prey species, habitat and main threats to survival. Almost 85% of respondents gave correct answers to questions (Compare: 74% of respondents gave correct answers in 2016), which indicates that growing environmental awareness of children and adults is result of various education and outreach activities held by local NGOs, including the Phoenix Fund.

*In 2017, educators gave 972 lessons for 18948 children in Lazovsky, Khasansky, and Terneisky, and in Vladivostok city*



The growing number of participants of Tiger Day Festival in Primorye also proves that people are becoming increasingly conscious of issues such as depletion of natural resources, extinction of wildlife and importance of Amur tiger conservation and other. Participants who attend Tiger Festivals are people deeply concerned about the fate of the Amur tiger population and the state of the whole ecosystem of the region.





## Annual Workshop for Educators



Besides educating children and adults, it is very important to increase professional skills of educators who are teaching Biology, Ecology, and Geography at school or holding various nature-oriented events. Since 2005, Phoenix has been organizing an annual workshop aimed at increasing level of teachers' knowledge and professional skills, introducing new computer technologies and giving educators an opportunity to share their experience. Specially designed workshops proved to be effective in raising skills of our educators and improving ecological lessons. The workshops offer opportunity for professional development, as well as meet teacher's specific needs. During a workshop, educators share their lessons, presentations, and other information, experience and materials with their counterparts, and are trained in new methods in education and outreach. Each year we involve more and more people and educational institutions.

This year, between March 29 and March 31, 2017, the 12<sup>th</sup> annual workshop for environmental education specialists from the south of the Russian Far East was organized by the Phoenix Fund. During a three-day workshop, 55 participants discussed regional nature conservation issues, got acquainted with innovative ways of work with the community and advanced guidance/reference papers on conservation of the Amur tiger and the Amur leopard. This year, the Phoenix Fund has welcomed the representatives of 13 protected areas of the Russian Far East and the educators from the eco-centres in Arseniev, Luchegorsk, Novopokrovka, Slavyanka, Sovetskaya Gavan, Terney and Ussuriisk towns.

The participants listened about the history of the Russian Far East, famed Russian explorer and ethnographer Vladimir Arsenyev and expeditions to the forests of the Sikhote-Alin Mountains, about botanic aspect in education and outreach activities of eco-centers and education departments of protected areas. Also, they learned about Lionrock typhoon and its aftermaths and effects on eco-system of Terneisky district of Primorye, and gained skills in writing grant proposals and project reports. The participants confirmed a high actuality of all the topics touched upon during the meeting. During the breaks between sessions, the teachers unlocked personal secrets and tips on how to help involve schoolchildren in nature conservation activities.

## Art Contest

For twelve years, the Phoenix Fund has been organizing annual art contests for children with the purpose of promoting careful and respectful attitude towards the Amur tiger and Amur leopard at young age. The topic always concerns these big cats. We believe that creating art is a healthy way for children to use their imaginations and to express themselves. Children have a natural affinity for animals and art – both of which can help them develop fundamental skills, values and attitudes. Art helps to give children a voice, encourages open-minded thinking and builds a sense of connection with the natural world. Participating in the contest, the children submit a piece of art displaying their idea of how tigers and leopards spend their days in the wild. From year to year more and more children take part in the art contests. Five years ago, Phoenix and the Tiger and Leopard Conservation Fund in Korea (Republic of Korea) decided to make the drawing contest international by organizing it in both Russia and Korea and providing an opportunity for Korean and Russian children to help each other on protection of Amur tiger and leopard populations in Russia and China.

*3,273 entries,  
including 700  
drawings from South  
Korea*

On May 13, 2017, Korean children – winners of the art contest devoted to the Amur tiger and leopard – were recognized at an award ceremony in Seoul, South Korea. It was the first stage of the international art contest. Over 700 Korean children have taken part in the contest this year. Prior to the award ceremony the audience listened to summary reports on current state of Amur tiger and Amur leopard populations. Tiger and Leopard Conservation Fund in Korea was pleased to host the event with special guest speaker Jo Cook, Amur Leopard and Tiger Alliance Coordinator, Amur leopard EEP & GSMP Coordinator. Young artists-winners were awarded with certificates and sweet gifts. Their paintings were sent to Russia for participation in the second stage of the contest and selection for a wall calendar for 2018.

The jury consisted of representatives of Russian protected areas and educators was faced with the difficult task – to select no more than 60 best drawings from 3,273 entries submitted by Russian and Korean children. This year, the entries arrived from Primorsky and Khabarovsk krais, Moskovskaya, Chelyabinskaya, Amurskaya and Jewish autonomous provinces, Republic of Crimea and Republic of Korea. Besides the wall calendars, the Phoenix Fund has also designed a series of pocket calendars with the children’s paintings.

These educational activities will indirectly contribute to conservation of the project’s target species and their habitat by fostering positive attitude towards endangered wildlife and conservation, increasing people’s environmental awareness, raising young people to protect and treasure the planet’s wildlife, and motivating people to implement conservation actions.



## Tiger Day Festival

For 18 years, the Phoenix Fund, Russian Vladivostok-based NGO, in collaboration with Vladivostok city administration and other local organizations, has been organizing a special Tiger Day Festival in Vladivostok city, Russian Far East, with support from the international community. We would like to express our sincere thanks to the Amur Leopard and Tiger Alliance for continuous financial support for Tiger Day Festival in Vladivostok. The main goal of the festival is to educate the public about the plight of the Amur tiger and promote current conservation efforts aimed at protecting the big cat and its habitat. Attracting as many children as possible is our main task. We hope that by capturing their interest at a very young age, we will have an opportunity to make a difference that will last for generations to come.

On Sunday, 24 September 2017, Tiger Day Festival celebrated 18<sup>th</sup> anniversary in Vladivostok. According to Vladivostok administration, as many as 18 thousand people attended the event. Traditionally at noon the costumed parade units representing local schools, kindergartens, businesses, governmental agencies, non-governmental organizations, children’s activity centers and delegations from administrative districts of Primorye, started moving down Okeansky prospect to the central city square. In all, the parade itself comprised about 90 units. Every year, the participants compete in the main contest – the Best Parade Unit – and this year was no exception. The parade units used any and all possible methods such as colorful tiger costumes, masks, balloons, umbrellas, musical instruments, posters, and conservation slogans to encourage people to save Amur tigers and other wildlife in the Russian Far East. Specialized motor vehicles - five quad bikes and ten off-road jeeps - designated for the use in taiga by anti-poaching teams headed the procession. Later on, on the central stage the vehicles were handed over to Primorsky Hunting Management Department by ANO Amur Tiger Centre. Acting Vladivostok mayor Konstantin Mezhonov and Vladivostok City Duma Chairperson Andrei Brik were among the parade goers. After the costumed parade ended, the festivities continued on the central city square. Head of the Presidential Control Directorate and chair of the Amur Tiger Centre Supervisory Board Konstantin Chuichenko, Primorye Territory Governor Vladimir Miklushevsky, and acting Vladivostok mayor Konstantin Mezhonov congratulated the residents and visitors on the 18<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Tiger Day. Then, three best parade units were awarded for brilliance, originality and full compliance with topic. Also, every parade unit received a prize – a Tiger Day gift



plate. Besides educational institutions of Vladivostok city, various organizations competed in the contest. According to the jury, the parade unit representing Federation of Primorsky Krai Trade Unions was the most colorful one. First, second and third place winners in this nomination got sweet prizes.

On the city square there were numerous thematic grounds where people could learn facts about the Amur tiger and tiger conservation projects and participate in various contests and quizzes. At Phoenix’s tent, kindergarten children could take part in a quiz and get a prize for correct answers to questions about the Amur tiger and other forest dwellers. Small children with great pleasure participated in coloring animals’ masks and “Know-The-Animal-Tracks” game. Behind the tents, over 100 people got his/her face painted as a tiger free of charge. Also, the children enjoyed participating in the following contests organized by Phoenix: “Feed the Tiger”, “The Fastest Tiger” and “Tiger Hunt” with tug-of-war.

“Feed the Tiger” was the most favorite contest, with 372 participants. The children and adults could take part in dumbbells and kettlebell lifting competitions. Good technique was critical. The total weight lifted by a participant was made equivalent to the weight of tiger prey species. For example, if a contestant lifted dumbbells of 8 kg ten times, it meant that he fed a tiger with a wild boar weighing about 80 kg. Participants in various contests organized by Phoenix and its partner-organization – Wildlife Conservation Society - could exchange coupons they earned to memorable prizes, namely magnets, pens, calendars, children’s books, cups, gift boxes with candies, T-shirts, etc. “We are delighted to see that every year more and more people concerned about the fate of the Amur tiger participate in the Festival. When we started Tiger Day in 2000, just a few hundreds of children gathered up. And today about 18 thousand people have come. It is symbolic that the Festival is celebrated for the 18th time in a row, and 18 thousand people have attended it!”, comments Director of the Phoenix Fund Sergei Bereznuik.

The Festival ended with a rock concert in the city’s main square. A live concert of local Russian rock bands Listya Travy (Leaves of Grass) and Starcardigan, and the famous Russian rock band Bi-2 (Russian: Би-2 Би-два) gave zest to the holiday.

Besides Vladivostok, thanks to support from ALTA and with the participation of and support from the Phoenix Fund, in 2017 Tiger Day Festival was also celebrated in 13 localities of the Russian Far East: Birobidzhan, Kirovsky, Luchegorsk, Ternei, Novopokrovka, Lazo, Sovetskaya Gavan, Vanino, Arseniev, Ussuriisk, Kemerovo and in Amurskaya Oblast.

*- Over 20,000 people celebrated Tiger Day Festival in Primorye;  
- Tiger Day Festival was celebrated in 14 cities and towns of the Russian Far East;  
- About 200 units participated in the parade in Primorye;  
- 170 children participated in a quiz about Amur tiger organized by Phoenix*

