

This report will be made public. If it contains confidential or sensitive information, please also provide a revised report for sharing with the public.

Section I. Project Information	
Project Title: Community-based conservation in Northeast China Tiger & Leopard National Park	
Grantee Organisation: Wildlife Conservation Society	
Location of project: Coordinates of Hunchun: 42°41'97"N, 129°86'41"E	
Size of project area (if appropriate): About 5,000 square kilometres	No of tigers and / or Amur leopards in project area, giving evidence & source: Hunchun Nature Reserve: 45 Amur tigers and 30 leopards, based on our camera trap analysis of 2023. Dahuanggou: 9 Amur tigers and 4 leopards, based on our camera trap analysis of 2023.
Partners: <i>(Please give details of partners, including communities, academic institutions etc. for this project.</i> The NCTLNP administration is our primary partner, especially the branch in Hunchun. We've worked with them on a range of conservation efforts since Hunchun Reserve was created in 2002. For this project, we will work together with their staff to carry out community patrol work.	
Project Contact Name: <i>(main contact via email)</i> Aimin Wang, Scott Waller, Jonathan Slaght	
Email: awang@wcs.org; swaller@wcs.org; jslaght@wcs.org	
Actual start date of project: <i>(if different from 1st February)</i> March 1, 2024	
Reporting period: March 1, 2024 - July 31, 2024	

Section II. Project Progress

Summary of progress for the first 6 months: *(please provide a summary for use in our communication materials)*

With the support of WCCA, the WCS China program, in cooperation with the Hunchun Municipal Forestry Bureau of NCTLNP, has made great progress supporting local communities living within and around Northeast China Tiger and Leopard National Park (NCTLNP). These communities have made progress protecting their community-managed forests and reducing the threat of snaring to Amur tigers and leopards. Since we began our community patrol team work in 2021, we have initiated patrol teams in 8 villages throughout NCTLNP that have covered 1,000s of km of patrols

and removed 100s of snares: in 2023, 7 patrol teams patrolled 1,373 km and removed 173 snares from their community-managed forests to reduce the threat of poaching. With the generous support provided by WCCA, we selected one new community to expand our community patrol team program, Hongqihe, after a careful review of candidate villages.

We established a community patrol team there and conducted training for rangers of this new patrol team on how to patrol for illegal activity and snares. Thanks to WCCA's support, we were also able to continue support of a second village near the national park, Lihua, in which we began a community patrol team in 2023. At these two villages, we coordinated community patrol teams to carry out 25 daily patrols, covering 138 km of ground and removing 10 snares placed by poachers. Beyond these patrols, our staff, along with community teams, helped provide educational material at a "Global Tiger Day" event organized by the NCTLNP in July attended by over 4,000 people.

Finally, we also conducted a preliminary survey on conservation knowledge, attitude, and practice for villagers in these two communities. In Hongqihe, this will serve as a baseline to measure the impact of our conservation outreach and education efforts on support for tiger and leopard conservation; and in Lihua, it served as an annual "progress report" on the impact of our work. Surprisingly, Hongqihe scored higher than Lihua, possibly because Hongqihe is in the core area of Amur tiger and leopard distribution, and there has been more effort in past years to educate the public on the importance of conservation. However, our 1-year survey indicated improved knowledge, attitude, and practice in Lihua since the beginning of the community patrol team there, though improvements were statistically insignificant. We look forward to sharing the further success of these two community patrol teams in improving protections for tigers and leopards in our final report.

Details of activities and results to date: *(Please give details of progress made towards the objectives & outputs of your Logframe, and activities included in your Workplan. Please add any relevant charts, maps and images.*

Objective 1: Promote community participation in wildlife conservation.

Activity 1.1. Identify two communities and establish community patrol teams.

In May 2024, WCS cooperated with Hunchun Municipal Bureau of NCTLNP to conduct a community survey of eight candidate villages in Amur tiger and leopard habitat that could successfully support a community patrol team. These villages were initially selected by the Hunchun Municipal Forestry Bureau based on their location within and around NCTLNP and surrounding tiger and leopard habitat, the community profile, population composition, collective forest area, and willingness to set up community patrol teams. Based on their initial survey results, Hongqihe village in Yangpao Township of Hunchun Administrative Region was selected as the new community of the project (**Figure 1**). In addition to this new village, we continued to support the community patrol work in the village of Lihua (**Figure 1**), where we organized a community patrol team starting last year (2023).

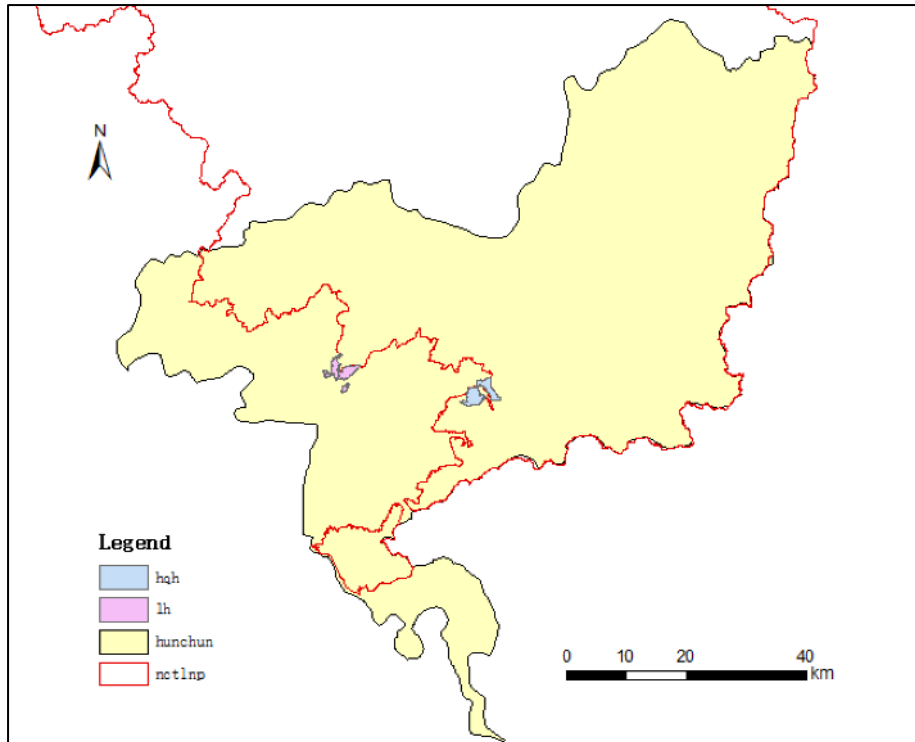


Figure 1. Location of the villages of Lihua (purple) and Hongqihe (blue) within Hunchun Administrative Region. The border of Northeast China Tiger and Leopard National Park is in red.

To identify potential members of the patrol team, the village committee first posted an announcement, interested villagers signed up, and the village committee conducted a preliminary screening. Based on these assessments, they provided a list of screened personnel to Hunchun Municipal Forestry Bureau. On July 17, WCS and the Hunchun Municipal Forestry Bureau conducted a skills assessment to select community rangers. The training was divided into indoor training and outdoor training. The indoor training content mainly included the use of GPS, filling out patrol record forms, and identifying wildlife footprints. Outside, the professional rangers of the Hunchun Municipal Forestry Bureau led the team to conduct GPS field practice training (**Figure 2**). After an evaluation, a final team of 6 people were selected in Hongqihe, including one woman.



Figure 2. WCS and the Hunchun Municipal Forestry Bureau conducted a community ranger training and assessment in the village of Hongqihe.

Activity 1.2. Establish support teams.

After the establishment of the new community patrol team, we also organized a support team consisting of two staff from the Hunchun Municipal Forestry Bureau, two experienced patrol team members from the village of Lihua, and two new patrol team members of Hongqihe. In the early stages of the project, the support team provided further extensive training for the new community patrol team. Later this year, the support team will also participate in patrol quality inspections in the middle and end of this project as well as public education efforts and technical support.

Activity 1.3. Organize patrol teams to carry out daily patrol work.

In 2024, we continued to work with the Hunchun Municipal Forestry Bureau to support community teams in Lihua and Hongqihe communities to carry out daily patrols. We use the SMART patrol system to record and analyse patrol data. We divided the patrol area into a 0.5 X 0.5 km grid that would guide patrol efforts and set the basis for our patrol effort and result analyses. During the reporting period, the two communities conducted a total of 25 daily patrols, covering a total of 138 km, with an average of 5.53 km per patrol (**Figure 3**). During their patrols, the community teams removed a total of 10 large snares from the forest (**Figure 4**), which amounted to an encounter rate of 0.07 snares/km. Community rangers also recorded many wildlife signs (tracks and scat) and direct sightings during their patrols (**Figure 4**). Roe deer were recorded the most (40 times), followed by wild boar (12 times), sika deer (6 times), and badgers (2 times).

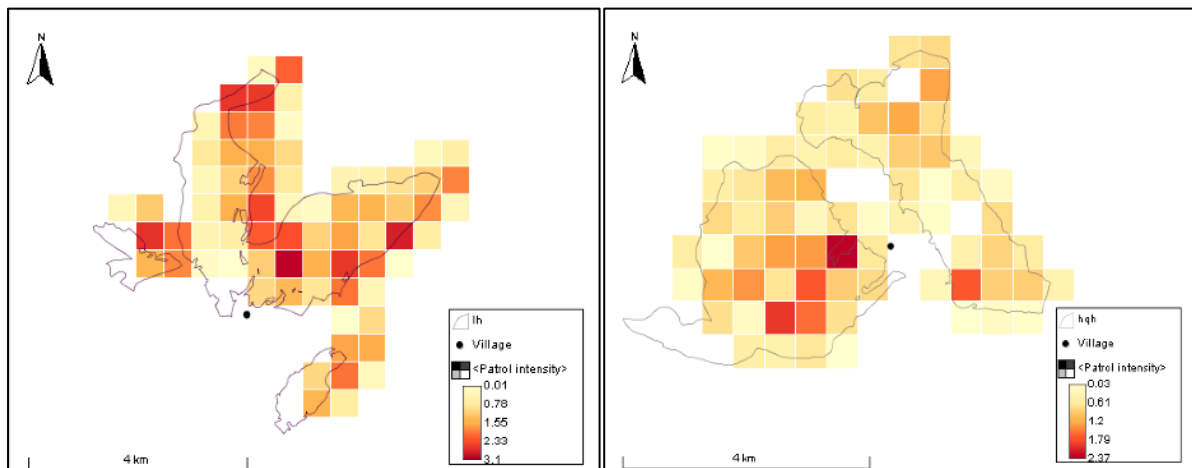


Figure 3. Patrol intensity in each community (patrol distance per grid, grid size is 500 m).



Figure 4. Photos taken during community patrols. (Left: a community ranger removes a snare; right: a live roe deer is captured by ranger's mobile phone.)

We plan to organize joint inspections with support teams in August and December 2024 for each community patrol area to assess the patrol work of each community team, and the number of snares present in their patrol area. Then a summary and evaluation of results will be presented to the community. These will be described in the final report.

Activity 1.4. Conduct public education campaigns.

In order to improve awareness of the importance of protecting wild Amur tigers and leopards, on July 28, the NCTLNP and the Hunchun Administrative Region People's Government jointly held a series of publicity activities for Global Tiger Day (**Figure 5**). This activity was held in the Xitumenzi village in the heart of the national park. More than 4,000 people from the Hunchun forestry department, forest public inspection law department, a local insurance company, wildlife protection organizations, villagers from various towns, students, and other people participated in the day's activities. As one of the supporting organizations, WCS China distributed leaflets, souvenirs, and books at the event about the importance of tiger and leopard conservation.



Figure 5. WCS China participation in 2024 Global Tiger Day activities in Xitumenzi village.

We plan to conduct 2 additional public education campaigns in November and December 2024. Details of the activities will be described in our final report.

Activity 1.5. Assessment of the impact of the project.

To assess the impact of the project, we cooperated with Hunchun Municipal Forestry Bureau to conduct an early questionnaire survey on conservation knowledge, attitude, and practice for villagers in Lihua and Hongqihe villages (**Figure 6**). We sampled 5% of the population and collected a total of 25 questionnaires. The content of the questionnaire included three categories: knowledge, attitude, and practice. The higher the score, the more the knowledge about the importance of conservation, the better the attitude towards conservation work, and the higher the participation in local conservation initiatives. We used the Shapiro-Wilk test and found that the three KAP metrics (knowledge, attitude, and practice, along with the total, represented by “t”) were normally distributed except practice. Therefore, we used the t-test and the Mann-Whitney test to determine the difference between two-level groups, and the ANOVA and the Kruskal–Wallis test for groups with more than two levels. We considered 0.05 as the significance threshold. From the score, the knowledge, attitude, behavior and total score of Hongqihe was higher than Lihua (**Figure 7**), possibly because Hongqihe is in the core area of tiger and leopard distribution and there has been more effort in past years to educate the public on the importance of conservation. In addition, compared

with the survey results at the end of 2023, although the score of Lihua has increased, the difference was not significant ($p_k=0.096$; $p_a=0.507$; $p_p=0.586$; $p_t=0.160$) (Figure 8).



Figure 6. WCS cooperated with Hunchun Municipal Forestry Bureau to carry out the early questionnaire survey on conservation knowledge, attitude, and practice.

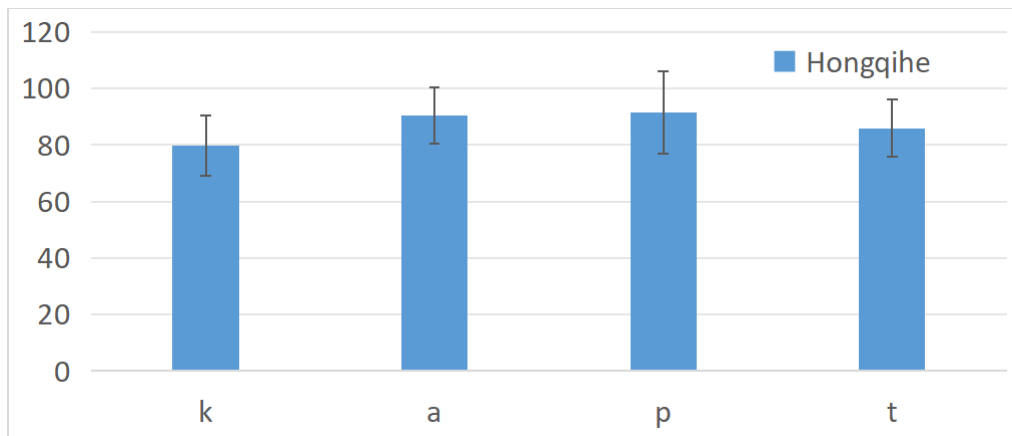


Figure 7. Knowledge, attitude, practice, and total score of Hongqihe village.

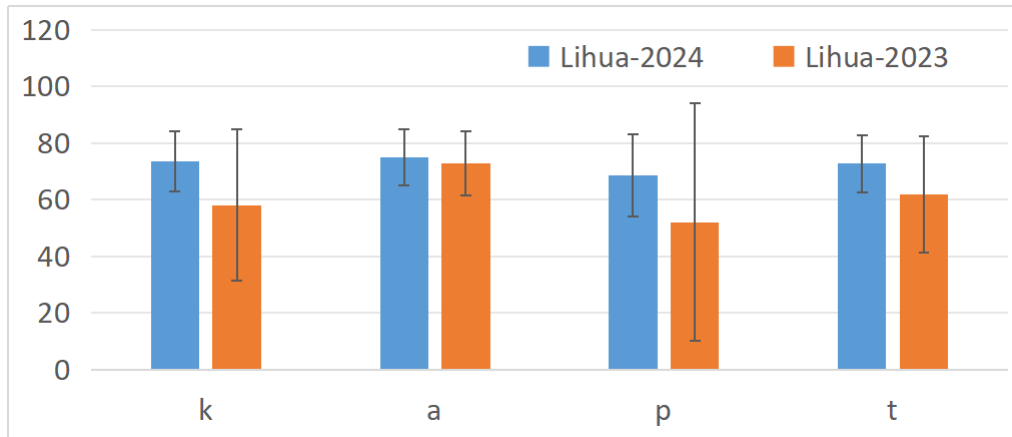


Figure 8. Knowledge, attitude, practice, and total score of Lihua village in 2023 and 2024.

Give details of any obstacles to success that the project has encountered over the last 6 months.

(Please provide detailed examples, explain what impact these will have on the project results and the changes to the budget and timetable of project activities)

Due to a protracted approval process by the National Forestry and Grassland Administration (NFGA) and the Public Security Bureau (PSB) in late April 2024 (an annual requirement for international NGOs to operate in China), project activities were delayed. We legally could not conduct any activities until we received this approval. As such, we could only complete the investigation of community selection in May, and we began communicating and coordinating with the new community in June. Although the activities were relatively delayed, this did not affect the ultimate progress of the project.

Budget: Is the spending on target? If not, please give details and provide an updated budget sheet.

Spending has been slow. From March to July 2024, our work mainly focused on the selection of pilot communities, communication and coordination, community ranger training, and conducting the preliminary survey. We still expect spending to be on-schedule, as many of the community patrol team support costs will be incurred in the second half of this award. For instance, the personnel costs of June and July will be paid after the data is approved in August, and most of the community patrolling activities will be carried out from August 2024 onward and charged to this grant. We will have joint patrol activities in September and December 2024 and the activity cost will be charged to this grant accordingly.

Media: Please provide a list of recent publications and media both local and national which mentions the work funded by this project and/or mentions WildCats Conservation Alliance

None

WildCats Conservation Alliance asks for at least 5 relevant high-resolution jpeg files of images of the project activities during this time period.

Please see the photos attached to the same email as this report.