

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: Supporting Amur leopard conservation in Russia	
Grantee Organisation: Wildlife Conservation Society	
Location of project: As a reference point, Land of the Leopard national Park is approximately 43.1N, 131.2E.	
Size of project area (if appropriate): This project focuses on conservation in the southwest region of Primorskiy Krai, an area of approximately 169,500 km ² (80% of the size of Great Britain).	No of tigers and / or Amur leopards in project area, giving evidence & source: <i>Amur leopard</i> (<i>Panthera pardus orientalis</i>). Amur leopards occupy habitats in the southern Russian Far East, in Jilin and Heilongjiang Provinces of China and, possibly, in North Korea. Amur leopards are listed as Critically Endangered on the IUCN's Red List of Threatened Species. In 2026, Land of the Leopard National Park d(LLNP) and the Northeast China Tiger and Leopard National Park, directly adjacent to LLNP, jointly reported 193 adult and 30 juvenile Amur leopards. The global population may be slightly larger, with some individuals outside of these protected areas.
Partners: <i>(Please give details of partners, including communities, academic institutions etc. for this project.</i> In June 2026, former staff of ANO WCS, our long-term Russian partner NGO, started the process of closing that entity and successfully registered a new conservation NGO called Far East Fauna. Far East Fauna's is primarily focused on the Amur leopard and conservation issues impacting the broader Land of the Leopard National Park area, with some legacy projects still province-wide. While the Wildlife Conservation Society Global Conservation Program no longer directly engages in on-the-ground activities, we remain committed to supporting the remarkable recovery of Amur leopards, an effort we have been involved in for nearly 30 years. We support Far East Fauna staff by offering input on conservation priorities, project design, analysis, and reporting. Together we remain dedicated to conserving the wildlife of the southern Russian Far East and ensuring a bright future for them alongside humans.	
Project Contact Name: <i>(main contact via email):</i> Scott Waller, MSc	

Email: swaller@wcs.org

Actual start date of project: *(if different from 1st February 2025)*

Reporting period: February 1, 2026 – July 31, 2026

Section II. Project Progress

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

During the reporting period, the Wildlife Conservation Society Global Conservation Program provided key support to our partners to better conserve the wildlife and wild places of the Russian Far East. We helped our main partner organization, Far East Fauna, continue to monitor camera traps along Highway A-370 in the Razdolnaya River Valley, a major barrier for Amur leopards moving through the Baranovskiy-Partizan Ecological Corridor between the Changbai and Sikhote-Alin Mountain systems. We helped design and analyse data from an intensive 4-day winter track survey, spanning 194 km of surveys across 350 km². Amur leopard tracks were found on both sides of the highway, a positive sign that these big cats are looking for safe places to pass through the corridor. The analyses we helped conduct are proving vital as our Russian partners work to establish the Baranovskiy-Partizan Ecological Corridor as an IUCN category-IV protected area. Finally, we began analysing Amur leopard and prey data from a collective 572 camera sites across 10 study areas to better understand how a changing climate and shifting prey base may offer greater recovery for Amur leopards in the Sikhote-Alin than we previously thought. We sincerely thank the WildCats Conservation Alliance for their support of our work.

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.*

Key achievements (described in detail below):

- 9 camera traps monitoring 6 crossing structures along highway a-370 in the Baranovskiy-Ecological Corridor since March 2025 (18 months);
- 194 km of snow track surveys conducted along 22 routes in a 350 km² area of the Baranovskiy-Partizan Ecological Corridor in January 2026, completed in just 4 days;
- 8 Amur leopard tracks encountered, likely from 2 individuals on the west side of the corridor and one individual on the east side;
- 2,627 tracks of sika deer, 2,259 of roe deer, and 755 of wild boar were recorded during the track survey, translating to high densities of prey in the corridor;
- Strong progress for the Baranovskiy-Partizan Ecological Corridor to become a 300 km² IUCN Category IV protected area with federal-level protection;
- Data from 572 camera sites and 10 study areas combined and annotated with 16 covariates to explain variation in detection and habitat use of leopards and prey;

- Initial sika deer and roe deer occupancy models completed, providing strong evidence that temperature minimums and interspecific interactions drive habitat use.

Objective 1: Establish an IUCN Category IV protected area in the Razdolnaya corridor

Activity 1.1: Analyse continuous monitoring data from the Razdolnaya corridor

Far East Fauna continues to monitor nine camera traps at six crossing structures along the section of Highway A-370 that passes through the Razdolnaya corridor (which we officially are referring to as the “Baranovskiy-Partizan Ecological Corridor”). These cameras have been active since March 2025. Originally, 10 camera traps were placed, but one camera trap was stolen in April 2026, and the local road department requested that they no longer monitor that specific area because of its location directly beneath a bridge. While unfortunate, we believe their first year of continuous monitoring at this site provided enough evidence that this bridge is not being used by large mammals as a crossing site; there is a gravel road beneath the bridge that is heavily used by humans to access adjacent forest roads and trails, and many wildlife appear to avoid this bridge as a result.

The latest camera check occurred in July 2026, and our Russian partners are now working through the images to find all detections of Amur leopards and prey species like sika deer, roe deer, and wild boar. We expect to have these data analysed by the end of September 2026.

Activity 1.2: Analyse winter track survey data

Far East Fauna coordinated a winter track survey from January 20-23, 2026 included 194 km walked along 22 survey routes in 350 km² of the Baranovskiy-Partizan Ecological Corridor. This survey was conducted together with the Russian Academy of Sciences and local biologists and hunters. Surveyors encountered eight tracks of Amur leopards, most likely from three individual leopards. Initial analyses determined that, intuitively, tracks were more likely to be found nearer to protected areas (Ussuriysk Reserve and Land of the Leopard National Park), and in places nearer to forests and away from high road densities. Prey species (sika deer, roe deer, and wild boar) were abundant in the Baranovskiy-Partizan Ecological Corridor: during the survey, 2,627 tracks of sika deer, 2,259 of roe deer, and 755 of wild boar were recorded. Using the Formozov-Malyushev-Pereleshin estimator of animal density, we estimated a combined prey density of 3.6 (95% CI: 1.9-6.1) animals per km², most of which consisted of roe deer (56%) and sika deer (38%) (**Figure 1**).

This first winter track survey provides clear evidence that Amur leopards are using the forests of this corridor, supported by surprisingly high densities of preferred prey which themselves rely on natural vegetation and areas away from human settlements and high road densities. Even if animal crossings of Highway A-370 are rare, we now know that our

target species are still using the forests nearby, and efforts to improve connectivity across the highway have a high chance of success given the abundance of wildlife nearby.

Far East Fauna plans to organize a second survey in winter 2026-27. This will be critical to increasing the sample size of Amur leopard observations, and to improving our ability to understand what factors drive leopard use of the broader corridor.

Activity 1.3: Summarise results in a report for partners

Together with the Russian Academy of Sciences, Far East Fauna is submitting results from the first winter track survey to the *Amur Zoological Journal*, a peer-reviewed scientific journal focused on ecological research in the southern Russian Far East and which is widely read by researchers and wildlife managers of the region. This is also an important contribution to designating the corridor as an official protected area (Activity 1.4); submitted documents petitioning for gazettelement can refer to this specific manuscript and the publicly available results within.

Activity 1.4: Establish Hunting Resource Conservation Zone (IUCN Category IV protected area)

Far East Fauna's approach to securing the Baranovskiy-Partizan Ecological Corridor as an IUCN Category IV protected area has been required to change due to local politics. Originally, they had planned to apply for designation of the corridor as a Hunting Resource Conservation Zone, a provincial-level designation requiring approval of the Primorskiy Okhotnadzor (hunting department). However, that department underwent change of leadership at the same time that they made connections with key individuals in a different and more influential department related to federal-level protected areas. As such, Far East Fauna plans to work with this department instead and are confident in their ability to secure stronger, federal-level protections for the Baranovskiy-Partizan Ecological Corridor (wildlife refuge). We look forward to sharing their success in the final report in February 2027, and we will notify WCCA of any significant changes that may happen before then.

Objective 2: Reassess the extent of potential Amur leopard habitat in the Sikhote-Alin

Activity 2.1: Collect and analyse data on Amur leopard habitat

Much of the heavy lifting of data preparation was completed during the reporting period, and the analysis is proceeding on schedule.

We decided to expand the number of datasets in this analysis to now include 10 study areas across Primorskiy Krai. Data were provided by Far East Fauna and combined with camera trap data from Land of the Leopard National Park. Altogether, these data include 579 camera sites covering 20,063 km² (according to minimum convex polygons drawn around each camera trap array). This area is approximately 12% of the entire province. Survey years range from 2018 to 2024.

We prepared 16 covariates that might explain variation in prey species occupancy (and, later, leopard occupancy and density) and prepared them at various spatial scales. The covariates range from landscape variables (e.g., elevation, cover type) to human development (e.g., distance to settlement, road density) and climate variables (e.g., long-term trends in snow cover and minimum winter temperatures). Following the methodology of a recent analysis of leopard occupancy in Bhutan, we summarized covariates using Gaussian distance-weighted kernels at increasing spatial scales from 250 m to 8 km. This is a logical approach as it assumes the covariate value at the camera trap is the most influential but allows for surrounding covariate values to also influence habitat use (in our case, synonymous with occupancy), and at increasing distances from the camera trap.

We also prepared all detection data from sika deer, roe deer, and wild boar to be analyzed in an occupancy framework using the Unmarked package in R. So far, we have run initial models for sika deer and roe deer with encouraging results. Most interestingly, minimum winter temperature is consistently the strongest predictor of sika deer habitat use, which means – as we predicted – a warming climate is increasing the amount of suitable habitat for this critical prey species of Amur leopards. Just as interesting, sika deer habitat use appears to be the strongest predictor of roe deer habitat use, with roe deer strongly avoiding areas where sika deer are more likely to be. This matches what we and our colleagues have seen on the ground in the Far East.

After receiving feedback from Dr. Mark Hebblewhite at the University of Montana, we are refining our prey occupancy models before proceeding with the Amur leopard occupancy and density analyses.

Activity 2.2: Summarize results for both scientific and general audiences

This activity will begin after *Activity 2.1* is complete (expected end of November 2026).

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

Spending is in line with the budget submitted with the proposal.

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.

N/A

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 five images provided by Far East Fauna attached to our email submission.

Additional figures

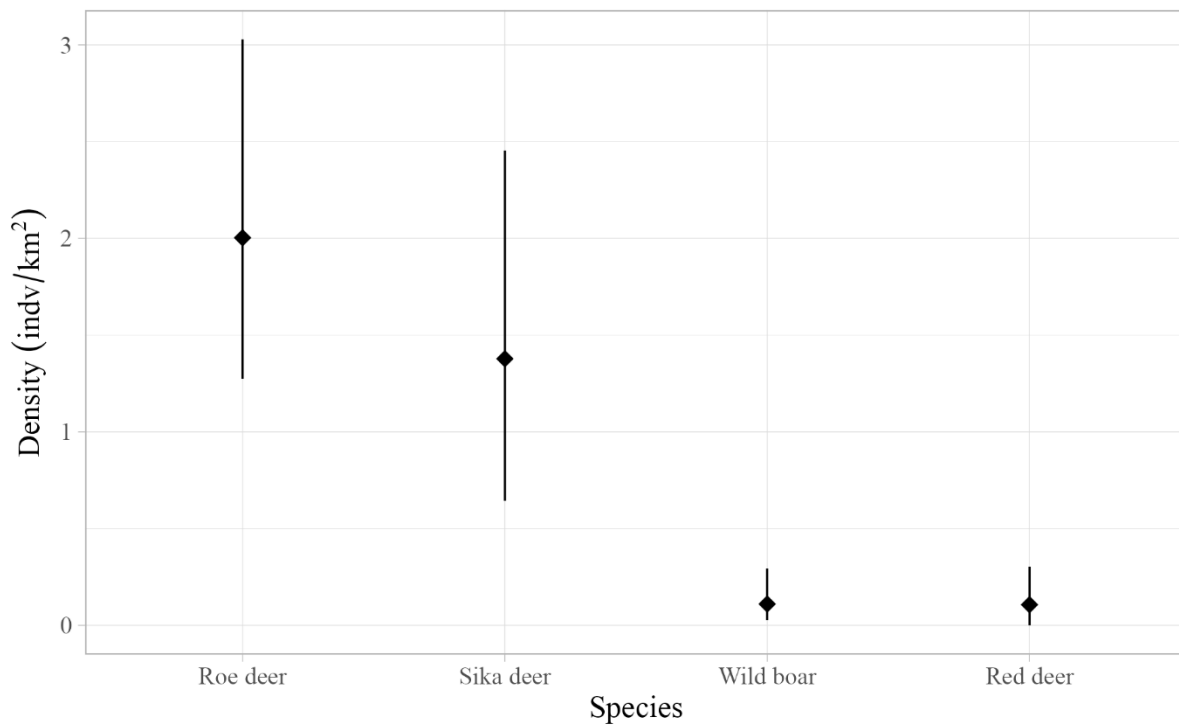


Figure 1. Estimated density (individuals per square kilometre) of four ungulates following the 2026 winter track survey in the Baranovskiy-Partizan Ecological Corridor, Russian Far East. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.