



## Amur Tiger Conservation Through Education

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## Final Report



**21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY TIGER**  
giving wild tigers a future



## PROJECT SUMMARY

The project was implemented in Krasnoarmeisky district of Primorye, Russian Far East. It was aimed at ensuring long-term survival of Amur tigers and their prey through education and outreach activities. The project's objectives were:

- To raise awareness of the local administration and people about the state of the Amur tiger population and other endangered species;
- To increase professional skills of educators involved in Phoenix's environmental education projects.

Just a century ago, there were an estimated 100,000 tigers in the wild; today only about 3,500 survive and occupy 7% of their historic range. Three tiger subspecies – the Bali, Javan and Caspian – have become extinct in the past 70 years. The six remaining subspecies – Amur, Bengal, Indochinese, Malayan, South China and Sumatran – live only in Asia, and all are threatened by poaching and habitat loss.

The Amur tiger (*Panthera tigris altaica*) has come perilously close to disappearing from Russia's Primorsky province in the 1940s, when the tiger population dwindled to a mere 30. The numbers fell again in the 1990s, but are now stable at 428 to 502, thanks to the assiduous efforts of local and international scientific, law enforcement and non-governmental organisations. Since 1998, the Phoenix Fund,



Russian environmental NGO, in cooperation with its partners, got involved in Amur tiger conservation actions. As well as battling poachers, the Phoenix Fund has been also fighting negative attitudes towards tigers. Devising imaginative material for kindergartens and schools, along with supporting the annual Tiger Day, Phoenix staff is determined to ensure that future generations will value the tiger and care about it. It is also very important to support local educators committed to nature conservation through providing them with educational materials, organizing training courses, and improving their working conditions. Thanks to on-going support from the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Tiger, Phoenix staff were able to work with the experienced educators who held regular eco-classes devoted to tigers and endangered wildlife and habitat, showed slide-presentations and video clips on animals and organized various ecological contests,

games, quizzes, and exhibitions at Tiger eco-centre in Novopokrovka town as well as schools in remote villages of Krasnoarmeisky district. Moreover, with the 21<sup>st</sup> CT' funds and other sponsors Phoenix held a Tiger Day Festival in Novopokrovka, the ecological holiday that has become a powerful tool in transmitting messages for the values of environment and thoughts about the environmental problems, and inspiring to live in harmony with the environment through a festive atmosphere. Below, we are glad to present our final report illustrating the project results achieved from February 1<sup>st</sup> 2012 through January 31<sup>st</sup> 2013.



## PROJECT PROGRESS

### Environmental Education in Krasnoarmeisky District

During the reported period the experienced educators conducted regular eco-classes at local schools in Krasnoarmeisky district, home to the Amur tiger. The classes included video demonstrations, slide presentations, lectures, games, quizzes and contests and were focused on fostering positive attitude of children towards tigers, strengthening ecological knowledge and raising awareness on threats to tiger and nature in general. Valeria Nazarova, the educator, who has been running the Tiger eco-centre since 2007, cooperated with other schoolteachers and the staff of Eco-Tourism and Environmental Education Department of the Udege Legend National Park and organised joint eco-lessons and various nature-oriented events for children and adults.

From February 1<sup>st</sup> 2012 through January 31<sup>st</sup>

2013 the educator held 400 eco-events for 9,067 children and 905 adults. Ecological lessons, field programs, contests, and short courses of lectures were offered to kindergarten and schoolchildren on topics such as Amur tiger biology and conservation, forest ecology and management, threatened and endangered species, landscape and biodiversity protection of Northern Primorye. The participants of the eco-lessons are often become winners of various local and regional contests, such as 'Forest Olympiad' Regional Ecological Contest, 'March of Parks' nature protection event, and others, which we believe indicates how well the teachers transmit conservation messages, foster positive attitude towards endangered wildlife and sensitize the children to nature conservation problems. Valeria Nazarova is very respected for her professionalism, passion and devotion to nature conservation. In July 2012, she was invited to take part in an exchange program and visit a number of environmental and educational NGOs in the US in order to gain knowledge and



exchange experience with her foreign counterparts.

### Opinion poll

During the reported period Phoenix conducted two opinion polls among schoolchildren in Krasnoarmeisky district in order to assess changes in their awareness of tiger conservation issues and attitude towards this big cat. The first stage of an opinion poll was conducted in February 2012 in order to gather information about the attitudes of young generation regarding tiger conservation issue.

first stage of the survey at classes where she never gave lessons devoted to Amur tiger before. Then, the educator started her course of lessons addressing the following topics: the current state of Amur tiger population, Amur tiger conservation issues, tiger habitat and anthropogenic influence, protection of tiger prey species, and etc. The second opinion poll was carried out in December 2012 with the same schoolchildren from the same settlements after they listened lectures and attended various in-school and outdoor events devoted to Amur tigers. The results were compared with the ones received in February in order to evaluate changes in children's knowledge.



The poll's objective was to represent how children feel about the Amur tiger and define the level of their knowledge on the population of this rare and endangered species, its subspecies and threats to their survival.

When conducting the opinion poll, Valeria Nazarova, experienced tutor of the Tiger eco-centre in Novopokrovka, used a questionnaire with 10 questions about tiger elaborated jointly by the Phoenix Fund and Michiel Hötte of WCS-Russia Program. Over 100 interviews were conducted during each steps of the survey. We selected only children ranging in age between 12 and 17. The survey participants were not pre-selected. In February, Valeria conducted the

Comparing the general results of two opinion polls, we saw that the schoolchildren possessed good knowledge on tigers without attending special lessons. About 53% is the average rate of correct answers among these respondents. But the lessons devoted to tigers significantly boosted children's knowledge – after attending the lessons 68% of the respondents gave correct answers.

In general, the data from the opinion polls helped us understand that our educational programs work very well and that every year more and more people become well-aware of tiger conservation issues.



Workshop for educators

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. This year we decided not to hold a workshop for educators as indoor activity with lectures. Instead, the educators and tutors were invited to participate in a summer camp for young ecologists and conservationists and employ their skills and knowledge obtained during the previous workshops. The summer camp was held near Luchegorsk town on June 26<sup>th</sup> -July 3<sup>rd</sup>. Over 40 schoolchildren aged 12-16 attended a wide range of classes and enjoyed

outdoor activities. During seven days of the summer camp 20 educators from all over Primorye demonstrated their professional skills by giving lessons specially developed and devoted to various ecological problems. For example, Nadezhda Perevozchikova carried out a lesson devoted to eco-tourism, Alla Akatkina focused on fresh water problems, Valeria Nazarova touched Amur tiger conservation issue, and Elena Bespyataya told about the role of mass media in promoting nature conservation. All the participants confirmed the great value of such an event which was beneficial both to schoolchildren and educators. We believe that such hands-on experience is





vital to understanding theory and will help Phoenix further assess how workshop materials are apprehended by the educators.

#### Tiger Day Festival



In September-October every year, one of the biggest environmental festivals takes place in Primorye - the Tiger Day Festival. The holiday reminds people about the uniqueness and beauty of the territory they live in. The Amur tiger is a symbol of Vladivostok and Primorsky krai; it is the most respected animal in the Russian Far East.

The main goal of the holiday is to help save the Amur tiger in the wild for future generations - not just on logos and coats of arms - and to draw international attention to the plight of this endangered species. Gradually the festival gained popularity, its status was elevated to a

enthusiastically celebrated in many countries. In 2012, Phoenix organized Tiger Day Festivals in Vladivostok, Luchegorsk, Novopokrovka, Partizansk, Lazo, Kirovka and Terney towns. Thanks to support from the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Tiger and other sponsors, on September 23, the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Tiger Day was celebrated in Novopokrovka.

More than 500 people, old and young, gathered up on the main square to commemorate big cats. Over 17 parade units representing local schools and eco-clubs participated in the parade which traditionally started at noon. When the festive procession reached the main square,



spectators could enjoy interesting performances by 150 children. About 300 entries submitted by children for an art contest devoted to the Amur tiger were displayed at the main square. Udege Legend National Park's staff conducted a "tiger lottery" and gave small prizes to winners. Parents and their very young children had an opportunity to compete in a "Best Tiger Stroller" contest. A family that won the contest was awarded with a certificate that let them visit the Udege Legend national park free of charge during a year. In addition, everyone had a chance to see handicraft works at a Handicraft and Souvenir Fair with a motto "Let's Tigers Exist Forever!" The residents and guests were entertained by young actors dressed up in different animal costumes (Curious Magpie, Majestic Amur Tiger and others). Kids of all ages enjoyed events specifically geared towards them, including tiger make-up and tiger costume contests, an exhibition of children's books and art works, and master classes in bookmark, charm and card making. At the end of the festival ten "tiger cubs" sang a hymn of Tiger Day Festival and released multi-coloured balloons to honour tigers. The spectators caught their breath at the sight of hundreds of air balloons filling the Novopokrovka sky. The children gave a cheery wave and promised to gather again next year to celebrate the Festival for the 11<sup>th</sup> time.

#### Project outcomes

Through project implementation we achieved the following results:

- Active participation in Tiger Day festival in Novopokrovka (more than 500 people took part in festive events in 2011 and 2012);
- Good participation in summer camp. As many as 60 participants (40 students and 20 educators) attended the event (in 2011, only 30 educators were involved in specially design workshop);
- Increased teachers' knowledge and as a result of exchange of experience during the summer camp;
- Increased participation in education and outreach programmes (400 eco-events for

9,067 children and 905 adults in 2012 compared to 275 eco-events for 5,063 children and 406 adults in 2011);

- Increased children's knowledge on tigers (according to opinion poll data, after attending a series of eco-lessons, their level of knowledge increased by 15%).

The Phoenix Fund is going to continue its educational programmes in Krasnoarmeisky district of Primorye in future and is hopeful that every year more and more people, young and old, will care about the environment and contribute to nature conservation.