



INTERIM REPORT FROM PHOENIX FUND

Grantor: The Dreamworld Conservation Fund
Project Name: Joint Anti-Poaching Activities in the South of Khabarovsky Krai
Grantee: The Phoenix Fund
Report Period: January 01 – June 30, 2008
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I. Project overview

The objective of the project is to ensure Amur tiger habitat protection and population survival in Primorsky and Khabarovsky regions, including:

- Strengthening protection activities in tiger habitat by carrying out joint patrols consisting of state law enforcement officers and public environmental investigation teams,
- Engaging local communities to actively participate in conservation,
- Gaining in support from the local people.

The Russian Far East is the only area in the world where both the Amur tiger – more commonly known as the Siberian tiger - and Amur leopard still exist in the wild. In spite of worldwide publicity, these big cats still face many threats - illegal poaching, human encroachment, deforestation, and a lack of natural prey species. An estimated 450 mature Amur tigers and 35 Amur leopards are left in the wild, and of the surviving tigers, only approximately 10% are found within protected areas. The numbers protected are not enough to sustain the population, and thus the future of the tiger is still at stake and depends on the attitude of the local people towards them. Tigers are still being poached for their skins, bones and other parts that are valued for their medical purposes in Asia. The insatiable demand for tiger ingredients appears to be the main driving force behind this poaching and traffic.

Inspection Tiger was formed in 1994 within State Ecological Committee of Primorsky krai. Creation of Inspection Tiger was more of necessity: in the beginning of the 90th, after opening the borders and dissolution of the federal nature conservation system, everything that could have been sold in Ussury taiga was pillaged and smuggled to neighboring China. The catastrophic situation affected endangered population of Amur tigers. Thanks to anti-poaching activities of Inspection Tiger in Primorsky krai and south of Khabarovsky krai, tiger numbers have crept back to between 431 – 529. Three-man Khabarovsky team is part of Inspection Tiger. Edward Yanovsky, the leader of the team, possesses large personal experience in wildlife conservation and has been leading the project throughout years. The team is specially trained and equipped to conduct anti-poaching patrols and to investigate human-tiger conflicts.

II. Project description

Team members

The team consists of two Inspection Tiger officers and a wildlife manager who have been working within the team for seven years. The officers graduated from Irkutsky Agricultural Academy with a degree in Biology and Hunting Management. Before starting their work as Inspection Tiger officers, they worked for four years in Khabarovsky State Committee on Environmental Protection.



Cooperation

The team cooperates with Environmental Prosecutor's Office (to initiate criminal proceedings efficiently), police departments of Khabarovsk city, Lazo and Vyazemsky districts (to conduct joint patrols and initiate criminal proceedings), Fishing and Hunting Departments of Rosselkhoz nadzor, gamekeepers and employees of the protected territories (to conduct joint patrols, obtain information, use motorboats and other transport) and mass media (to cover team's activities and nature conservation issues).

Equipment

The team has an UAZ vehicle (manufactured in 2001), Motorola wireless handheld radio stations, video and photo cameras, GPS-unit, motorboat, PC and notebook, and pistols for self-defense at its disposal. There is a need to purchase a new diesel jeep to increase the efficiency of team's work.

Legal situation; Law enforcement rights revoked

During the seven years of its existence our team members have been part of various state law enforcement agencies. In 2007 two team rangers were staff members of Inspection Tiger and one ranger was a staff member of the local Hunting Management Department. These three state inspectors were assisted by civilian team members (civilian members were included in the team because written witness statements by civilians in support of citations drawn up by state inspectors are needed for successful prosecution of poachers). Unfortunately, the law enforcement rights of both Inspection Tiger and Hunting Management Department were revoked as a result of government reforms and a transition of conservation management responsibilities from federal to provincial level.



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Checking hunters

As a result, none of the team members has had law enforcement rights since the 1st of January 2008. The local Primorsky Krai (Province) government became responsible for protection of both forests and fauna within the province. So far the newly formed provincial department for the protection of fauna has only hired 12 inspectors to protect endangered and game species in Primorsky Krai outside protected areas, an area almost the size of Italy. Several of our team members have unsuccessfully applied to be included as a staff member of the new fauna protection department. The department now plans to increase the number of inspectors and we hope this time at least two team members will be included in the department and thus receive law enforcement rights.

Despite the reform the team has continued to operate without law enforcements rights. This is possible as a result of co-operation with inspectors with law enforcement rights from other agencies, namely police, border guards and protected area staff. Inspectors from these agencies enjoy working with the anti-poaching team, because the work is exciting and the team is well equipped.



Anti-poaching methods

The main anti-poaching methods are as follows:

- Patrolling hunting grounds by car. The rangers, together with police officers, stop and check vehicles moving out of the forest;
- Patrolling on rivers by motorboat. Fishermen often have rifles in their boats and they visit hunter's cabins located near riverbanks;
- Checking logging camps and sites in winter. The rangers often find illegal rifles hidden in a cab of logging vehicles;
- Checking apiaries at night and making night ambushes on logging roads;
- Checking winter cabins after hunting season is closed;
- Tracking hunters in spring when there is thin crust of ice over snow;
- Alluring poachers by imitating stag's mating call that attracts female of the species in autumn. Usually, when a poacher hears such a roar, he took his gun and began hunting.

Additional activities



The Khabarovsk team investigates conflict tiger cases whenever that is required. Sometimes, rangers repair their vehicle by themselves. On average, they spend up to 10 days per month to do minor repairs, including repairs in the field. For large-scale repairs (axle, engine etc.) the team has its vehicle repaired at a repair service. In addition, the team carries out education and outreach project through giving lectures at schools and interviews for mass media.

Results

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Repair in the field

Despite the loss of law enforcement rights and constant breakage of the patrol vehicle, the

team managed to implement the following activities:

- to deal with a problem tiger in Lazo district of Khabarovsk region;
- to transport a tiger cub from Vyazemsky village to Inspection Tiger's rehabilitation base in Razdolnoye village in proper time;
- to investigate the case of bear attack on human in Mataisky wildlife refuge;
- to initiate criminal proceedings against a poacher arrested for illegal hunting in Mataisky wildlife refuge;
- to seize nine illegal rifles.

According to the rumor the team's presence in the forest makes poachers change their plans. They will do nothing till they are sure that our team left the area.

Plans for the future

The team intends to improve its results and establish good relations with environmental law enforcement agencies.



III. Anti-poaching activities

This project has been made possible in 2008 with the support of the Dreamworld Conservation Fund, the Zoological Society of London (ZSL) and 21st Century Tiger. For the reported period the team conducted 18 many-day patrols, drew up 11 reports on violations of hunting regulations, revealed 5 violations of fishing regulations, seized 12 illegal rifles, and investigated 2 conflict tiger cases.

January



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Conflict tiger case

In January the team held five patrols, withdrew three guns, made up five protocols on hunting violations. On two of them criminal proceedings were started. The team was occupied with rescue of two orphaned tiger cubs, one of them died of emaciation. A conflict tiger was shot off in self-defense. A bus knocked down a tiger that led to its death.

On January 09, the team leader got a message from Eduard Kruglov, Director of “Utyos” rehabilitation center for wild animals by Khabarovsk city, that a man had been attacked by a tiger and was hospitalized. E. Yanovsky

went to the hospital to check the information. The victim had numerous abrasions on his body, broken ribs and forearms. He explained that in the morning on January 01, a tiger jumped at him 15 km far from Solontsovy village of Lazo district in Khabarovsk region, 200 km far from the road. The wounded managed to walk to the car where his brother was supposed to wait for him. Presumably, the two men went poaching, as the hunting season ended on December 31.

On January 10, two team members with a police officer went to Solontsovy village to make inquiries among locals. On January 11, in the environs of Kidiminsky mountain crossing at 6 km distance from the road they discovered the place of the conflict. On the area of about 5 m² there were bloodspots and flakes of tiger hair. No tracks of large predators or wild boar remnants were found. The police officers drew up a report. The team established that the wounded tiger had crossed the road and retired deep into the forest. The rangers followed the tracks; saw five tiger beds with blood in both front and hind part of the animal. The tiger was lying in the last bed for 7-8 days. The team leader reported the situation to the village administration, to the forestry and to the Conflict Tiger team of Inspection Tiger. They made a trip to the closest logging site to warn people against possible dangerous encounter. There they discovered an illegal shotgun and withdrew it.

On January 12, the Khabarovsk team jointly with Conflict Tiger rangers patrolled the territory in search for tiger tracks. On January 13, tiger specialists of Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) arrived from their base in the north of the region and they all went on patrolling. Returning back to the village, the environmental officers noticed a fresh track of a motorcycle, followed it and discovered an illegal 16-gauge gun inside the vehicle. Its owner who appeared some minutes later explained that he had found the gun. The officers made up an administrative report on him.

On January 14, the rangers used a truck DT-75 to track the tiger but due to steep slopes and the forest being clogged with fallen trees it did not turn productive. WCS specialists held the opinion that it would be impossible to trap the wounded animal under such circumstances.



On January 15, at 3 p.m. the team of six rangers suddenly came across that very tiger, which made an attempt to attack them. People had to shoot in self-defense. The dead tiger was examined. It had wounds inflicted approximately two weeks before (presumably, made with a bullet and case shot. Its carcass was transported to Ussuriisky Agricultural Academy for an expertise.

On January 18, there came information on a young tiger in Vyazemsky village. The rangers arrived at the place and concluded that the tiger had come from the direction of Otradnoye village, entered one of the backyards, killed four dogs and finally hid itself in a kennel. The rangers passed the tiger to Oleg Grinenko, Inspection Tiger ranger, who lives in his farm in Razdolnoye village and had some experience with nursing wild tiger cubs (For more details read Attachment I).



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Transportation of an orphaned tiger cub

On January 18, a bus injured a tiger in Bikinsky district of Khabarovsk region. The young tigress died on the place.

On January 25-26, the Khabarovsk team patrolled Mataisky wildlife refuge with their wardens. Two illegal lumbermen were stopped. They were cutting down oak and ash trees. The rangers forwarded the documents to the local precinct to start a criminal case.

On January 26, the officers apprehended a poacher in the refuge. Documents for further check and criminal procedure were drawn up and passed to the police.

On January 30, lumbermen discovered another orphaned tiger cub in the forest 40 km far from Vyazemsky village of Khabarovsk region. They brought it to an asphalt plant located nearby. The female tiger cub aged 6-7 months was very much emaciated, with broken canines, frostbitten tail and troubled intestines.



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Checking hunters

The Khabarovsk team of Inspection Tiger transported the cub to a warm garage in Khor village, and invited a veterinary, who made intravenous fluids and vitamin shots to it. Central authorities of Rosprirodnadzor (Moscow) gave a permission to move the cub to "Utyos" rehabilitation center near Khabarovsk city. Its specialists used to nurse bear cubs for future release, but also had some successful cases with tigers. Unhappily, despite all efforts the cub died the following day after arrival.

February

In February, the Inspection Tiger's rangers carried out two many-day joint patrols with police officers, revealed three violations of hunting regulations, drew up eight reports on administrative violations and seized five rifles.



On February 4-7, a joint patrol with police officers was carried out in the area of Matai hunting society. On February 4, the rangers of Inspection Tiger served as witnesses of a wildlife crime, when a man with a Vepr carbine #6966 was detained by police officers for illegal hunting near the Kolomy stream. The carbine was seized and handed over to a local police department. On February 5, near the Katen river the joint team detained a violator with a rifle IZH-27 №0427328 for hunting without a permit. The rifle was confiscated and handed over to a local police department. Later on, near the Katen river, the joint team examined the area around a loggers' camp of "Asia-Les" Ltd. The loggers told that the area had already been examined by gamekeepers of Matai hunting society the day before and they had not found any violation. The loggers tried to convince the rangers that they had no rifle. Ten minutes later they were very surprised when an Inspection Tiger's ranger found an illegal rifle IZH-18 №590077 one hundred meters from their camp. The loggers were sure that nobody could find it.

On the same day the team checked a loggers' camp of "Istok" Ltd. The rangers found out that a logger went to hunt several hours before their arrival. One of Inspection Tiger's rangers went to catch the logger and the other one stayed at the camp to wait the violator. When the ranger was following the logger's footprints he noticed that the logger took measures to confuse inspectors by mixing up his foot prints. The logger went backwards, but the rangers managed to puzzle out his tracks and shortly found a logger's rifle TOZ BM № 10063 hidden in the snow. When the logger returned to the camp, he met one ranger of Inspection Tiger and began to explain that he had left the camp just to find a rod of magnolia-vine and showed the rod which he had specially cut to show proofs of his story. But he did not see another ranger with the found rifle standing behind him. When the poacher saw another ranger he was very upset with the fact that he would not be able to shoot with that rifle anymore. The police officers handed over both seized rifles to a local police department.

One more violator with an illegal rifle TOZ BM № 24181 was detained on the same day for illegal hunting near the Katen river. When the rangers found the violator's footprints going away from the Katen river and examined them, they concluded that it would be impossible to come up with him. Thus, they decided to continue their patrol near the river and catch that violator on his return in the evening. The man was very surprised to see the rangers and he was very tired to run away from them. The poacher confessed that it was for the first time when he had been detained with the illegal rifle. The rifle was seized and handed over to a local police department.

On February 11-15, the team repaired the patrol vehicle.

On February 19-20, Inspection Tiger's rangers checked information on disappearance of two cows as a result of tiger attack in outskirts of Kotikovo village, Vyazemsky district, Khabarovsky krai. The information turned to be false. The cows were found pasturing in the field. No tiger tracks were found in the adjoining areas.

On February 26-28, the team repaired the patrol vehicle.

On February 29, the Khabarovsky team members testified in the court of Lazo district (Khabarovsky krai) against Mr. Dankan (see case of January 26, 2008). In March the team conducted two many-day patrols, confiscated an illegal shotgun and checked a message on a conflict tiger.

March

On March 05-07, the team with the police officers of Lazo district patrolled Lazovsky state industrial farm enterprise. They asked local people if they often saw tigers. A hunter said that he had seen tiger tracks 7-8 days old in the vicinity of Katen village.



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Inspector with an illegal rifle found in a hollow tree

On March 05, the officers checked a logging site of Khorskoye forestry and found an illegal gun in the hollow of a tree. It was confiscated and forwarded to the police station.

On March 12-13, the team appeared as witnesses in medical examination of a man who claimed he had been injured by a bear in Mataisky wildlife refuge.

On March 12, the team interrogated people of Yuzhny village on their encounters with tigers. No one saw them that month.

On March 13, the team examined the place in Mataisky wildlife refuge where the man was wounded by a bear. They saw a den and bloodspots on the adjacent tree, on which the victim climbed. There was no sign that the bear was hunting in the refuge. The team established that the man had frightened the animal from the den.

April

In April the team conducted 4 patrols by vehicle, revealed one violation of hunting regulations and three violations of fishing regulations, and seized two illegal rifles.

On April 1-4 and 7-11 the patrol car was repaired and serviced.

On April 12, the team visited Utyos rehabilitation centre in Kutuzovka village to check physical conditions of a young tigress that had been transported there before.



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Inspector checks a gun license

On April 13, team in cooperation with fishing inspection officers patrolled along the Khor river. During the patrol they noticed a man hiding in the bushes on an island. The team rangers crossed the river in a boat and started to search for the man. It took 30 minutes to find him lying on the ground and covered with a raincoat. The man turned out to be a jobless local from Svyatogoriye village. The villager told that he had come there for fishing. After a while, the rangers found an illegal firearm IZH-18 № 03438 in the shrubs. The man objected that it was his property. The rifle was handed over to a police department of Lazo district. In Svyatogoriye village the team rangers talked with local people on safety rules in tiger habitat.

On April 16, the Khabarovsky team, together with Khorsky fishing inspection and police officers, conducted a joint patrol in water protection zone of the Kiya river. During the patrol the rangers stopped a vehicle for searching. An inside search resulted in a loaded unsheathed hunting rifle. A report on violation of hunting regulations was drawn up by police officers, with Khabarovsky team rangers serving as witnesses. The rifle TOZ-34 №62121 was seized. The rangers visited Kiinsk village and gave lectures for local people on safety rules in tiger habitat.



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Unauthorized logging site

On April 17-18 and 21-25, the patrol vehicle was repaired.

On April 26-27, the team rangers and Khorsky fishing inspection officers patrolled water protection zone of the Kiya river and drew up three reports on violations of fishing regulations. The team also visited Georgievka village and instructed villagers on rules of human behavior in tiger habitat.

On April 28-30, the patrol vehicle was repaired.

May

In May the team conducted two patrols by vehicle, revealed two violations of hunting regulations, and seized two rifles.

On May 1-3, the Khabarovskiy team, together with the head of Khorsky fishing inspection, and police officer patrolled the area of Lazovsky commercial industry. On May 1, the team visited Solontsovy village to talk with local people on safety rules in Amur tiger habitat. On May 2, on their way from Solontsovy village to the Upper Kafen river the rangers found a Toyota Carib without people inside. While examining the road and the roadside the team found footprints of two men and dog tracks leading directly into the forest. As there were no brooks for fishing, the people were supposed to have gone to hunt. It was decided to find them. The Khabarovskiy team members and the police officer followed the footprints leading to the creek valley and disappearing among many animals' tracks. The examining of the creek valley did not prove to be a success, and the rangers decided to check the slope of the nearest hill. They noticed that

the grass was trampled there and found tracks made by boots. After covering 300 meters the rangers heard a muted rattle and realized that the men were making a *lobaz*, a raised hide for hunting, close to a salt lick. The rangers approached gently to the hunters engaged in making *lobaz*. The dog also was too preoccupied to notice the rangers. It was an unpleasant surprise for the hunters when they saw the inspectors. One of them, the dog's owner, was deeply disappointed because he was sure that they had taken all measure to prevent from being discovered by law enforcement officers. It turned out that the men deliberately had left their car far away from their site and tried to leave as less as possible tracks near the salt lick. The rangers examined the area and found a rifle TOZ-34 № 062192. The detained men did not have a permit to hunt. The police officer drew up a report and seized the rifle.



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Checking fishermen

On May 12-14, the team and police officers patrolled Matai military hunting society. On May 13 they detained a man with a rifle IZH -27 № 012189 near the Dolminka river and close to a salt lick. The detainee did not have permission to hunt. The police officers drew up a report and seized the rifle.



On May 19-23 and 26-30, the team had the patrol vehicle repaired.

June

In June the team conducted three patrols and revealed one case of illegal fishing.

On June 2-3, the team patrolled Vyazemsky state industrial farm enterprise. On June 3, the patrol was suspended due to back axle breakage on the patrol vehicle. The vehicle was repaired from June 5 to June 19.

On Jun 20-22, the Khabarovsky team conducted a joint patrol with gamekeepers on the territory of Matai Military Hunting Society. On June 20, the rangers found a Nissan-Safari jeep near the Metsa river. Two gun cases were lying in the passenger compartment. No person was noticed around. As Matai Military Hunting Society had no permit to hunt red deer, the rangers decided to make an ambush around the vehicle and wait until poachers appeared. On June 21, at the afternoon two hunters with rifles came up to the jeep. They turned out to have gun licenses and a permit to hunt red deer for scientific purposes.

On June 22, the team members talked with residents of Dolmi village about safety rules in tiger habitat.

On June 27-29, the Khabarovsky team and fishing inspection carried out a joint patrol on the Khor river. On June 29, they met local people of Gvasyugi village and told about rules on human behavior in tiger habitat. Later the same day the rangers revealed an illegal fishing case.



ATTACHMENT I



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"Zov taigi"

On January 18, 2008 there came information on a young tiger in Vyazemsky village. The rangers arrived at the place and concluded that the tiger had come from the direction of Otradnoye village, entered one of the backyards, killed four dogs and finally hid itself in a kennel. The rangers passed the tiger to Oleg Grinenko, Inspection Tiger ranger, who lives in his farm in Razdolnoye village and had some experience with nursing wild tiger cubs. The female cub was named "Angara" after a river that flows from Baikal Lake in Siberia.

After Moscow authorities granted permission, the cub was brought to *Utyos*, a wildlife rehabilitation center 150 km from Khabarovsk city. Eduard Kruglov, the owner of *Utyos*, has been engaged in bear rehabilitation for many years and currently keeps a resident tiger, rescued 12 years ago, at the center. In 2001, two rescued tigresses were successfully rehabilitated at *Utyos* and released back into the wild.



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"Zov taigi"

Now living in a remote enclosure on the property, Angara is purposefully kept away from visitors in hopes that she will maintain her fear

of people. A fear of, and flight from, humans is often necessary for animals trying to survive in the wild. Angara will also learn to hunt prey on her own while living at *Utyos*.



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"Zov taigi"

Phoenix Fund, International Fund for Animal Welfare and Amur branch of WWF agreed to pay the cub's expenses while staying at *Utyos* until she is strong enough to be fitted with a radio collar and released back into the wild, tentatively scheduled some time in autumn 2008 or spring 2009.

We are grateful to the Khabarovsky team for its terrific work in the field and successful rescue of the tiger cub. We are hopeful that Angara will be released back into the wild with success once she is strong enough.



ATTACHMENT II

Table 1. Results of anti-poaching activities of Khabarovsky team, January – June 2008

Activity	January - June 2008
I. Violations documented:	
1.1. Hunting	11
1.2. Fishing	5
1.3. Forest resources	-
1.4. Protected areas	-
1.5. Other	-
2. Illegal weapons seized and handed over to the police	12
3. Confiscated poaching devices:	
a) Fishing nets	-
b) Boats	1
4. Poached wildlife confiscated:	
4.1. Meat of Siberian stag	-
4.2. Sable	-
4.3. Squirrel	-
4.4. Roe deer meat	-
4.5. Duck	-
4.6. Wild boar	-
5. Investigated conflict tiger cases	2
6. Initiated criminal proceedings	2
7. Work with mass media	
TV features	6
Newspapers	6