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Phoenix Fund

“Wildlife Conservation in the Russian Far East in 2008”

Final report
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I. Project Overview

Primorye in the south of the Russian Far East represents the only area in the world where the Amur/ Siberian tiger still exists in the wild. The results of Tiger Count 2005 indicate that tiger numbers have been stable in Russia over the last 10 years (the 1996 count estimated the population at 415-472 tigers and the 2005 count at 428-502). But the Amur tiger population is very vulnerable due to poaching, habitat destruction, prey depletion and many other factors. Only an estimated 10% of the tiger population is living in protected areas, this is clearly not enough to sustain the population.

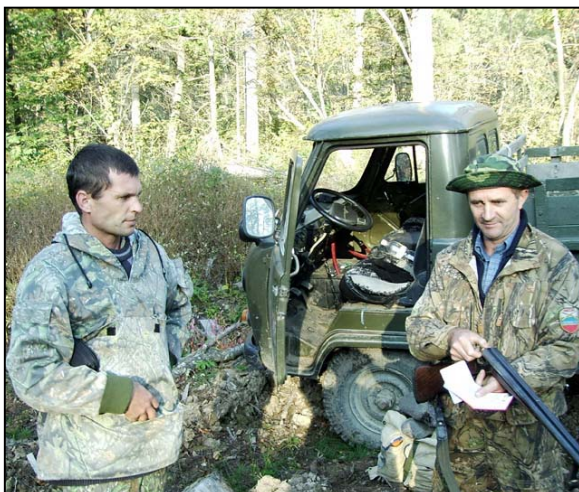
Since the year of its establishment in 1998, the Phoenix Fund has been carrying out nature conservation projects in the south of the Russian Far East, including anti-poaching, forest protection, ecological education and outreach projects. The Phoenix Fund is a member of the Amur Leopard and Tiger Alliance (ALTA). We, together with Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), Zoological Society of London (ZSL), are the main implementing organizations of ALTA in Russia. WCS and ZSL implement ecological research, wildlife health projects, population monitoring and other scientific

state environmental law enforcement agencies, including the Western wildlife managers' team of Primorsky Hunting Management Department. The team operated in Krasnoarmeisky district, the North of Primorye, still rich in wildlife and cedar forests. Thanks to support from the Kolmarden Fund Raising Foundation, the Zoological Society of London (ZSL) and 21st Century Tiger the Western team continued



© Phoenix Fund
Park's hills in autumn colours

its anti-poaching activities in 2008. Despite adverse changes in nature conservation system in Russia and loss of law enforcement rights due to recent administrative reform, Alexander Samoilenko, the leader of the team, carried on patrolling the area along with police officers and public volunteers. In the third quarter of 2008 Alexander was offered to join the provincial Game and Rare Species Department and become in charge of one of its anti-poaching team. Unfortunately, due to bureaucratic procedure, Alexander Samoilenko has not started to work within the Game and Rare Species Department as yet. We hope that in 2009 he will be able to continue his anti-poaching activities in the north of Primorye.



© Phoenix Fund
Western team checks hunters

work in the Amur leopard's range. To struggle with poaching and strengthen protection activities in tiger habitat Phoenix supports anti-poaching activities of various

This report also contains information about the anti-poaching project in Udege Legend National Park. Thanks to timely support from the Kolmarden Fund Raising Foundation, the Park's staff managed to protect wildlife in severe winter conditions. According to 2004 tiger census (WCS-WWF), there are at least seven tigers (including three females, one of them with two cubs) more or less permanently residing



in the Park itself or migrating to and from the adjacent areas. Thus, the Park is located in the core area of tiger habitat, and has a big potential for increasing both tiger and tiger prey populations for the whole region. A mobile five-members anti-poaching brigade has been operating alongside with 20 field officers who stay in permanent ranger stations all around the Park. The mobile brigade conducts patrols to prevent poaching and fires and to react promptly to any related information. The officers also help to resolve predator-human conflicts and emergencies (people disappeared in taiga, first aid etc) and have explanatory talks with the local communities. They patrol the Park on a daily basis by vehicle, boat and on foot, checks visitors and stops illegal woodcutting. The rangers stop for the night at the fixed ranger stations.

We strongly believe that the continuous anti-poaching activities will help ensure sound protection for the Amur tiger population, its habitat and prey.

II. Project Implementation

Support for Western wildlife managers' team



© Phoenix Fund

Logs harvested illegally

The Western wildlife managers' team was headed by Rosselkhoznadzor (Primorsky

Department of Federal Service for Veterinarian and Vegetation Sanitary Supervision) and was responsible for preventing and revealing poaching and illegal logging. Unfortunately, since the 1st of January 2008, as a result of an administrative reform in Russia, Rosselkhoznadzor partly lost its law enforcement rights. The local Primorsky Krai government became responsible for protection of both forests and fauna within the province. And Rosselkhoznadzor was empowered to control the new Game and Rare Species Department (GRSD) and check how inspectors protect forest and wildlife resources. When the GRSD was established in January 2008, it had only 19 staff members, but later it became possible



© Phoenix Fund

Abandoned rifle

to recruit more officers (up to 43) with money from regional budget. Alexander Samoilenko, the leader of the Western team, applied to be included as a staff member of the new fauna protection department. A response has not been received yet. The delay is probably caused by adverse global financial situation and a cut in regional budget. We hope that in 2009 Alexander will be included in the department and thus receive law enforcement rights.

Despite these obstacles the team continued to operate in the field in the first half of 2008. This was possible owing to close co-operation with inspectors with law enforcement rights from other agencies,



namely police, border guards and protected area staff. Unfortunately, the team's results were badly affected by the reform.

In January the team leader paid much time to preparation of reports, analysis of 2007 activities and control of execution of administrative and criminal cases based on the team's reports in 2007. In the result of this work, a violator was sentenced with a year and a half probation for illegal woodcutting and theft of trees in April 2007 in the hunting grounds of Dalnerechensky district. The team leader collected evidence on the poaching case of March 2007, when a group of poachers killed five roe deer when hunting by snowmobiles. The police started the case, then hampered it for some reason, and finally shut, returning the vehicles to their owner. The investigation officers might have been bribed. The team leader was indignant at the fact, and expressed his understanding of the story in the local newspaper.

In January – April 2008, the team conducted 9 patrols. In the course of them three reports were drawn on logging violations and two reports on hunting violations.

As powers to protect and control use of game species were passed from the federal to the regional authorities, the team participated in establishing the work of the new structure in Dalnerechensky and Krasnoarmeisky districts. The off-road vehicle that the team used was no longer available, and the team leader had to use his own car. Due to that, it was impossible to penetrate deep into the forest.

In February – March 2008, according to the order of Rosselkhoznadzor (Primorsky Department of Federal Service for Veterinarian and Vegetation Sanitary Supervision) the team participated in annual census of wild animals and birds in the hunting grounds.

On March 26, the team confiscated a Himalayan bear from a villager and handed over to the Primorsky Nature Protection Department. The Himalayan bear is recognized as Vulnerable by the IUCN and

threatened by illegal pet trade and the bear gall bladder markets.

In April the team went on patrol and involved the police, journalists from Russian television, newspapers and the public. On April 06, the officers discovered an illegal logging site. A criminal case was initiated.

On April 11, the team detained two persons for hunting on a salt lick during closed hunting period in the hunting grounds of Dalnerechensky district, 30 km far from Martinovo village. The rangers also revealed illegal cutting of 100 m³ of oak trees and confiscated two tractors of the site. They drew up a report and detained Mr. Silaev, resident of Dalnerechensk town, who is suspected of having committed this crime.

On April 24, the team found a storehouse of illegally cut timber, about 60 m³ of Korean pine. The police initiated the criminal proceedings on the report.

In May, the team revealed no violations. Since then, Alexander Samoilenko has suspended his anti-poaching work and waited until he joins the Game and Rare Species Department.

Support for anti-poaching team of Udege Legend National Park



© Phoenix Fund

Tiger tracks found in the Park

The Russian Government provides insufficient funds for Udege Legend National Park to operate in full and in the most efficient way. In 2008, thanks to our



supporters (Whitley Fund for Nature, Save the Tiger Fund, Kolmarden Fund Raising Foundation), we provided the mobile team with two military all-terrain vehicles “GAZ” and “ZIL”, two GPS-navigators and a satellite phone. Also, Phoenix supplied the team with winter outfits and provided funds for fuel.

For the reported period the team conducted over 49 patrols to reveal and investigate violations of logging, hunting and fishing regulations. Each patrol lasted 5-6 days. The officers initiated five criminal procedures and 18 administrative fines (6 on illegal hunt and 12 on illegal fishing), confiscated a tractor, six shotguns and poached prey (a red deer, a wild boar and two bears). Logging violations are very numerous inside the park, because previously the territory belonged to two timber enterprises. For example, this year the team revealed illegal woodcutting that brought damage in the amount of \$167,000. Mostly people cut oak, Korean pine, ash-tree and others.

As a result of an agreement with a local forestry company, the team can occasionally use a “MI-2” helicopter for patrols. This opportunity enables rangers to see what is happening in remote areas, which are hard to reach even by off-road vehicles and trucks. From the air one can notice fire outbreaks and react promptly. Besides, this is helpful for animal surveys and determination of their density: during the recent flight the team saw two wild boar herds and three red deer herds.



© Phoenix Fund
Marking borders of the Park

Fishing is permitted in some zones of the park, but fishermen should observe fish size limit. When anglers exceed the limits the

Park’s rangers make them pay fines. This year greylings and lenoks were the mostly heavily harvested fish stocks.

In November Yuri Trush, ex-ranger of Inspection Tiger and at present the head of the Park’s protection division, and Andrey Golobokov, former leader of the Forest team and now leader of the Park’s prompt response team, held a training for 15 newly employed officers. They covered such aspects as role and functions of national parks, drawing citations with observance of all technical and bureaucratic formalities, regulations within each functional zone of the Park etc. Due to the absence of other job positions in the villages, young people come to work in the protected areas, often ecologically ignorant and having no particular interest in nature and its protection. Therefore, at the very beginning of their tenure it is necessary to select intelligent people and teach them well.



© Phoenix Fund
Inspector fund traps during a patrol in the Park

In early November, the mobile team arrested an armed poacher inside the Park. He was badly drunk and tried to shoot at rangers. Fortunately, he missed the mark, but Yuri Trush had a heart attack due to stress and was taken to the hospital. A criminal procedure was initiated against the poacher.

In November 2008, thanks to the team’s efforts, Arminskaya logging company was deprived of its logging license and was sentenced to pay damage compensation in the amount of \$2,230 for operating inside the protected area.

In November and December after abundant snowfalls the snow depth reached 1 meter (over 39 inches) in the Udege Legend.



The mass death of ungulates could take place if no urgent measures were taken. Sika deer, roe deer and wild boar being the food resource for the Amur tiger, would die in the first place. It is also worth mentioning that after snowfalls local hunters rushed to the forest where it was easy to find animals by their tracks on the snow or kill deer stuck in snowdrifts. The Park's administration appealed to Phoenix requesting additional funds for urgent measures to save ungulates: to deliver forage to feeding grounds, clear the woodlands to let the hoofed animals get food and continue anti-poaching patrols. Thanks to Kolmarden Fund Raising Foundation the Park's staff received additional financial support and managed to address the problem without delay.

- Three criminal proceedings initiated by Western team and six – by AP unit of Udege Legend National Park;
- A Himalayan bear confiscated from a villager and handed over to the Primorsky Nature Protection Department;
- a tractor, six shotguns, seven fishing nets and poached prey were confiscated by AP team of Udege Legend National Park;
- 3 self-made illegal salt licks were destroyed in national park;
- 70 warning signs fixed along the boundary of the Udege Legend National Park.

III. Measurable objectives delivered

For the reported period, the project has successfully delivered the following measurable objectives:

- Two tractors and 160 cubic metres of illegally cut timber were seized by Western team;

Quantitative results of anti-poaching activities in Udege Legend National Park

| Activities | January – December 2008 |
|--|-------------------------|
| Patrols carried out | 49 |
| Criminal proceedings initiated: | 6 |
| Violations revealed: | 31 |
| - Illegal hunting | 9 |
| - Illegal fishing | 22 |
| - Felling of timber | 3 |
| - Manufacturing and carrying of rifles | 1 |
| Condemned people | 1 |
| Fines | \$170,000 |
| Illegal guns withdrawn | 6 |
| Fishing nets confiscated | 7 |
| Machinery confiscated | 2 (tractors) |



ATTACHMENT

Udege Legend (Udegeiskaya Legenda) Nature Reserve

