GREEN CORRIDOR FOR AMUR TIGER

As we all know, only less than 500 wild Amur tigers still survive in this planet. Most of them live in Russia nowadays. Only about 20 stay in the species’ birthland, China. Such rare number is not adequate for a sustainable development of its population. The wild Amur tiger is faced with extinction in China.

“The recovery of wild Amur tiger population in China could only be realized with the support of that in Russia. Currently, one of the major barriers is the border fence along Sino-Russia border,” said Professor Wu Zhigang, from Jilin Provincial Institute of Forestry.

It is a big problem for both the two countries to establish a green corridor for Amur tiger to freely pass the border line in the condition of good border management. Currently, the tiger population in the forest of far east Russia is close to saturation while tiger is very rare in a large area of forest convenient for tiger’s living in China. At the same time, forest can not be sustainably healthy without adjustment of top predator like tiger. It is very similar with the situation of living house in China – some cities with inflating population and very limited housing resources while others with small population and many empty building.

It is a long story for the border fence along Sino-Russia border. In the early 1930’s, Japanese invader initiated the construction of the border fence to defend Soviet Union’s attack. The main body of that fence was destroyed when the Soviet Red Army launched counter fight to the Guangdong Army remained in the northeast of China in 1945.

The second time of border fence construction happened in the 1960’ after the dispute between China and former Soviet Union. China built the fence on the basis of Japan-build one with timber and iron wire. “it was more symbolic with a pretty low height. Both tiger and ungulate could pass it,” Prof. Wu added.

The third time began from the beginning of 21st century. People, motivated by economic interest, committed smuggling and poaching along the border. China started fence construction in order to maintain the security and stability in the border area. The new fence was made with cement pole and iron net and its height is over 2 meters. “It is almost inaccessible for tiger and its prey,” Prof. Wu noted.

With the improvement of environment conservation, the designer of new fence being constructed has preserved passages for wild animals. According to the report of a joint survey carried out by WWF and Jilin Forestry Department, the rangers found tiger’s tracks along the passage for wild animals on the Sino-Russian border.

During the survey, WWF also discussed with the stakeholders, including Hunchun nature reserve and border troops. A common view was that the border fence does cut off the tiger and other wild animal’s free pass in some area. However, the obstacle of border fence to wild animal is very limited since it is not constructed in all the areas along the border. The key is to promote trans-boundary tiger conservation network, which integrate all the forces of nature reserve, forest farm and border troops as well as the counter parties of the Russian side to establish a free immigrating passage for Amur tiger.
International Youth Forum on tiger conservation was held in Vladivostok on November 19-24. Delegates from 13 tiger-range countries came to the Amur tiger native land to attract public attention and engage their support to save the world’s wild tiger population. The preparations for the Summit were serious. The young people had to get acquainted with WWF staff, experts and their work on tiger conservation in their country; to analyze the current success, problems and opportunities in order to engage youths to support and participate in the tiger protection movement; to create a personal account on Facebook where to describe the situation with tiger in the country, and write about personal achievements and ideas/advices on tiger conservation.

The schedule of the Forum was very tight. Presentation and discussion of the projects/action plans developed by delegates on tiger conservation in their own country, fields trips to tiger habitats, meeting people directly involved into anti-poaching activities, heads of protected areas, staff of hunting estates busy with raising the number of wild ungulates, main tiger prey. The delegates became main participants of the Ceremonial opening of the «Tiger Trail» consisting of specially manufactured stones with embedded tiger prints and name of each of 13 countries, gave interview to local and federal press. Video-bridge with the Heads of Government participating in the International Forum on Tiger Conservation in St. Petersburg became the climax of the event. Young people wearing national costumes addressed high ranking leaders with their personal appeals expressing hopes for tiger saving of the youth of each tiger-range country.

“I would like to believe that the Tiger Forum of the prime-ministers being the first will not become the last in the row, said Sousata Chemcheng a delegate from Laos. - We hope from now on tiger-range countries meet at least once in tree-four years to synchronies watches so that to confirm that we are moving towards our global goal – to double the number of wild tigers by 2022.”

“...We invite the world’s youths to join us in supporting tiger conservation. Our youth action plan has a role for everyone keen on lending support to youth tiger conservation movement – from increasing awareness to mobilizing youths to take action supporting tiger conservation, and from adopting green lifestyle to actively volunteering in activities such as replanting of degraded forest areas”, states the Appeal of the International Youth Forum on Tiger Conservation.

Let us together make the year of Tiger!

Tiger prints with name of each of 13 tiger-range countries
With WWF’s promotion, a consultancy committee for wild Amur tiger conservation, chaired by Mr. Ma Jianzhang, academician of the Chinese Academy of Engineering, was established on Oct 17 in Beijing.

More than 20 members of the committee are from Beijing Normal University, Beijing Forestry University, Northeast Normal University and Northeast Forestry University as well as Jilin and Heilongjiang Forestry Institutes and other relative colleges and academic organizations.

Officials from the State Forestry Administration, Forestry Departments of Jilin and Heilongjiang provinces also participated the inaugural meeting held in Beijing.

“Amur tiger, as the top predator in the food chain, is the hardcore indicator of the health and function of the place where it lives,” said Mr. Ma Jianzhang on the opening speech, “It is safe to say that protecting tiger means protecting human, ourselves. I am very glad to be the Chairman of the committee.”

All the participants raised constructive ideas and suggestions on Amur tiger conservation and how to fully function the role of the committee. “There are only biological experts in the committee,” noted Mr. Wang Xiaoping, Beijing Bureau of Parks and Woods, “more experts from other domains, such as sociology, economy as well as publicity should be in it since tiger conservation is an integrated issue of social economic development and biodiversity conservation.”

“We can draw both experience and lesson from WWF’s Minshan Initiative of giant panda conservation, a very successful model, in terms of species and habitat conservation,” Mr. Bai Xiaoming, Researcher of Jilin Environment Protection Department, said. “We should take it from a landscape-scale-level to develop the action plan and strategy for tiger conservation. He also suggested that the construction of highway and railway in Changbaishan Mountain should be considered hence it would impact the Amur tiger’s living corridor greatly.

At the same time, WWF officially issued one of its most important outputs for the Year of Tiger, the Recommendation of China Wild Amur Tiger Conservation Planning.

Highly appraised by the State Forestry Administration and all the participants, the recommendation divided 10 priority areas, such as Hunchun, Wangqing and Dongning, in Changbaishan Mountain and Wandashan Mountain for wild Amur tiger and its habitat conservation and management based on the real situation. The recommendation details the feasible actions and measures for each priority area in accordance with the potentiality and feasibility of the 10 areas.

WWF expected that the recommendation would be attached importance by each level of relative decision makers to promote both Chinese national and provincial governments to develop their own Amur tiger conservation.

Currently, there are still 4 subspecies of wild tiger in China, including Amur tiger, South China tiger, Indochinese tiger and Bengal tiger. However, Amur tiger is the only one which has the possibility to recover its wild population in China.
An Amur tiger is believed to have killed 2 cattle in Yanji, Capital of Yanbian Korean Prefecture in China’s Northeast province of Jilin. This is the first time in nearly 10 years of any signs of activity from the Amur tiger in Yanji, which may indicate the restoration of potential Amur tiger habitat in the area.

According to Chinese media, a villager from Nanzhangzhi Village in Yanji while herding his cattle in a small ravine discovered 2 cattle missing from his herd of over 50 cattle. Several days later the remains of the cattle were recovered in a nearby forest. Based on the evidence collected from the scene, villagers believe that the “culprit” could either be an Amur tiger or a bear.

The fur of the attacker was collected from the scene and sent to the State Forestry Administration’s Detecting Center of Wildlife based in China’s Northeast Forestry University. In early November, the DNA test results revealed that a 3-year-old Amur tiger was responsible for killing the cattle.

WWF notes that the location where the attack occurred was around an ecological corridor in the Changbaishan area, which was recently identified in a joint study by WWF and the as a potential linkage between two large patches of tiger habitat.

“The results from the tests provides evidence that the Amur tigers are spreading to larger potential habitats, and it also supports the importance to connect large patches of potential tiger habitat to facilitate the movement of tiger population,” said Dr. Zhu Chunquan, Conservation Director of Operations at WWF-China.

The study, a joint effort of WWF, WCS and experts from China’s Northeast Normal University, KORA and the University of Montana, identifies 9 Tiger Conservation Priority Areas (TPA) in the Changbaishan area and 12 linkages between these TPA’s.

The local forestry department in Yanji attributes the recent activity of the Amur tiger to conservation measures taken including a ban on hunting and conservation of the forest.

For the owner of the cattle, the loss of his cattle is definitely unfortunate. For the conservation community, however, it’s a bittersweet moment. On the one hand, this could be the result of many years of hard work implementing conservation strategies to protect the feline and hence serves as a welcome bit of information.

On the other, the attack on domesticated animals like the cattle does raise concerns as the ecological theory of populations dynamics suggest that the presence of predators like the Amur tiger is most eminent when prey populations are the most depleted. Based on the theory, the attack on the cattle may indicate that there are insufficient numbers of prey for the Amur tigers in the wild. This is of concern as it may lead to a number of disturbing outcomes that may be detrimental to conservation efforts.

“Firstly, if domesticated animals such as dogs contract communicable diseases and tigers could be infected, the disease may be transmitted to them and cause immeasurable loss to the population of tigers. Secondly, as there are not enough wild prey, tigers have to capture domesticated animals as food. If tigers are familiar to livestock, as a result this may gradually change the eating habits of wild tigers and impair their ability to survive in the long run,” says Mr. Fan Zhiyong, Director of Species Program in China.

In order to prevent further tiger attacks, the local forestry department has erected warning signs around the area. Local forestry officials have said that they will continue efforts to monitor the Amur tigers.

Due to significant conservation efforts to protect the Amur tigers along with improvement to the ecological environment of the nature reserves and the potential habitats, the population of Amur tigers is now showing signs of recovery.

Xinhua, a state-owned news agency, reported early this year that Amur tigers attacked domestic animals 19 times in the Hunchun Amur Tiger Nature Reserve in 2009, noting that forest workers have even captured the images of Amur tigers five times using infrared cameras from a distance.
TAIMEN CONSERVATION SUCCESS: CHANGING THE WAY PEOPLE RELATE TO NATURE

In order to inspire people to care about and protect nature, there’s a need to continuously seek for a wider range of tools for developing conservation leadership at the community level. WWF Mongolia’s communications work in the AHEC Mongolia focused on addressing illegal fishing activities in the Onon river within RARE Pride Campaign. The symbol of pride campaign is the Taimen, freshwater indicator species being on the top of food chain. The social marketing, a method for changing attitudes and behaviors that has been successfully applied by RARE was adopted for this campaign. The campaign manager, B.Gankhuyag is working with local fishing people to adopt catch-and-release fishing practices with the purpose of reducing illegal fishing.

This threat was expected to be reduced as local people will stop fishing in the winter and spring and will practice more “catch and release” fishing which is enabled by the fact that more monitoring and enforcement (in the form of Community Managed Areas, an Onon River Basin Council, and more) will be adopted. One-year extensive campaign, entitled “Set our Taimen free” came to end with the results that far exceeded our expectations. The following successes can be quoted as we compare the pre- and post campaign survey findings which were carried out using Apian® Survey Pro® software:

• At knowledge level: Legal knowledge of local fishermen increased by 40 percentage point;
• At attitude level: Attitude of local fishermen increased by 56.2 percentage point;
• At intercommunications level (the next stage of the theory of change): IC of local fishermen increased by 75 percentage point;
• At behavior level: 76.9% of local fishermen answered “take a catch and release picture with camera” and 19.1% of fishermen answered “don’t fish” with the question “How you show to others you are a good fisherman?” No one answered “keep dried taimen head for home” in same question.

Besides the quantitative results, there are number of qualitative findings, including:

• In 2010 in the Onon River totally 5 illegal fishing activities reported by all Soum inspectors, Park rangers and mobile anti-poaching unit, while there were no records in the previous years
• Fishermen collect taimen data and patrol at the same time with monitoring or fishing and taimen expert compile the data
RUSSIAN AND CHINESE CUSTOMS OFFICERS DISCUSSED PROBLEMS OF ILLEGAL WILDLIFE TRANSPORTATION

A work meeting on strengthening international cooperation to prevent illegal transportation of rare species and their derivatives from Russia to China was held in Vladivostok at the initiative of WWF Russia, TRAFFIC, and Federal Russian Customs.

Representatives from the Russia Federal Customs, Far Eastern Customs Directorate, Far Eastern Operative Customs, Siberian Customs Directorate, and General Customs Directorate of China, TRAFFIC Russia and TRAFFIC China took part in the meeting.

“International illegal trade in tiger parts and derivatives that are widely used in traditional Chinese medicine for preparation of high-value remedies is a great incentive for tiger poaching. This meeting gave an opportunity to the Russian and Chinese Customs to get ready for the implementation of St. Petersburg Tiger Summit decisions in terms of strengthening the control over tiger parts contraband”, - comments Alexey Vaisman, senior TRAFFIC program coordinator, WWF representative.

The draft “Action plan on international cooperation between the Customs of Russia and China in control over illegal trafficking of wild animals, plants and their derivatives across the customs border” was prepared based on the information reported by the Russian and Chinese customs officers and TRAFFIC representatives. The Action Plan is suggested to be basis for the Agreement for conclusion between the Customs of Russia and China.
Doubling the number of tigers is not only a great heritage of the tiger summit but also a great job, which needs great efforts in the field to make it happen.

In China, WWF and its partners in Jilin and Heilongjiang provinces are getting ready. The area of the tiger habitat under monitored is going to be tripled from less than 700 km² to about 2,000 km² in this winter. All the places are arranged along the Sino-Russian border in the two provinces, which are defined as priority areas for Amur tiger conservation in northeast China by WWF.

The increase of monitoring area needs more local partners’ support and enhanced manpower. Therefore, WWF organized a monitoring and patrolling training for 50 participants from one nature reserve and nine forest farms in Suiyang Forestry Bureau in Heilongjiang province from 5th to 6th, December. They learned how to identify the footprint of the wild animals in the snow, digital camera shoot, MIST operation. WWF also took this time to provide equipments, including digital camera, GPS and field work guide brochure, to the partners.

All the trainees were from the local, such as farmers of the neighboring communities, forest farm workers. According to the conservation experience of WWF, all of them would be able to be qualified as a ranger if only they get enough training and work with rational managing mechanism. “Amur tiger conservation can not be succeeded until we win the support from all the local people,” Dr. Jiang Guangshun, the Senior Program Office of WWF Changchun Office, addressed in the training.

Good news after the training is that the works from Suiyang forestry bureau arrested a poacher who was setting traps in the forest on December 10th and brought him to the local police office.

WWF’s tiger conservation is still in the primary phase in northeast China. There is no suitable way for the cooperation between WWF and its partners. Therefore, WWF developed 4 pilot models, say, forest bureau management model, forest farm management model, WWF management model and farmers management model. WWF will test the models respectively in the 10 pilot sites and promote the most successful one in all the tiger habitat in the next couple years.
MANAGEMENT PLANS UNDER FINAL STAGES

WWF Mongolia has facilitated first extensive consultation of Buffer zone and Onon-Balj National Park management plans was held in October 2010 in the territories of all 7 soums underlying the Onon river basin. In order to reflect baghs’ (the smallest administrative unit) and community groups’ voices, this draft has been discussed accordingly in November 2010. As the follow-up, the final management plans have been discussed ensuring the interlinkage between all plans during the stakeholders’ consultation held on November 30, 2010. The final Buffer zone management plans have been approved by local Parliaments of all 7 soums which is one of the main achievements of WWF Mongolia’s intervention in this area. Additionally, the first discussion of draft management plan for Integrated Water Resource Management of Onon River Basin was organized for stakeholders’ comments in Binder soum center on December 1, 2010.

The discussions were attended by totally 95 individuals including the Governors and Heads of Citizen’s Representative Khurals (local Parlia-
THREE PROTECTED AREAS DECLARED IN AMURSKAYA PROVINCE

As part of cooperation between the government of Amur region and WWF-Russia, two wildlife refuges Tokinskiy and Nizhnenorskiy and a buffer zone of Zhelundinskiy refuge were created in Amurskaya Province in October-December 2010.

Tokinskiy refuge with the area of 251 000 hectares is aimed to protect habitats of snow sheep included into the IUCN Red Lists, as well as Red Lists of Yakutia, Amurskaya and Khabarovskiy Provinces.

Nizhnenorskiy state wildlife zoological refuge on the area of 30 280 hectares has to protect migration routes for the Nora River roe deer which number is the bulk in the whole roe deer population in Amurskaya Province. This is the only grouping of roe deer in the world making mass seasonal migration. Every fall, hundreds of animals cross the Nora River leaving the Norskii state reserve with their summer habitats for the southern areas of the Province. But while crossing the river the hoofed animals lose their main advantage, the speed, thus becoming an easy target for poachers. The refuge where hunting is completely banned as well as staying with arms will allow raising the effectiveness of roe deer protection. These restrictions will be in effect from March, 1 – November, 1.

Nizhnenorskiy is number 34th regional refuge in Amurskaya Province and number 2 created this year.

“Migrating roe deer is a unique phenomenon on the Earth, comments Yurii Darman, head of WWF-Russia Amur branch, who has spent 20 years researching and protecting this species. And to enjoy their full beauty is possible only on the Nora River. Scientists from France and Great Britain worked here with us; several beautiful documentaries were shot here. We could lose the population if Dagmarskaya hydro power station was built here as were planned several decades ago. We thank the Amurskaya Province Governor for this Gift to the Earth! ”
The Bikin River Valley has been included into a Tentative List of UNESCO World Heritage Sites at the request of Russia’s Minprirody based on documents prepared by WWF, Greenpeace and partner organizations.

“Thanks to long cooperation between Greenpeace, WWF, Association of Indigenous people of the North we managed to initiate activities on Bikin inclusion into the List, comments Svetlana Titova, WWF-Russia Amur branch program coordinator. - Within the last 3 years WWF invested over 30 mln rubles into conservation and development of this territory. Money are being given not only international public funds but also by governmental structures of other countries as tiger and Korean pine are regarded to be nature treasures of the whole planet”.

The Bikin River valley is the last intact large massif of Korean pine-broadleaved forests in the Russian Far East. This is 1.3 mln hectares of taiga which is home for 30-35 Amur tigers and indigenous tribes Udege and Nanai.

This unique territory should belong to all people of the Planet and be protected by the world community. Korean pine forest gives nuts to be eaten by wild boars, red deers, squirrels, sables, and other animals. Tigers chase wild ungulates not allowing diseases and overpopulation to happen. Udege people go hunting and fishing preserving traditions and lifestyle of their ancestors. And their traditions are very simple: do not shoot tiger as it is a forefather of your tribe; do not cut Korean pine as it feeds all forest dwellers; do not distress your neighbors as life is given for happiness!

The Bikin River Valley could become part of the World Heritage

Forest and steppe fire prevention belt

Officers of Disaster Prevention unit of Emergency office of Khentii aimag led by the State Inspector of Disaster Prevention, carried out forest and steppe fire prevention belt within 140 km long distance along the State border strip between “Khumul Gol” military unit in Binder soum and “Kheriin Gol” military unit in Dadal soum. The task was completed within 21 days, despite delay of planned work for four days due to weather condition /snow fall/. Since the fire prevention belt was created close to the Russian border, the performers had 3-4 fire extinguishers to be used in emergency cases. In addition, the officers met heads of military units of Tsagaan Chuluut, Bukhun, Agats and Kheriin Gol for consultation of other areas, where such works could be done. During meetings, they provided with warning on prevention from potential fires that might have appeared during work and instructions on prevention from forest and steppe fires. The fire prevention belt was created at width of 70-100 m.
November 24, Ussuriysk, Russia. Magistrate of a court in the Primorskiy Province found Sergey Burtsev guilty of killing a female tiger in June 2010 in the surroundings of Krounovka village.

The court imposed a fine of $4800 as penalty and additional fine of $18 400 as a compensation for the environmental damage to the State. Sergey Burtsev already paid $1600, and the court confiscated his two illegally possessed guns.

“I’m very satisfied with the court decision, says Pavel Fomenko, biodiversity coordinator at WWF-Russia Amur branch. - We had an opportunity to provide the quality of expertise and full evidence needed for the case on illegal hunting. Finally, the law triumphed in a tiger case. I hope that from now on, tiger killers will be prosecuted without mercy”.

Poaching is still one of major threats to tiger conservation. Reinforcement of environmental control and punishment for illegal trade, keeping and trafficking of tiger skins and other parts was included in the proposals that WWF submitted to the Russian Government this year. WWF-Russia believes that punishment for trade, trafficking and keeping of tiger parts must be more severe and comparable with punishment for tiger killing.

“We are planning to toughen punishment for tiger poaching and for the criminal business on these animals”, said Russian Prime-Minister Vladimir Putin in his introduction speech at the International Tiger Conservation Forum in St. Petersburg.

“The planned legislative changes are very relevant and timely because at present tiger poachers can’t even be sentenced to imprisonment, says Gennady Zherebkin, law enforcement advisor of the WWF-Russia Amur branch. - The latest court decision on tiger killing is one of the few cases when a tiger poacher was found guilty of a criminal offence. A similar sentenced was passed in the Primorsky region in 2004. It doesn’t mean that during 6 years in between no one killed tigers. It’s just that unfortunately, such crimes are difficult to prosecute. In this case we won thanks to cooperation between environmentalists, law enforcement authorities and judiciary”.

WWF believes this sentence to be a turning point in the Russian environmental court practice.

The mobile anti-poaching unit “Irves-5” which deals with monitoring & patrolling of poaching and illegal wildlife trade throughout Onon river basin has arrested 12 cases of illegal actions and imposed totally about 1200 USD as fines to violators and offenders during the reporting period, from October to December 2010. The most serious cases include poaching and trade cases of taimen, Mongolian gazelles, roe deer, wild boar and Siberian marmot. The public awareness lectures has involved around 320 local residents covering different topics such as law awareness, information sharing, best practices and fire prevention.
The Government of Russia has taken a huge step to save key Amur tiger habitats by banning Korean Pine logging.

Just before the International Tiger Conservation Forum, which took place on November 21-24 in St. Petersburg, the Russian government has adopted a new version of the list of tree and shrub species prohibited for commercial timber logging, and included Korean Pine in the list.

WWF-Russia included this ban in the list of top 8 measures that must be taken in Russia for tiger conservation, which were presented to the Ministry of natural resources and environment of Russia in summer 2010.

Korean Pine harvest is important for at least 50 species, including the wild boar, one of the main prey species of the Amur tiger. Korean Pine forests played a key role in Amur tiger conservation during the drastic decline in its population (down to just 30 animals) on the Sikhote-Alin in the first half of the 20th century.

In 2007, Korean Pine forests received an almost mortal blow – the new Forest Code of Russia cancelled the ban on industrial Korean Pine logging. Taking into account that commercially valuable timber stocks are depleting, forest companies rushed to use the remaining available forests – the protection forests. As a result, the largest amount of Korean Pine timber in history was exported from the Russian Far East in 2009, and according to WWF estimates, its harvesting exceeded the allowable limits by 2.5-3.7 times.

“Today, Korean Pine forests are in the worst condition in the recent history, says Denis Smirnov, head of the Forest Program of WWF-Russia Amur branch. - And half-measures could not save them from complete degradation. Widely announced plans of the regional forest departments and foreestries to voluntarily reduce pine logging turned out to be empty promises made to divert the public and government attention from the problem. In this situation, the only adequate decision was to introduce a full ban on Korean Pine logging, and we have been insisting on it for three year and a half”.

Ban on Korean pine logging is the best gift for the Amur tiger in the Tiger Year.

A GUARDING AND MONITORING SHELTER WAS BUILT

In recent years, illegal mining operations are getting intensified in Gutai Davaa and its vicinity in the territory of Batshireet soum of Khentii aimag. These illegal actions are believed to be source of potential environmental destructions, particularly the negative impacts on Onon river. In order to halt these illegal operations and improve regular monitoring on illegal hunting, fishing and running unsustainable tourism activities a guarding and monitoring shelter was built at Khadagt Uvur area in Onon Bag territory with support of WWF Mongolia Programme Office. The guarding shelter was completed by “Onon Guard” community members and highly appreciated by local government commission. Local residents are pleased as they regard this shelter will make vital contribution in improving monitoring on illegal activities.
On October 20 WWF Russia held an emergency press conference demanding the exemption of protective forests in the Bikin River Basin of northern Primorsky Province from a timber auction authorized by the provincial Forest Management Department. Commentary on this pressing issue was provided by WWF Russia experts, by representative to the Legislative Assembly. Testimony was sent to the Forest Management Department and Primorsky Province Ecological Prosecutor’s office on the illegality of including in the auction logging sites in the Bikin River Basin, which since 2009 have been held under lease by the indigenous peoples community enterprise “Tiger.”

The scheduled auction would open up three key Amur tiger habitats for logging: the Pozharsky and Bikinsky Pine Nut Harvesting Zones and the proposed “Middle Ussuri” wildlife refuge, which would protect a key tiger migration corridor from Russia to China. Public reaction to the auction, in Russia and abroad, was universally negative, all the more because Prime Minister Putin has invited all heads of state of tiger-inhabited countries to participate in the International Forum on Tiger Conservation in St. Petersburg. In the run-up to this summit, the public was anticipating news of a different sort. The Prime Minister’s press secretary Dmitriy Pyeskov responded that questions of Amur tiger research and protection are under the direct control of Mr. Putin, but that a full public statement was pending investigation of the circumstances surrounding the auction.

As a result, as announced by the communications department of “Primorye Forest Management Association” – the main bidder for the so-called “sanitary logging” rights - the scheduled auction was not held. More than 30 logging sites that were to be opened up for intermediate logging were not offered, despite considerable pressure from interested parties to make them available. As the Forest Management Department explained, its director Pyotr Diuk departed on holiday, and the commission responsible for conducting the auction simply did not appear.

Anatoly Belov, a long-time Russian anti-poaching ranger working on the frontlines of protecting tigers has been awarded the 2010 WWF Duke of Edinburgh Conservation medal this November.

Belov, 48, has been active in anti-poaching activities in Southwestern Primorsky province on the Russia-China border for 22 years, and his efforts have been crucial in protecting the endangered Amur tiger. He has led a team that has detained hundreds of poachers over the year, and confiscated dozens of weapons. These efforts came despite upheavals and changes in the government that saw his superiors replaced, and without taking any time off or holidays.

“This is a great honor that will truly support our work to save the magnificent Amur tiger,” Belov said. “I hope this award also inspires others to support the men and women around the world who risk their lives protecting wild tigers from poachers.”
COMMUNITY “YARGUI” HAS ITS “PARTNERSHIP PALACE”

Community “Yargui” of Binder soum of Khentii aimag was established in 2009. It has 12 members from seven households. In 2010, the community drafted its forest management plan as they are part of local forestry management community groups. The “Yargui” is the one who established the first community palace in the soum. The first event held in the palace was a workshop on improved participatory co-management held on December 11, 2010. As one of the best communities, the “Yargui” has already signed the cooperation agreement with the soum Governor. The members are active in attending trainings and workshops organized by a variety of partners, taking part in environmental conservation activities, knowledgeable in sustainable use of natural resources as well as making continuous progress in livelihood support business.

LOCAL COMMUNITIES HAVE DEEPER AND DEEPER KNOWLEDGE ON GROWING VEGETABLES AND FRUITS

Within the framework of the project “Poverty Reduction through Community Based Natural Resource Management” being implemented in Onon River Basin, local communities aim to improve their livelihoods and to ensure the sustainable use of natural resources through learning about vegetable and fruit planting and growing practices. The third-phased training was carried out during the time, when local farmers store, preserve and process their harvests and prepare their vegetable plots for the coming winter based on their knowledge and practices acquired during previous training phases. Training was attended by totally 165 individuals of Dadal, Norovlin, Bayanadraga, Binder, Batshireet, and Umnudelger soums of Khentii aimag and Bayan-Uul soum of Dornod aimag, all soums underlying the Onon River Basin. On training, the participants were introduced with various methods of vegetable preservation, processing and storage of their harvests for their consumption and use until the next year’s harvest and digging of small sized cellars/storage pits for household purpose. Moreover, the participants learned about how to prepare and preserve their fruit seedlings and vegetable plots for winter mainly from the DVDs that showed instructions. Furthermore, totally 84-hour training (12 hour training per a soum) on technology of woody plants and seedling planting during autumn was provided through classroom trainings and practicum on vegetable plots in accordance with the approved training programme. On this third-phase training, the manuals and DVDs were distributed to all the participants and the Soum Coordinators. In addition to learning process, the participants exchanged their achievements, experiences and lessons learnt as well as future plans during the training. All local communities attended the trainings were happy with their achievements and skills gained during three-phased trainings.
Women’s Council of Dadal soum of Khentii aimag has held a consultation meeting on November 23, 2010 aiming at developing their annual work plan as the follow-up of the appeal issued by Onon River Basin Women’s Forum in August 2010. The consultation meeting was attended by over 30 women coming from both rural and settled areas. They discussed and identified options to improve/intensify the soum Women’s Council performance; developed and approved annual work plan which includes totally 16 types of activities. The Council members have agreed on amount of membership fee that would somehow contribute to intensification of activities. It was decided that Women’s Forum will be held on annual basis with specific focus on thematic areas, promote variety of contests including making traditional dresses and educational lectures/workshops for the soum female residents in the most efficient way.

Poverty in rural areas becomes widespread from day to day. To make contributions in poverty reduction in rural areas, a 14-day professional training on construction carpentry was organized in Dadal soum starting from October 25 to November 08, 2010. Training was attended by 21 unemployed individuals from seven soums in the Onon River basin. The attendees were selected based on several criteria, including willingness to improve their livelihoods through carpentry works, to have basic skills to do carpentry. Training was given by professors from Forestry and Public Awareness Institute under the University of Science and Technology with theoretical and practical approach. Practicum was conducted in the Onon-Balj Information center, where the trainees completed its insulation and interior design maintenance. About 80 per cent of trainees have basic carpentry skills and experiences e.g. in building wooden houses. Upon the completion of this training, they expressed full satisfaction because they have learned about carpentry art, including building houses and making a variety of wooden items that surely make contributions in improvement of their future livelihoods. 25 per cent of trainees have skills and experiences in carving. They developed their first business plan on making carved products and supplying the markets. Certificates were awarded.
Eco-club members of secondary school in Umnudelger soum of Khentii aimag organized a campaign “If the surroundings is clean, the mind is sound” (from October 1 to December 1, 2010) among the secondary school students in order to motivate them to protect the environment and have more creative thinking in cleaner or more sound surroundings. Within the campaign, a number of competitions were organized including collection and presentation of existing materials related to traditional environmental conservation practices, collection of plastic bags, recyclable waste and bottles abandoned in their residential area, the work which was carried out in cooperation with the soum ranger. They collected and sold totally 120 kg of plastic bags and bottles to local traders of recycled materials. Additionally, drawing and essay writing contests “Taimen is king of fresh water” and a contest of logos pertinent to the environmental conservation were announced and successfully organized. The eco-club members, who have been highly appreciated by local residents with the campaign, are also planning to organize a campaign “Let’s protect wildlife” in the nearest future.