



WWF Russia

WWF Mongolia Programme Office

WWF China Programme Office

Amur/Heilong Ecoregion Complex Newsletter Issue 9, July to October, 2008

Achievements

1. 25 local fish observers were identified to assess taimen and Amur sturgeon



Tagging exercise leading by fly fishing guides © WWF Mongolia

During the summer season WWF Mongolia has identified 25 local fish observers. These people are known in their community as the ones who know every twist of river and fishing holes, and are most frequently approached by outsiders as a guide for adventure fishing especially for taimen.

Aims of selecting these local observers was to assess taimen and Amur sturgeon distribution, migration patterns and key habitats so as to form the basis for the conservation planning and to involve in conservation efforts. Related trainings were held as first steps toward changing knowledge attitude practice (KAP).

WWF has got permission from the Academy of Sciences and Ministry of Nature and Environment to conduct taimen habitat and population density assessment by tagging taimen in Onon River. The tagging exercise was carried out by Mongolian Rivers Outfitters (MRO) fly fishing guides using Floy T-bar tags. The detailed information about colors and numbers of these tags will be shared with local observers allowing them to record migration and density of taimen in the area. Based on the ratio of tagged and untagged fish during the catch and release in subsequent years, taimen population density will be estimated and progress to conservation of adult taimen will be measured.



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During second training on 7 September, local observers were trained fly fishing techniques through in-class discussion on taimen conservation. Participants shared their views and concerns about dwindling taimen population and how to increase the population, including pro and cons of taimen hatchery that are often advocated by local scientists.

2. New national parks succeed in the Amur tiger protection

Zov Tigra (Call of the Tiger) and Udegeiskaya Legenda (Udege Legend) actively threw themselves into actions on protection of tiger and its habitats. Staff was hired, poachers caught, and weapons confiscated. But what is more important – all logging operations have been stopped in the NP's territories with all the loggers' hardware removed. Most activities were done with funds allocated by WWF and STF (Save the Tiger Fund). Two cordons were built, off-roaders, radio equipment and field outfit for inspectors purchased. In September, WWF made a "regular" present: Zov Tigra got the former visitor center in the village of Chuguevka; for Udegeiskaya Legenda a building was purchased to be reconstructed and redecorated for the park's needs.

3. Experts workshops advance Free-flowing Study

On July19 and Sep.6, Changchun Programme Office held two FFS workshops, which promoted the process of FFS. Participants were Mr. Li Heyue, Deputy Chief Engineer of Songliao Water Resource Committee, Mr. Bai Xiaoming, Jilin senior Ecology expert, Ms. Yu Hongxian, from Northeast Forestry University Mr. Li Lin, from Heilongjiang Forest and Science Institute, Mr. Lv Xiangguo and Mr. Li Ying from, Northeast China Geographical and Agricultural Ecology Institute, etc.



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FFS kick-off meeting in Changchun ©WWF China/Luo Xingbi

After two-month hard working, all experts have largely promoted the FFS process. They shared information of distribution and population about Amur River (China Part) fishes like sturgeon, huso, salmonhucho taiman, etc; the eco-function of Sanjiang Plain, stem of Amur River and Dalai Lake like flood water storage, wetland carbon library, microclimate regulation, self-purification of water body, habitats

providing, etc. GIS experts will arrange data to generate maps. While next task is to provide suggestions for the threats assessment frame proposed by International technical team, so that a unified technical criteria can be worked out soon.

4. A unified protected area will be established in the Russian Far East for the last 30 Far Eastern leopards

On August 14, a meeting has been conducted with Sergei Ivanov, vice-premier minister of Russia, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Ecology, and WWF. It was devoted to the conservation of last 30 leopards. Finally, an agreement was reached to establish a unified protected area for leopard in the Far East. WWF had been trying to achieve this goal for a long time.

The Ministry of Natural Resources submitted proposals to shift the oldest nature reserve in Russia-- "Kedrovaya Pad", which is now under the supervision of Russian Academy of Sciences and two adjacent wildlife refuges (zakazniks) – Barsovy and Borisovskoye Plateau under its supervision. Sergei Ivanov, vice-premier of Russian Federation, supported this proposal.



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5. Together with local efforts to promote core areas conservation

Following the Government approval of internal zoning of the Onon-Balj National Park, which was prepared with direct supported from WWF MPO, WWF MPO carried out a participatory assessment on how to protect the core zones of OBNP. The assessment revealed the main threats to the ecosystem, such as wildfire and illegal hunting for big ungulates and taimen by holiday makers and amateur hunters from cities. The team has been identified through participatory approach. The assessment also identified the extent of the pressures from local herders on biodiversity.



Meeting with local potential volunteer rangers
© WWF Mongolia

The finding of the assessment will be discussed by the County governors and the OBNP Administration to agree on nominating these volunteer rangers. Once these volunteer rangers put in place, WWF will provide basic training and gadgets such as communication equipment for these volunteer rangers.

6. Festival in favor of the Far Eastern leopard knocking each door

This year, all three districts of southwestern Primorye, the so called Land of the Leopard, joined the ranks of those who celebrate traditional "Land of the Leopard" festival. On September 19, four villages of Khasanskii district feasted the event, on September 20 and 21, other villages "followed the example". All together 28 secondary schools, about 2000 kids and 500 grown-ups took an active part in the festival.



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Leopards' festival is loved by kids and grown-ups.

© WWF-Russia / D. Kuchma

Special attention deserves the fact that this time the leopard's holiday was done not only by kids and teachers but also by kids' parents. Mums and Dads helped the kids to design costumes and decorations during the preparatory stage of the feast, and also acted as real helpers in the festival: they fried pancakes in a Kindness Street, played mini-performances, sewed a blanket for the leopard,

and drew posters. On September 27, the city of Ussuriisk will invite townsmen to enjoy the festival named "Big cats of Primorye" that will portray both leopard and Amur tiger, leopards' elder brother.

7. Korean Pine conservation promoted in Northeast China

On Aug.18, 2008, WWF Changchun Programme Office participated in the International Symposium on Conservation of Hongsong (Korean Pine) in the hometown of Korean Pine---YiChun City. This symposium enhanced the international communication and cooperation on Korean Pine protection, probed the effective ways of sustainable development



Korean Pine cones © WWF Russia/D. Kuchma

of Korean Pine resources, by which to promote the international process of Korean Pine conservation. Participants included NGOs like IUCN, WWF, Man and Biosphere, TNC, etc, experts of Chinese Academy of Sciences, Chinese Academy of Forestry, etc.



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Korean Pine is a precious and venerable tree, providing abundant food and living space for wild animals. Over half of the world's Korean Pine grows in Northeast China, with Changbaishan mountain ridge and Xiaoxing'anling as its core distribution zones.

On Sep.1, 2004, the Major of Yichun City (located in Xiaoxing'anling) issued "the No.1 Order", taking lead of the Country, determinedly prohibited the logging of nature Korean Pine forest, and conducted a series of Korean Pine conservation activities.

In the year of 2006, according to the nature regeneration and growing principle of Korean Pine cones, Jilin Provincial Forestry Department issued a policy: Prohibit Korean Pine cones collection in Changbaishan NR. This policy created fine condition for Korean Pine's regeneration, so the forest would have a good "rest". After the Prohibition, population of wild animals in Changbaishan NR enjoyed an obvious increase, which will benefit and promote the implementation of Changbaishan Amur Tiger/Leopard Conservation Planning.

Taking advantage of the opportunity that Yichun has been listed as one of China's first batch cities with low carbon in the air, Yichun Government expressed their willingness to make breakthroughs in carbon sinks transactions with support of WWF. Mr. Lou Jia, Head of WWF Changchun Programme Office expressed congratulation to the workshop on behalf of WWF China.



International Symposium on Conservation of Hongsong (Korean Pine) in the hometown of Korean Pine---YiChun City ©WWF China/Hou Baisen



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8. Program on animals' conservation adopted in Primorye

In Primorskii Province, a decree about Provincial Program "Protection of Fauna Species" was adopted and will be put into effect during the period of 2008 to 2010. WWF's experts provided consultancies in its preparation. Basically, the new law is intended to protect wild ungulates through reinforcing structures responsible for supervision over game species exploitation. The funds allocated for the program's implementation — 2 mln euros — will be used to increase staff and provide inspectors with needed equipment. This law is the first one adopted across RFE and Siberia in the sphere of hunting management.

WWF hopes that the neighboring Knabarovskii Province will follow the example where similar program has been already elaborated but not yet approved by deputies of State Duma and the Governor.

9. Gasprom's project in the Land of the Leopard

WWF voiced its remarks on the construction of a gas pipeline planned to be built in the Land of the Leopard in the southwestern Primorye. On August 15, public hearing on the Sakhalin-Khabarovsk-Vladivostok gas pipeline project was held in Slavyanka.

According to WWF's and WSC's data, the projected route of the pipeline will intersect territorial plots of seven leopards, and this is one fifth of the whole leopard's population. The pipeline is drawn right on the trails where camera traps are set to register existence of rare cats in the wild for five years already. We do hope that Gasprom's specialists will consider the current situation and try to minimize possible negative impact of the new industrial project on the rare animal.



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Others

1. "History of wildlife smuggling in the Russian Far East" published in Vladivostok

A unique book about the history of wildlife smuggling in the Russian Far East covering more than 100 years (XIX – beginning of XXI centuries) was published in Vladivostok in September. The book was written by Sergei Lyapustin, PhD, Professor, former operative Customs officer with more than 10 years of operative working experience. The book covers history of the Russian Customs and regional aspects of fighting with wildlife contraband in the Russian Far East. The book is available only in Russian.

2. 2008 Green Ambassador Campaign

After 2 months' ambassador selection and training, 24 students from 7 universities of Jilin and Heilongjiang Provinces got the opportunity to participate 2008 GAC.

With the theme of "Walking into Wusuli River, protecting flagship species", 24 ambassadors conducted field activities at Zhenbaodao NNR, Hulin etc, after filed activities, pictures exhibition and essays collection publication are followed.



GAC: habitat survey in Zhenbaodao NR ©WWF China/Luo Xingbi



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3. "Root of life" does not give rest to smugglers!

4 seizures of wild ginseng roots with a total weight of 4 kilo 545 grams were made by the Far Eastern law enforcement agencies in Primorskii Province from August to mid September, 2008! WWF experts were involved in all seizures providing biological expertise. The increasing number of seizures of derivatives within last years is a result of close collaboration among WWF-Russia, TRAFFIC Europe-Russia and the Customs in the Russian Far East.

4. Winners of environmental journalism contest announced



Yurii Darman [greets](#) winners of the environmental journalism contest

© WWF-Russia / O. Sass

Second round of the Far Eastern contest of environmental journalism "Zhivaya Taiga" ("Living taiga") was conducted in cooperation with WCS, "Phoenix" Fund and other organizations. The jury examined 40 television and 148 written materials submitted by 62 journalists from Primorskii, Khabarovskii, Kamchatskii, Amurskaya and Jewish Provinces. This time the themes of the contest extended from 6 to 9. 34 journalists became winners and laureates of the contest. Grand prix, the trip to

Chanbaishan in China, was given to Aleksandr Velikanov from one of the popular newspaper "Vladivostok".



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5. Changbaishan Reserve's specialists visited Primorye

WWF provides assistance to Russian and Chinese PAs located in the Amur tiger range to foster ecotourism development, to develop joint approach for tiger conservation and its restoration in China. On WWF's invitation, five Changbaishan Reserve's representatives came to Russian Far East to visit several PAs and WWF's visitor center "Land of the Leopard". Soon, the return visit of Russian PAs staff is planned to Changbaishan.

6. Trial-use of Amur Tiger Law Execution Inspection and Resource Monitoring Management System

Amur Tiger Law Execution Inspection and Resource Monitoring Management System is developed by WWF Changchun Programme Office, Jilin Provincial Wildlife Conservation Association and Jilin Provincial Academy of Sciences. From now on, Hunchun NNR, Wangqing NR and Huangnihe NR will trial-use this system in their daily work. If works well, it will be popularized in the whole Jilin Province. Meanwhile, Dongning NR of Heilongjiang Province will also trial-use this system. Using the system, NRs can input a unified form of execution and monitoring data, which helps a lot in data analysis after sharing.