



WWF

2021

Jan-March

AHEC e-newsletter

ISSUE No. 59

ASIAN BIG CATS

On a Mission to Protect China's Amur Tiger

In northeast China lies vast areas of forest that is the home of Amur tigers. We hear an account about what it takes to protect this area, from Liu Duo, an anti-poaching officer with WWF-China.

My name is Liu Duo and I've grown up on our forest farm since childhood. From a young age I've formed deep connections with the mountains and forests here, and now I'm protecting them as a WWF anti-poaching officer.

Poaching is a major threat to the survival of Amur tigers and although it's strictly prohibited by the government, poaching and the illegal wildlife trade still exists. Snares are common and anything trapped in a snare falls victim to their deadly grasp, including

tigers. It's hard to stop the poaching but we're dedicated to our anti-poaching goal which is "zero poaching".

"Anti-poaching" means we stand against poaching. WWF and partners support patrol teams in nature reserves to build their capacity and work together towards strengthening joint law enforcement and community anti-poaching groups. This is all so we can offer a safe home for Amur tigers and leopards. Being part of an anti-poaching team is hard work behind the scenes. I often walk many kilometers with other rangers to track tigers and maintain our camera traps. Most of the time I only see the footprints and scat of this amazing animal. We also support nature reserves in other ways such as setting up an Anti-poaching Supervision and



Evaluation Mechanism Pilot (SAMAP), introducing new management tools and helping to train rangers. But sadly, in many places poaching still occurs; sometimes I ask myself, "when will we achieve zero poaching?"

Mr. Zhan who is a senior ranger once said to me: "Your father is very proud of you. Now we all know that his son is protecting the tigers." I'm very moved by his words. As nature conservationists we try our best and we're confident zero poaching will be achieved. To support the efforts of rangers we have introduced tools that will increase the protection of these areas. SMART patrolling enables rangers to accurately record patrol routes, signs of poaching and images that can be saved as evidence. SMART patrol is already used as a regular conservation tool in China's tiger range.

Another conservation tool being used to improve tiger habitat in the area is Conservation Assured Tiger Standards (CA|TS), the world's first accreditation standard for tiger reserves. It can identify areas for improvement in a nature reserve, and then we can help fix the problem. Huangnihe National Nature Reserve is expected to be soon upgraded from a registered CA|TS site to an accredited CA|TS site.

Innovating is critical to stay one step ahead of poachers and so we've been working with Intel and Hikvision to introduce artificial intelligence (AI) anti-poaching technology. Manual identification of wildlife is particularly time consuming and it's hoped the AI can speed this process by automatically identifying wildlife.

For me though the most exciting thing is that the snare density in the anti-poaching pilot area dropped to a very low level; this means the application of SAMAP is effective, and we can confidently promote SAMAP to more nature reserves.

WWF's government partners, Northeast Tiger and Leopard National Park Administration, Jilin and Heilongjiang Forestry and Grassland Administrations fully understand the importance of the anti-poaching work in protecting tigers. They organise and conduct various forms of anti-poaching actions in key tiger range every year. Together our long-term efforts have been contributing to reducing poaching.

We want to do our job well, safeguard homes, work hard for the goal of "zero-poaching" with our actions, and ensure tigers have a safe home. I grew up surrounded by the forest and for me the anti-poaching patrols not only protects Amur tigers, it connects me to my home and I will continue to safeguard it with my love of nature in my heart.

Special Action against Wildlife Illegal Activities

From November 2020 to February 2021, WWF used AI anti-poaching prediction model and SMART data to help NCTLNP formulate a third-party acceptance scheme and establish a third-party patrol working group compassed by 26 rangers in field.



In March, this third-party working group and relevant experts were divided into three teams and went to Northeast China Tiger and Leopard National Park (NCTLNP)'s sub bureaus to assist its "Special Action against Wildlife Illegal Activities 2020 Winter -2021 Spring". WWF and WCS teams also supported the acceptance plan for this special action.

The final acceptance report will be carried out from April to May 2021. The special action in a large-scale can not only shows the anti-poaching achievements of the sub-bureaus of NCTLNP, but also further promote the anti-poaching work in China's national park pilot system.

Beekeepers and Hunters Joined Efforts to Preserve Honey-Bearing Forests of Primorye



A public anti-poaching brigade has been formed out of game users and beekeepers. These categories of forest users are interested in preserving honey-bearing trees and preventing illegal logging of linden and other valuable species. The brigade will operate within the Amur tiger range in Primorye in the territory of three model hunting leases.

The project of WWF-Russia to preserve honey-bearing forests was launched with the support of the Credit Bank of Moscow (MKB) and is being implemented by the Union of Beekeepers of Primorsky Province and the "Fauna", "Sinigorye" and "Yakovlevsky RZOP" hunting clubs. The public anti-poaching brigade represented by game users and beekeepers will help to prevent illegal logging of linden on the territory of more than 100 thousand hectares.

In 2018, WWF-Russia appealed to the provincial authorities to take urgent measures to preserve the Far Eastern lindens. In 2019, special "no take zones" appeared in the Primorsky Forest Plan in which the felling of linden is prohibited. However, the high demand and market price for linden wood leads to illegal logging of linden, including within the "no take zones".

At the end of 2020, WWF Russia, together with the Ministry of Forestry and Hunting Management of Primorsky province organized [a training for game](#)

users and beekeepers to combat illegal logging. The certificates of public inspectors will allow them to carry out not only the protection of game resources, but also to identify illegal logging.

More details are here: <https://wwf.ru/en/resources/news/amur/pchelovody-i-okhotniki-primorya-obedinilis-dlya-sokhraneniya-medonosnykh-lesov-vostochnogo-sinego-kh/>

VTB Bank and WWF Support the Rehab Centre TIGR in Primorye

Thanks to the joint project of VTB Bank and WWF Russia, the Center for the Rehabilitation “TIGR” received an ISUZU pickup truck and a Yamaha Grizzly ATV with complete set and a trailer for its transportation for effective work on the rehabilitation of large predators and mitigation of human-wildlife conflicts. Regularly, the Center’s staff go on long distances to resolve conflicts with predators, and these are most often remote taiga corners and swamps with no access and roads. Therefore, both the car and the quad bike are very helpful. Vehicles and equipment from VTB and WWF, which the staff received earlier and now, is used in works to minimize conflicts between humans and wild animals, track movement with released tigers in Evreiskaya Province.



The Rehab Center “TIGR” is a public organization which needs systematic and regular funding. At present, WWF Russia provides support both for keeping individual animals at the Center, and also basic funding such as the construction and maintenance of enclosures, power supply, the purchase of fuels and special equipment.

More details are here: <https://wwf.ru/en/resources/news/amur/vtb-i-wwf-pomogayut-sentru-reabilitatsii-tigr-v-primore/>

Hunting Clubs of Primorye were Trained to Increase Ungulates Numbers and Carry out Sustainable Hunting Management

The workshop was organized with support of WWF Russia Amur branch on March 10-11 in Severnaya hunting lease, one of WWF’s model areas.



Participants gained knowledge on control over extraction of game resources within the Amur tiger habitats and other rare species, learned about measures to increase the number of game resources, and summed up preliminary results of the extremely difficult winter of 2020-2021. Due to the epizootic of African swine fever, which was first recorded in the Pogranichny district of Primorye in August 2019 and by now has spread to all areas of the Amur tiger and Far Eastern leopard habitat in the south of the Russian Far East, there is an urgent need to increase the number of ungulate species alternative to wild boar. This is necessary in order to prevent the conflict of large predators with humans due to a decrease in the food resources.

The practical part of the workshop was held on “Severnaya”

hunting club territory, which thanks to WWF, has all available forms of infrastructural objects and facilities to increase ungulates numbers even in such difficult seasons such as 2020-2021.

New Snowmobiles for the Bikin National Park

In January 2021, four BURAN snowmobiles, full sets of winter and summer outfit for 22 rangers, a large batch of building supplies and tools to repair the rangers' station became a New Year's gift to the Bikin National Park from WWF Russia.

It became possible thanks to a joint initiative of WWF Russia and the Discovery Channel campaign to increase the number of tigers. While the craftsmen are still sewing traditional patterns on rangers' jackets, the test-drives for snowmobiles are already completed and the rangers are on their way to winter counts in taiga.



“Thanks to the joint project of WWF and the Discovery Channel implemented in 2020, WWF Russia has already donated 3 outboard engines, a Yamaha Viking snowmobile, wood processing equipment for construction works at the Takhalo Ranger Station, tools for setting camera traps on the territory of the Bikin National Park and 1000 batteries for the Amur tiger camera trap monitoring, a Mitsubishi L 200 SUV fully equipped for work in the forest. A new batch of vehicles, equipment and building materials totaling over 3.5 million rubles, which entered the national park this year, continues this cooperation. Our immediate plans include the purchase of the TREKOL HUSKY all-terrain vehicle with components, worth about 6 million rubles, which is very necessary for raids to remote areas of the national park, delivery of the necessary supplies and materials,”

comments Peter Osipov, director of WWF Russia Amur branch. Currently, WWF Russia also supports the Bikin National Park to create a buffer zone and is implementing a project for a School of Local Guides with the support of HSBC Bank.

More details are here: <https://wwf.ru/en/resources/news/amur/snegokhody-ot-wwf-rossii-popolnili-avtopark-np-bikin/>

Tiger Pen-Friend Project in Social Media

The project was launched in the WWF Russia's social media accounts in February. This is a correspondence between two tigers, a male Zeus living near a large metropolis and a “girl from the hinterland” Madeleine from the central areas of the tiger's range, where WWF projects are carried out. The pen-friends share news about their everyday tiger life, the pressing problems for tiger conservation in Russia. They discuss the actions taken by the WWF for the conservation of tigers, their prey species and habitats. The information is given in a literary and accessible form and the project has already received many positive reviews.



GREEN BELT OF AMUR

From Russia to South Korea: New Scientific Data on Oriental Stork Migration

Two Oriental storks tagged with GPS transmitters in Russia with the support of WWF were observed on the wintering sites in South Korea. Unique information about two Oriental storks tagged in Russia with GPS transmitters wintering in South Korea was

received in early December 2020. Experts from the Endangered Species Restoration Center of the National Institute of Ecology of the Republic of Korea helped to check the signals of the transmitters, track these birds and find out their condition.

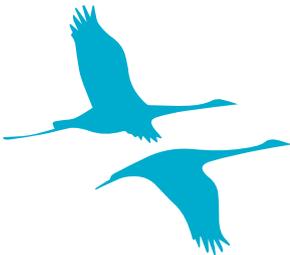
According to Anna Serdyuk (Barma), Ph.D., senior coordinator on protected areas at WWF-Russia Amur branch: “The Oriental stork breeding grounds are located in the Russian Far East and Northeast China. Birds arrive here in spring, bring offspring, and early in autumn, when the chicks grow stronger and finally take their wings, storks fly to wintering sites in the Yangtze River basin, Lake Poyang in China. A few individuals spend winter in Japan, South Korea



and Taiwan. A small group of 20-30 wintering birds is annually observed in South Korea, but it has not yet been possible to track their exact migration routes. The fact that we can observe two birds tagged in Russia in a group of 20 storks wintering in South Korea is an amazing event! This also shows the efficiency of the international Oriental stork monitoring program, which WWF-Russia launched in 2018 jointly with the Chinese Academy of Sciences and the network of protected areas in the Amur basin. After 3 years of the program implementation, 132 Oriental storks had been already tagged with GPS transmitters.”

New data on their migration route were obtained thanks to international programs on stork conservation and joint efforts of specialists from Russia, China and South Korea.

More details are here: <https://wwf.ru/en/resources/news/amur/iz-basseyna-amura-v-yuzhnuyu-koreyu-vpervye-polucheny-tochnye-dannye-otkuda-dalnevostochnye-aisty-pr/>



Two Rarest Red-Crowned Cranes Released into the Wild in Primorye

On March 29, in the buffer zone of the Khanka Lake Nature Reserve. These birds were rescued from death with the support of WWF and were kept at the Rehabilitation Center TIGR to be prepared for independent life in the wild. This is the first case of rehabilitation and wintering of Red-crowned cranes at the Rehab Center in Primorye.

One of the birds, a 1.5-month-old chick, was rescued in summer 2020 in Evreiskaya Province and timely delivered to the Rehab Center. In March, specialists of WWF-Russia and Center TIGR put a ring and a GPS transmitter on the bird.

Its neighbor by the enclosure, who was brought to the Rehab Center in February 2021,



already had such tags. A two-year-old Red-crowned crane named Quater was born in the Muravyevsky Nature Park of Amurskaya province, from where it was released into the wild in May 2020. For unknown reasons, the crane lost its way, did not fly to the south of China or the Korean Peninsula for wintering, but stayed in the north of Primorye, far from migration routes. The signal from the transmitter helped to locate the bird and rescue it. For more than two months, ornithologists from the Amur-Ussuriysk Center for the Study of Bird Biodiversity and the Federal Research Center of Biodiversity of the Far Eastern Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences, with the support of

WWF Russia, local residents and the Wildlife Management Department ensured the life and safety of Quater in the snowy and frosty Primorye. It was finally caught and taken to the Rehab Center only in early February.

Both birds spent winter in a warm house, which was specially purchased for the Rehabilitation Center with the help of WWF-Russia supporters to keep heat-loving rare birds, and before the release they were kept in one enclosure.

According to expert recommendations, the release of cranes into the wild took place in Primorye in the buffer zone of the Khanka Lake Nature Reserve, in the period that experts consider the most suitable for this bird species.

More details are here: <https://wwf.ru/en/resources/news/amur/v-primore-vernuli-v-prirodu-dvukh-redchayshikh-yaponskikh-zhuravley-/>

Nest Building for Scaly-sided Merganser



In March, WWF supported OPF and Songjianghe Forestry Bureau for 15 artificial nest boxes installation to help the scaly-sided merganser's (*Mergus squamatus*) breeding population recovery in Changbai Mountain.

The scaly-sided mergansers nesting in the holes of tall trees. Their habitats are lack of natural tree holes for nesting. Based on the scaly-sided merganser conservation practice, the artificial nest building is an effective method for the bird population recovery, as the nest boxes provide the necessary nesting facility for the birds. According to the survey, there are stable breeding populations of the scaly-sided merganser in the Songjianghe River and Manjiang River Basins with potential suitable trees for nesting.

For the next step, WWF will work closely with its government partners in Jilin Province for the actions plans draft and execution for scaly-sided merganser conservation aiming to recover the breeding population of the bird from 200 pairs to 400 ones in the next 10 years. In addition, WWF and its partners will carry out regular monitoring and patrol work, together with the necessary management and technical training.

Barbed Fences around Croplands are a Threat to Mongolian Gazelle

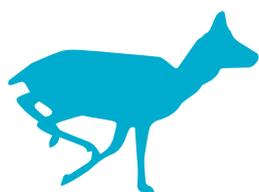
WWF-Mongolia in cooperation with Eastern Mongolia Protected Area Administrations' officers and rangers has conducted a field monitoring on the species population in territories of Khentii, Sukhbaatar, and Dornod provinces in Eastern Mongolia in February, 2021.



The field monitoring team has collected numerous important biodiversity and socio-economic data including locations of steppe ungulate and domestic livestock herds, deep wells, open water sources in the region. Amongst, there is a concern raised by the monitoring team. It was mortality of Mongolian gazelle. The team found carcasses and remains of a total of 279 died Mongolian gazelle individuals during its fieldwork. Collected them to a site, they disinfected and buried. According to their field notes, main causes for most of the died gazelles are the barbed fences around an airport and cropland that impeded mobility and caused to die; and shortage of natural hays and freezing temperatures during the harsh winter condition with heavy snow fall.

Recently, incidents of Mongolian gazelle mortality have been increasing due to the cases such as catch by domestic dogs, a scarcity of natural hays, and barbed fences around croplands in the region. Therefore, conservation efforts need

to address at mitigation, prevention, and elimination of these causes. "To accurately plan and implement effective safeguarding measures onsite, the scientifically based judgment and recommendations supported by detailed research and monitoring data are required. Thus, the field monitoring is carried out within designated areas to have detailed monitoring data" said the monitoring team members.



Inventory on the Ungulates within Khar Yamaat Nature Reserve has been Initiated

WWF-Mongolia has been delegated with the responsibility of Khar Yamaat Nature Reserve (NR) Administration since 2014 and a progress has been seen in conservation management of the Nature Reserve.

Values of Khar Yamaat Nature Reserve for which it was established include the wildlife such as red deer and roe deer. However, the recent data on their populations and locations were not available, except for informal reports by local herders and records in the bio-

fund data kept by the NR rangers. Upon consideration of these existing weaknesses, WWF-Mongolia has initiated a field inventory on wildlife populations within the NR in March, 2021 used the linear transect method that is widely applied in international practices. The inventory was joined by rangers from the NR and Bayan-Ovoo soum Khentii aimag and Tumentsogt soum of Sukhbaatar aimag, the soums (sub-provinces) located in a buffer zone of the NR. During this field inventory, the team recorded the data of seven species which included 14 individuals of red deer (*Cervus Elaphus*), 45 individuals of roe deer (*Capreolus pygargus*), and 136 individuals of Mongolian gazelle (*Procapra gutturosa*) along its routes designated. The team included wildlife specialists and rangers report that these records are an important



update for the database on the wildlife populations within the NR. The rangers including volunteer rangers in the NR have been trained with how to properly use the field devices including GPS and demonstrated their applications during the field inventory.

Khar Yamaat Nature Reserve is Bouncing Back



Entire Khar Yamaat Nature Reserve (NR) affected by steppe fire in spring 2015. The fire resulted dramatic decline of the rodents which are integral part of the steppe ecosystem. Researchers and students from National University of Mongolia is conducting biodiversity monitoring survey every year at Khar Yamaat NR since the steppe fire. Recent results from monitoring indicates that small mammalian population in Khar Yamaat NR is bouncing back to its former state after 5 years of recovery. The Korean field mouse, which often settle the disturbed habitats at first, was only dominant species after steppe fire. It was no longer dominant species in 2020 giving a place to Brants's vole and Striped dwarf hamster, which are typical residents of Daurian steppe in Mongolia. Moreover small mammalian species increased from 3 species in 2016 to 7 species in 2020 along with 10 times increase in abundance.

Recent Conservation Efforts on Ereen Range

WWF-Mongolia and Administration of Onon-Balj National Park (ONNP) placed automatic cameras in designated sections abundant by wildlife traces on Ereen Range



in 2020 autumn to collect data on the wildlife species compositions and occurrence to update the database. Researchers checked functionalities of the cameras and downloaded captures from the digital cameras on January 21-23, 2021. In addition, they jointly with the NP officers and rangers took biotechnical measures: putting hays in the areas on the Range.

Situated in territories of three soums (sub-provinces) of Khentii aimag (province) and one soum of Dornod aimag, Ereen Range is rich in its biodiversity including three species of coniferous forest: Krilov's pine, Dahurian larch, and Chekanovskii larch that are only found on the Range, but not in the rest of the Mongolian territory. Out of these species, the Dahurian larch (*Pinus daurica*) is listed in the Red Book of Mongolia. The Range is distributed by the wildlife species such as musk deer (*Moschus moschiferus*) and moose (*Alces alces*) included in the Mongolian Red Book. Ereen Range is one of the target conservation spots designated in the management plan for ONNP.

Capacity Building Training for Newly Recruited Rangers

An area “Gutai Davaa” located in the head of Amur River was protected and included in the national Protected Area network as a result of long-term dedicated efforts of WWF-



Mongolia and other stakeholders in the country. The area was officially approved by the Parliament of Mongolia in May, 2020 and its conservation management is put with Onon-Balj National Park (OBNP) Administration according to Decision of Environment and Tourism Minister. Recently, six rangers have been newly recruited for the Range.

WWF-Mongolia and OBNP Administration organized capacity building and orientation training for the rangers in March, 2021. The rangers were provided with insights of many relevant issues including who are rangers and their main duties as stated in the package environmental laws. In addition, they were provided with basics of linear transect monitoring, proper use of GPS and SMART application for patrolling data analysis, and monitoring on

forest cleaning. The participants-new rangers completed some field demonstrations in Steppe River valley with guidance of the NP Administration’s officers and trainers.

Yet Another Grid Company Joined Actions on Oriental Stork Conservation



DRSK company has approved a five-year program to protect rare birds from electric shock. The program was developed basing on data on the Oriental storks breeding sites in the Amur basin, provided by WWF Russia, and became the result of many years of cooperation between power engineers and WWF.

Action plan of the program includes protection power lines from biological damage as a result of the Oriental stork breeding on electric towers. This year, DRSK power engineers will install more than 7,000 (and 28,000 in total by 2025) protective devices on power transmission poles in the Amur region, preventing the birds from landing on bare wires. This protection will reduce bird mortality from electric shock. Power engineers will also insulate the wires on the towers with stork nests to avoid short circuits. DRSK plans to spend about 35 million rubles on bird protection

devices and wire insulation.



The Year for the Wetlands-2021 kicked off on World Wetlands Day in the Amur Heilong River Basin

Marking the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Ramsar Convention, WWF announced 2021 as the Year for the Wetlands in the Amur-Heilong River Basin. WWF Russia, WWF China and WWF Mongolia with partners unite efforts for wetlands conservation.

In Russia, 35 territories have this status with 6 in the Russian part of the Amur. However, the work on establishing new Ramsar sites or enlarging the area of existing sites lacks the nationally approved mechanism for this process. Therefore, WWF Russia’s main



task within the Year for the Wetlands is the adoption of the national level procedure for establishing wetlands of international importance in Russia.

In the Year for Wetlands, an inventory of the Ramsar sites in the whole Amur-Heilong ecoregion is planned, as well as the assessment of the existing threats, and development of management plans for these territories. The work on research and conservation of rare bird species inhabiting wetlands, primarily cranes and storks, will be continued. WWF's partner organizations - nature reserves and national parks, public environmental organizations, student nature protection brigades, plan to organize dozens of events in the Year for Wetlands: photo exhibitions and presentations, talks and lectures, game programs, contests, quests and

quizzes- and participate in international contest of children paintings "Wetlands for Life" on <https://amurinfocenter.org/>. An is launched, a photo exhibition "Wetlands of the Amur Basin - Guardians of life" is displayed there

More details are here: <https://wwf.ru/en/resources/news/amur/vo-vsemirnyy-den-vodno-bolotnykh-ugodiy-v-bassejne-amura-startuet-god-vodno-bolotnykh-ugodiy/>

Ten Activists in Amurskaya Province Received Certificates of Public Inspectors

NGO AmurSEU and Bars brigade are the key partners of WWF Russia in Amurskaya province. For the third decade, these organizations are engaged in the implementation of public control over compliance with environmental legislation. Last year, together



with state environmental authorities they organized more than 100 patrols, that resulted in more than 150 reports on violation of environmental legislation. Almost 6 kilometers of illegally installed nets were seized, dozens of unregulated garbage dumps in protected areas and places of illegal mining were revealed. Last year, they were actively involved in the work to detect the unsustainable placer gold mining areas, and inform government agencies and the public about this problem.

Obtaining certificates of public inspectors will increase the efficiency of work to identify violations and simplify their interaction with environmental authorities.

WWF believes that the development of the institution of public inspectors and the involvement of local people in activities to identify environmental violations is one of the most important mechanisms for protection of natural complexes. More details are here: <https://wwf.ru/en/resources/news/amur/barsy-i-amursoes-stali-obshchestvennymi-ekologicheskimi-inspektorami/>

E-training on Improved Law Enforcement

WWF-Mongolia facilitates improved cooperation and capacity building of the stakeholders, namely civil servants and environmental practitioners through its joint trainings on environmental conservation organized at local and central levels. One of the recent capacity building events organized is the e-training on preventing and

halting wildlife poaching crimes for local police officers including ecological police (e-police) officers in soums (sub-provinces). It was jointly organized by Khentii Aimag's Sub-Council for Prevention from Environmental Crimes on March 1, 2021. Purpose of this round e-training was to share instructions of inspection and detection of wildlife poaching related crimes based on documented case studies and incidents. In addition to the instructions and recommendations, the participants were also able to receive detailed answers to their questions asked. This type of training is necessary for local law enforcement officers to increase their knowledge and skills to combat illegal hunting and trade of wildlife and their parts. Thus, the e-training has become an important step for knowledge-experience sharing for local officers in the province.

GREEN ECONOMY

WWF Appeals to the Ministry of the Environment to Protect Rivers from Placer Gold Mining

One of the main WWF's proposals sent to the Minister of Natural Resources and Environment of Russia, is to introduce a ten-year ban on the issuance of licenses for prospecting, exploration and extracting of placer gold deposits on rivers not previously affected by this type of activity.

Thanks to the public monitoring, which WWF Russia conducts jointly with a number of environmental NGOs with the support of the Presidential Grants Foundation, in recent years many river pollution cases have been revealed during placer gold mining, including in areas close to indigenous people settlements. As a result of satellite monitoring, in May 15 to October 15, 2020, 231 cases of river pollution were detected on the territory of the Far Eastern Federal District. The total length of the polluted river sections was about 6650 kilometers. Most of these violations have been confirmed by the results of inspections by state environmental authorities.

The letter also includes proposals to return the project documentation for the development of placer gold deposits to the list of objects of the state ecological expertise, as well as to introduce a moratorium on the development of deposits near protected areas and in areas of value for the conservation of biological diversity and economic activities of the local population.

For the past four years, WWF Russia has been working with the Coalition of environmental organizations to address placer gold mining issues. Satellite monitoring of river pollution, carried out with the support of WWF, made it possible to assess the scale of the problem and draw the attention of state bodies to it. Training of public inspectors is underway to reveal the facts of river pollution on the ground. Work is underway with state authorities to tighten control over gold miners.

More details are here: <https://wwf.ru/en/resources/news/zelenaya-ekonomika/wwf-rossii-prosit-minprirody-zashchitit-reki-ot-zolotodobychi/>



SUSTAINABLE FORESTRY

In Primorye, Auctions for Timber Harvesting in the Rest Zones for Linden and in Green Areas of Settlements Stopped

The Primorsky Province Ministry on Forestry has canceled the tender for the right to harvest wood on eight sites in the central Primorye, which have plantings of different categories of protection.

In December 2020, WWF Russia sent an appeal to the Ministry about the need to cancel the auction for 7 sites in two forestry units which were offered for harvesting wood in November and December. The analysis of the project documentation carried out by WWF Russia showed that these sites have approved rest zones for linden, specially protected forest areas and are located in the green zones of 11 settlements, which will inevitably lead to negative social and environmental consequences.

WWF Considers this decision as a right and timely. The existing forest legislation does not provide any chances for the local residents to be involved in the process of forest management, even when the forests closest to the settlements – green zones and other forests with high social significance – are taken into consideration. That is why the social aspect should be taken into account in advance, at the stage of planning and forming lots. WWF positively assesses the decision of the regional Ministry and hopes that in the future forest plots will be formed with regards of the ecological and social value of forests. More details are here: <https://wwf.ru/en/resources/news/amur/v-primore-ostanovleny-torgi-na-zagotovku-drevesiny-v-zonakh-pokoya-po-lipe-i-zelenykh-zonakh-poselen/>



COMMUNICATION

In the Year for the Wetlands Protected Areas of the Amur Basin Launched a Campaign to Protect Rivers, Lakes, and Swamps

On World Wetlands Day, five provinces of the Russian Far East: Khabarovsk, Primorsky, Zabaikalsky, Amurskaya and Evreiskaya provinces, with the support of WWF-Russia, an environmental education campaign was launched to protect rivers, lakes and swamps. More than 5500 people took part in offline and online events over just one week.



On February 5, a round table "The current state of wetlands in Evreiskaya Province" was held in the visit center of the **Bastak NR**.

On February 2, on the initiative of the **Lazovsky NR** and the **Zov Tigra NP**, 12 eco – lessons "Wetlands are the Keepers of Life" were held in secondary schools of three local secondary schools.

The **Udegeiskaya Legenda NP** developed a rich program for schoolchildren of all ages. For grades 5-8, a lecture " Rivers of the Krasnoarmeysky district ". For the initial level – eco-lessons "The amazing world of swamps". For high school students, the skills competition was conducted.

Employees of the **Khankaisky NR** prepared a set of presentations, games, and films about the wetlands for educational institutions.

In Ussuriysk, the **nature protection team "Tis"** opened the Year for the Wetlands with an informative lecture on the importance of wetlands in the ecosystem and an interactive game for students of the Primorsky State Agricultural Academy.

In the Khasansky district of Primorye, with the support of the **District Department of Education**, the schools of four villages held class hours and creative classes: children drew and made crafts of the inhabitants of the swamps.

A seminar for teachers of the village of Troitskoye dedicated to the Year of Wetlands and upcoming events was held in the visit center of the **Anyuysky NP** on February 2. For teachers, a virtual tour across the wetlands of the NP was held.

And much more other activities were conducted.

E-competition for "Steppe Ecosystems"

WWF-Mongolia successfully organized an e-competition to publicly publicise a copyrighted book "Steppe Ecosystems" through online platform with active youth participation. The book contains key details on the steppe ecosystems those are to be shared publicly. The competition was held in three phases for a period from January to March, 2021. It was actively participated by 69 students studying in domestic and foreign universities.

At its first phase, a question-answer (50 questions related to details from the book) was organized online. There were 24 students replied all the 50 questions with right answers at this phase. They were invited to move the next (second) phase of the competition.



The participants were asked to prepare and make their presentations on the book “Steppe Ecosystems” at the second phase. The best presenters from the second phase were grouped (three in each) and asked to prepare and present short ads, posters, and short videos on the selected key points from the book to the public online. At the final phase, the selected groups were asked to make their presentations on solutions of the concerning issues to the steppe ecosystems. 10-minute presentations from each group were zoomed online for selection of winners.

According to the organizers, the competition was much informative for either its participants (students) or the public as the detailed insights on the steppe ecosystems and their values were presented and shared in interesting ways. One of the ultimate goals of the competition was to show importance of team working towards the environmental conservation.

Awareness Activity on the Value of Water and its Efficient Use

WWF-Mongolia and Khentii province jointly marked the World Day for Water. This event was participated by representatives from the local government offices dealing with water related issues, namely the Aimag’s Departments for Environment and Tourism

and Hydrological and Meteorological Research and the Governor’s Office and local communities. The event was held in either online or onsite (in phases) due to the pandemic COVID-19. For instance, awareness was raised by special programmes on the water protection legislation and economical water use aired online and local televisions under a call for “Let’s Economically Use Water”. Eco-club members-school children delivered key messages attended pre-programme awareness raising events on value of water and its efficient use, prevention from water pollution, and eco-friendly living styles with a focus on water containers used by households. Moreover, the school children actively took in online presentation competition on water value. This was interesting and informative for them.



During this year’s events, the present and previous data on water consumption in residential areas from the previous year were compared and presented to

the communities. The comparison data show the water consumption in residential units in Khentii province has increased. This may be influenced by the government policy to release from utility bill payments by residents until July 1, 2021 due the pandemic outbreak in the country, according to the event organizers. This pandemic related response is helpful for the people to overcome the recent hard time on one hand, but it leads to wasteful water consumption on other hand. Therefore, a call for economical use of water has been widely disseminated for the public online under the World Day for Water. Overall public attitudes and responses to the call are much positive and motivate. A contest for short ads on sustainable water use was also announced and the best products were selected and shown to the public on local mass media.

Earth Hour 2021 in China

On March 27, 2021, "Earth Hour" event attracted government, social institutions, enterprises, and the public all over China to jointly made a ten-year environment conservation commitment of "connect to nature". In addition, many cities in China have held various offline and online activities for the public involvement of nature protection. WWF's strategic partner One Planet Foundation (OPF) held Earth Hour Changchun event on the theme of "Run for Tigers". This event integrated the wild tiger conservation workshops, live shows, conservation exhibition, and tiger charity fair to showcase tiger conservation and encourage the public to take actions for protection.

The audience learned the story of tiger "Hu Wa", the importance and urgency of ecological corridor building for tiger habitat restoration, as well as the snaring issues and anti-poaching. OPF has invited WWF wildlife officers to give presentations on tiger projects with interactions with the public.

This year, Li Qiao, from Nanling Affiliated Primary School of Jilin University, won the runner up award of Dr. Rimington Children's Award. Dr. Rimington Children's award is a global tiger protection award initiated by WWF TAI and its partners to recognise and encourage the children worldwide who have made outstanding contributions to tiger conservation.

150 volunteers from Jilin Television Children's Art Team brought nature poems and song toto the public: Nature Reciters, Love for the Nature Is My Eyes; nature conservation artists put the performance of the beauty of nature in the form of songs and dances at Earth Hour.

In addition, the fair of "Run for Tigers" attracted a large number of Changchun citizens. People witnessed the snares in the tent with the volunteers' explanation, and made donations for OPF's tiger conservation programmes.

This year "Earth Hour" highlights "action" and "hope", stresses the issues of global biodiversity decrease and habitat loss, brings people from all over the world together, arouses their attention on nature conservation.



Earth Hour 2021 in Russia

Vladivostok:

* The youth public association "Model UN in the Far East held a week dedicated to the Earth Hour at the Far Eastern Federal University. An ECO-quiz, a film marathon, a series of lectures, a flash mob, and a quest were held. In the FEFU itself, the lights were also turned off.

* Velosvetlyachki Vladivostok organized a bike ride with reflective badges with the symbols of the Earth Hour

* Five restaurants and café turned off the electric lights to lit the candles on the tables of their clients. 100 post card was disseminated among the clients asking them to sign an appeal to the government. The action was supported by Pacific Russian Food

* All-Russia Kids Center "Okean" held interactive classes for 450 kids and youth.

* The lights of 126 buildings were turned off in the city

Ussuriysk:

* Students from the nature protection team "Tis" gathered by candlelight in the hostel of the Primorsky State Agricultural Academy and discussed over tea the environmental problems that can be solved today, including with their participation.

* The Far Eastern Technical College held a light flash mob, turning off the illumination of the dormitory building in the form of a lotus.

Khabarovsk:

* The Separate Collection Movement and the All-Russian Society for Nature Protection (VOOP) held flash mob installations against waste pollution of the planet's natural ecosystems at the Polyana separate collection station from 20-30 to 21-30. In the parking lot in front of the separate collection station "Polyana" on the territory of the shopping center "Ecodom" there was an installation of plastic bottles as the most mass type of household waste with the participation of people who practice separate waste collection.

* The nature protection team "Khekhtsir" in Khabarovsk organized the game "ecomafia" for students of the Pacific State University in the Horizon Tourist Club.

Blagoveshchensk:

* The nature protection team "Bars" in Blagoveshchensk held a flash mob where the guys symbolically lined up with phone flashlights in the big numbers "60+" at the Yunost stadium

Zeya:

* Zeysky NR together with the House of Children's creativity "Rovesnik" gathered young people in the traditional "Song Circle" - an improvised concert with the guitar



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