



WWF Russia
WWF Mongolia Programme Office
WWF China Programme Office

Amur/Heilong Ecoregion Complex Newsletter Issue 11, January to April 2009

Achievements

1. A new Field Office of WWF Mongolia was established in Dadal soum

In February 2009, WWF Mongolia sets up its new field office in the Dadal soum (county) of Khentii aimag in the eastern part of the country. The field office team comprises of 8 staff: Ch.Chinbat, office director, P.Davaatsetseg, operations officer, B.Narantsatsralt, the NRM and conservation officer, B.Gankhuyag, community development officer, G.Bolortuya, communications and public awareness officer, D.Bat-Erdene, driver, B.Maitsetseg and Kh.Bayarsaikhan, the office assistants. In the first stage, the office's main task is to undertake the JFPR (Japanese Fund for Poverty Reduction) funded and ADB supported project, entitled "Poverty Reduction through Community-based Natural Resources Management" in the Onon-Balj river basin, the inauguration of which was held on 6th of February 2009 in the Information Center of the Onon Balj National Park (OBNP).

The project implementation areas include Dadal, Norovlin, Bayan-Adarga, Binder, Batshireet, Umnudelger soums of Khentii aimag and Bayan-Uul soum of Dornod aimag. Number of conservation issues will be addressed, such as wild forest fire, illegal wildlife trade, climate change, environmental education, law enforcement and legal environment activities etc. Here, the community involvement will be the main pillar for success. The office will concentrate its efforts on developing and implementing NRM plan, enhancing the local communities' capacity to manage resources in sustainable ways and providing opportunities for local communities of alternative and environmental-friendly livelihood options in the OBNP and its buffer zone.



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Staffs in the new office
 © WWF Mongolia

“An opportunity opens up for you since the project implementation period overlaps with your 4-year elections’ mandate. We deem it is important to establish close cooperation in the project activities. Since this is the first joint project with ADB, we should try our best in order to create a powerful team and deliver good results”, said B.Chimed-Ochir, Director of WWF Mongolia. The soum governors also have expressed their

willingness to build close partnership and render support in implementing the project activities. And the office now is working hard to achieve high conservation results through pinpointed activities in collaboration with local communities and other organizations.

2. Timely help has been provided to ungulates in disastrous weather



Feeding wild ungulates © WWF-Russia



Roe deer in heavy snow © WWF-Russia



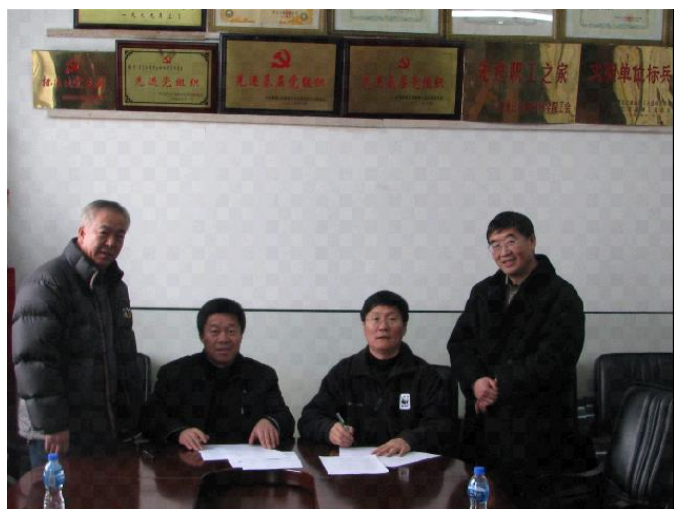
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Very hard and even hostile weather conditions in the northern Primorye has made WWF announce this territory as a disaster area. WWF together with WCS allocated funds to protect ungulates and provide them with forage thus preventing high mortality of wild hoofed animals. So called Reserve Fund has submitted small grants varying from \$500 to \$1,500 to hunting estates which could provide real help to the animals, i.e. to those have detailed plan on how to prevent high mortality of ungulates and possess tools and equipment to implement it. In total, 8 hunting societies out of 12 applied were granted for a total sum of about 8000 Euros. Mainly, the money was spent for purchasing fuel for snow-mobiles and purchasing forage and salt.

3. Amur tiger conservation agreement has been signed between WWF China and Heilongjiang Wildlife Institute

Under the framework of 2008-2009 WWF & SFA cooperation MoU, the Amur tiger conservation agreement has been signed on Jan.19 between WWF China and Heilongjiang Wildlife Institute (SFA designated unit) after half a year discussion. This was a real leap forward since 2007 which was considered as tiger difficult time in China. It was a good momentum last October in Yanji that most of VIP network colleagues gathering together with SFA and its provincial departments' positive involvement. That was a real turn that all parties domestically and internationally agreed to develop Changbaishan plan in the same boat



Signing the agreement
© Heilongjiang Wildlife Institute



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After the agreement was signed, Dr. Zhu led WWF China team visited Jilin and Heilongjiang forest departments/agencies and discussed tiger conservation. It was quite positive for WWF to have local support to take some tiger efforts soon in two demo sites, one is in Dahuanggou, where tiger information was collected three times at the end of 2008, and the other is in Nuanquanhe, current tiger habitat bordering Jilin, Heilongjiang and RFE. Set-up snare-free zone will be the first project in these two demo site, which is supported by StF.

4. Research shows wildfire is one of the main threats to the Onon Balj river basin

Over the last 8 years, 89 incidents of wildfire broke out in the Onon river basin causing more than 1 million USD of ecological damage. Out of these 16,8 percent of wildfires moved in from Russian Federation while the reason of 49,4 percent of incidents is not identified. The rest of incidents is reported to be derived from households' ashes and cigarettes. 6 cases of fire derived from peat due to dryness in recent years should caught our attention. Taking into example the single case of Dadal soum, 85 percent of total territory was subject to fire in 2007 and 2008.



Tree after the wildfire © WWF Mongolia

The forest fire causes major problems such as changes in the plant diversity, increased fire stricken and unrooted trees in the riparian and mixed forests, pasture degradation and dry-up of rivers and water sources. Therefore, it is necessary to take immediate actions to conduct trainings on prevention of forest fire and reporting on incidents, undertake related practical

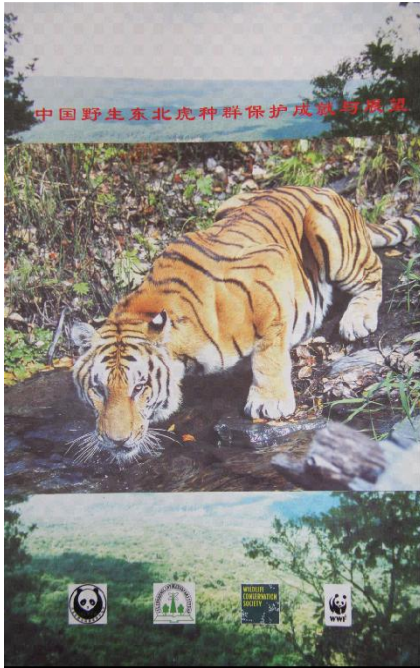
exercises and create fire prevention belt along the border areas.



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5. "Conservation Achievements and Expectation of Wild Amur Tiger in China" was published



"Conservation Achievements and Expectation of Wild Amur Tiger in China" © LUO Xingbi, WWF China

In later Jan 2009, "Conservation Achievements and Expectation of Wild Amur Tiger in NE China" was published by WWF Changchun Programme Office, Jilin Forestry Department, Jilin Wildlife Conservation Society, Jilin Forestry Academy of Sciences and WCS. This book is composed of 5 sections. First, the general introduction of current Amur tiger situation in China, such as population and distribution; second, threats that tiger faces; third, government's efforts and achievement on tiger conservation; fourth, NGO's efforts and achievements on tiger conservation, including WWF and WCS; and fifth, future expectation of tiger conservation. This book has been distributed to forestry departments of Heilongjiang and Jilin Provinces and forest bureaus in tiger distribution areas.

6. Monitoring of the Amur tiger has been carried out in Primorskii and Khabarovskii Provinces

WWF-Russia, WCS and Far Eastern branch of Russian Academy of Sciences have conducted annual monitoring of the Amur tiger in its habitats in Russia---Primorskii and Khabarovskii Provinces. Monitoring has being conducted for 12 years already and gives information for analysis of tiger population dynamics and characteristics of its distribution and reproduction from year to year. These data are main monitoring results.



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Another important goal of the research program is controlling large wild ungulates' status as well as changes of tiger habitats quality and its potential victims. This year, monitoring area will be as large as 23,500 square km with 16 plots laid in Khabarovskii and Primorskii Provinces. Totally 6,000 km of transects will be covered by foot, ski and snowmobile. Mapping will be registered on the plots tracks of both tigers and wild ungulates. Results of the field research will be summed up in April when all the activities are finished. The integrated report will then be prepared and forwarded to the governmental structures responsible for tiger conservation in Russia.

7. Ungulates counted from helicopter's board

On January 27-February 3, WWF together with partners conducted aerial survey of wild ungulates in the southern part of the Sikhote-Alin mountain range that is considered priority for conservation of the Amur tiger and its prey in Primorye. The first aerial survey was done in 2004. Results received and processed will enable us to evaluate the changes occurred



Sika deer air viewed during winter ungulates survey © V. Aramilev

over the last 5 years. During 7-days long census 64 plots laid in territories of several hunting societies were surveyed from helicopter board. According to our preliminary estimates the situation with wild ungulates has not become worse.



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8. Jilin Forest Industry determinates to make 843,000 ha forests certified by FSC and Mudanjiang Forestry Administration Bureau promises to make 768,000 ha forest FSC certified

On March 2, 2009, Dr. Zhu Chunquan, Conservation Director of WWF CPO, Mr. Lou Jia, Head of Changchun Programme Office and Mr. Wang Hong, senior programme officer were invited to join a FSC Certification cooperation meeting by Jilin Forest Industry. Mr. Gao Bo, Head of Forest Certification Office, Ms. Cui Yajun, from Ministry of Science and Technology of Jilin Forest Industry, etc joint the meeting.



Meeting in Jilin Forest Industry
© LUO Xingbi, WWF China

Mr. Gao Bo generally introduced the Industry. There are 8 forestry bureaus about 1350,000 ha locating in Jilin Provinces. Major products are Dew River Flakeboard, Jiqiao Floorboard and Quanyangquan Changbaishan Natural Mineral Water, which are in the list of top ten famous brands in China. In order to guarantee overseas market, especially for Dew River Flakeboard, the Industry

determinates to develop its own brand by using its own certified wood. Mr. Gao Bo said, the Industry now is trying to make at least 2 forestry bureaus certified this year, and another 2 forestry bureaus in the coming years, totally about 843,000 ha. In this process, WWF is invited to provide technical support to the Industry, such as classifying forests according to the HCVF standards, give suggestions to the forest management plan, etc. Dr. WWF really appreciate their passion in forest certification, suggested that involving all the 8 forestry bureaus in the application process will benefit all of them was also accepted by the Industry.



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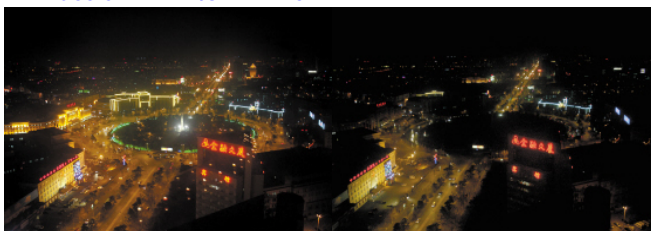
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On March 3, 2009, a meeting was held in Mudanjiang to discuss future cooperation on FSC certification participated by WWF China, Rainforest Alliance, IKEA and Mudanjiang Forestry Administrative Bureau, Hailin Forest Bureau and Chaihe Forest Bureau. During the meeting Mudanjiang Forest Administrative Bureau promised to further apply for forest certification in the second stage, including 156,311 ha of Hailin Forestry Bureau and 345,272 ha of Chaihe Forestry Bureau. Once these forests are certified, the forests will play an important role in conserving Wild Amur tiger, which will vice versa protect the forest ecosystem.

9. Earth Hour Swept Primorye and Changchun



One of the posters in Russia © Viktor Khmelik



Before and after the lights off at Renming Square in Changchun © LI Hongliang, New Culture View

WWF-Russia Amur branch and WWF China Changchun Programme Office were actively participating in Earth Hour. In RFE, Primorskii Province Governor and mayor of Vladivostok officially supported EH and promised to switch off buildings of provincial and city administrations. In both RFE and Changchun City, the light was switched off on big

buildings as well. In Changchun, about 130 companies and enterprises, 12 universities and more than 100,000 people directly participated in the EH action. Youth environmental movement was taking an active part in the action.

In Primorye they distributed leaflets, conducted mini lessons for kids in secondary schools, etc. In Changchun, except for united university actions, they formed an EH team, visiting EH participants, sent presents and distributed EH concept.



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Other Information

1. In line with the community-based natural resource management project's launch, the public information center of OBNP in Dadal soum of Khentii aimag opens its door to



Visitors looking up data in the information center © WWF Mongolia

the public. The center aims at providing necessary information and organizing trainings and public outreach educational activities. It serves as starting point for community involvement into the conservation activities. The information center will be fully functional to those who care about environment and are willing to contribute to conservation work.

2. The Leopardovyi federal wildlife refuge was created in October 2008 in the Far Eastern leopard habitats. After the establishment, the interagency operational group to protect Leopardovyi refuge was formed in Primorye under the auspices of Federal Service for natural Resources Exploitation. With WWF's support, the group has started regular patrolling in the refuge's territory now.

3. Scientific-methodological expert center started its work in February 2009 in Vladivostok branch of the Russian Customs Academy. In the past 5 years, it appeared that there were no specialists in the region able to identify and evaluate derivatives of rare wildlife animals and plants, especially traditional Chinese medicine. The timely creation of scientific-methodological expert center, dealing with biological expertise is an indicative event in the struggle with smuggling of wildlife objects in the Russian Far East.



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4. WWF Russia Amur branch has started a project on conservation of large block of forests in the Bikin River in cooperation with Germany Government and with support from Forestry Agency in Primorskii Province. For the first time about 900 000 Euros are allocated by KFW (Germany Bank of Development) in the frame of intergovernmental initiative on reduction of climate change impact.

5. Free-flowing Study is a trans-boundary freshwater conservation project concerning China, Russia Far East and Mongolia. China part of the report "A Healthy Amur River---- the Fundamental Premise for the Sustainable Use of Freshwater resources and Regional Economic and Social Harmonious Development" was completed recently.