You Say Big Cats

Discovery protects tiger together with WWF

The Discovery Inc. documentary Tigerland drawing attention of the world public at the wild tigers’ plight was premiered at the 2019 Sundance Film Festival in the prestigious U.S. Documentary Competition on January 27 and was broadcasted on Discovery Channel on March 30 worldwide. Discovery and WWF-US partner on a matching donation campaign to help preserve Bikin National Park in Russia. Discovery is committed to fully funding the site through 2022 and will work with WWF to fundraise for the project. Discovery will match donations received through this campaign up to $250,000 through December 31, 2019.

In March, Discovery Channel and WWF launched a campaign VKontakte #СпастиТигра #ProjectCAT to attract people’s attention and inspire them to make donations for tigers’ conservation. At the same time, Discovery Channel, Animal Planet и TLC will kicked off the on air campaign in support of the action with several Russian celebrities.


Tiger Tragedy in Khabarovsky Province

The accident resulted in a tiger death took place on March 20 in Zolotoy village. According to preliminary information a local man defending himself shot a tiger that came to his backyard.

A villager having heard his cow bellowing in the barn went to check what had happened. Inside the barn he found a tiger and a killed cow. According to the man, the tiger made a sudden move towards him. Defending himself the man hit the tiger with a hayfork. After that he rushed to the house to get the gun and returned to the barn. He tried to scare the predator away, but the tiger attacked again and the man fired off. Unfortunately, the wound was fatal. Right after that the man called the police and the Wildlife Management Department. The tiger male was quite aged and had health problems. According to preliminary expert estimates when attacking the man the tiger was very weak and was not of a real threat to the villager. The legality of the man’s actions will be assessed after the investigation and establishing all the circumstances of the accident.

The Amur tigers, Boris and Svetlaya and their two cubs, feel themselves happy and safe. Such was the conclusion of the expert group after the analysis of pictures and video captured by camera traps in Zhuravliny Wildlife Refuge. Boris and Svetlaya were released back into the nature in Evreiskaya and Amurskaya Provinces in 2014 after a course of rehabilitation. They met for the first time in 2015. The whole family was filmed by camera traps. According to the data, the cubs of their first litter are staying within their parents hunting area. They are well nourished meaning there is plenty of food in the area and they are skillful hunters.

Also during the field trip locations of Saikhan, the male released in Evreiskaya Province last spring. He has adopted to the new environment successfully. In the area there is one more tiger – tigress Filippa. To have all the data about the tigers of Evreiskaya Province our partner organizations plan to enlarge the network of camera traps. The monitoring results demonstrate that the tiger numbers has increased in Evreiskaya Province, due to the reintroduced tigers as well.

Together for Conservation Effectiveness

We Are the Guardians of Amur Tiger & Leopard

On January 25th, the Fourth Tiger Habitat Ranger Competition successfully called an end in Hunchun, Jilin Province. The competition is co-organized by the Northeast Tiger & Leopard National Park Administration, Department of Natural Protected Areas Management of National Forestry and Grassland Administration, Department of Wildlife Conservation of National Forestry and Grassland Administration, Jilin Forestry and Grassland Bureau, Heilongjiang Forestry and Grassland Bureau and WWF. 17 teams of 51 tiger habitat rangers from 10 forestry bureaus of Northeast China Tiger & Leopard National Park, natural reserves of Heilongjiang and Jilin Provinces, and Land of Leopard National Park in Russia, gathered to compete for the champion of the event. This year’s event has arranged five awards, and all have been taken after fierce competing. Northeast Tiger & Leopard National Park Administration Hunchun Municipal Branch has gained the first prize.

This activity was designed to build the rangers’ sense of honor and inspect their skills. A platform was created for experience exchange and improving their conservation work effectiveness. Through the competition, the public would have a deeper understanding of the significance of the rangers’ contribution to Amur tiger and leopard conservation.

This year, the field session had been something different. In the last three competitions, each team had their own small site. This year, however, all teams were distributed into a big region of 40km² and compete for the simulated poaching tools such as hunting loops and snares. This change has stimulated the passion of all the rangers and they took part in the competition with excitement. The field competition mainly verifies the rangers’ skills in GPS application, camera trap set up, snare removal, SMART patrol and team collaboration, etc.

For the indoor competition on 24th, the questions link to the regulations, case study, wildlife information, footprint and excreta identification, patrol skills, etc. All teams participated actively in the Q&As. Their enthusiasm inspired all the audience to join in together and won presents. With the fair and dedicated support of the judges, Northeast Tiger & Leopard National Park Administration Hunchun Municipal Bureau won the first prize, and Northeast Tiger & Leopard National
Park Administration Wangqing County Branch and Hunchun Branch won the second and third prize respectively. Wang Zhongwu from Jilin Huangnihe Nature Reserve said:’ The competition helped me a lot to improve my capacity. When I find the traces of the wildlife in my daily patrol, I feel heartily exciting. I will keep doing this job and be a tiger guardian.”

One more highlight of the competition is that at the closing ceremony, Northeast Tiger & Leopard National Park Administration and WWF have signed strategic cooperation agreement. In the coming 3 years, both parties will closely work together in the areas of recovery of Amur tiger and leopard population and their habitats, combating against poaching, community development, technology and method introduction and international exchange promotion.

The First Stakeholder’s Meeting of Working Group for Water Protection Zones
With the support WWF-Mongolia, Khentii Province Citizens’ Representatives meeting approved the ”Water protection zones (special (<50m) and ordinary (<200m) protection zones) of water bodies” in 2016. This leads to the implementation of the Law on Water, such as defining no-go areas for mining, preventing floods and protecting drinking water sources and supplies at the settlement areas. Although it’s been a while, the enforcement of the law is poor. Therefore, the Khentii province governor has established a working group to ensure the implementation of the law. Binder soum was selected as a model for the enforcement of the law on Water.

The first stakeholder’s meeting of the working group was organized by Binder soum of Khentii province on March 18, 2019, with the support of WWF-Mongolia. In addition to the working group members, Binder soum authorities, state environmental inspectors, and the Onon Ulz River Basin Authority participated. The meeting discussed and exchanged their challenges and solutions how to implement regulation on water protection zones of the law.
According to local authorities, insufficient budget and lack of coordination among public institutions interfering implementation of the regulation of Law on Water. Binder soum is characterized as the nearest settlement areas on Onon River. Therefore, it connects to water pollution. Lately, Gutai gold mining company is receiving a lot of local criticism, which is bordered by Binder soum. If the mining is operational then the Onon River is at risk of pollution, which is the headwater of Amur River in Mongolian part. Therefore, the parties agreed to take special care to this issue. There are a number of issues to be solved and the first step is to set up hygienic zones of water supplies wells at the soum center, mark signs, solve budget issues and emphasize on the river's simple and specially protected zones signs.

Smugglers found guilty in attempt of trafficking a large party of wildlife derivatives

A district court of Primorsky Province found guilty a criminal international group for the attempt of smuggling to China claws, paws and other parts of black and brown bears, Amur tiger’ pelt, skeleton and claws, as well as amber, arms and armaments. Three criminals were condemned to 58 months in jail. A 48 y.o. woman who also belonged to the group was sentenced to 42 months in jail and USD 20K fine. The total amount of the confiscated batch is estimated at USD 760K. Let us recall that on 26-27 January, 2018 the Far Easter Customs jointly with the Border Service and Security Service of Primorsky Province blocked the large crime channel in Khankaisky District. Thanks to the skillful actions of the operational group, it was possible to uncover the place where the smugglers planned to cross the border. As a result, two minivans and one jeep with a trailer were detained. The smugglers were planning to transport the contraband across frozen Khanka Lake, avoiding customs and check points.


"Living Planet Report" Launch in Eastern Mongolia

WWF-Mongolia translated and published the "Living Planet Report 2018" for the first time in Mongolia. AHEC field office in cooperation with the local authorities, organized "Living Planet Report" launch, combining with the "Snow festival" in Dadal soum of Khentii province on 16 February 2019. The "Snow Festival" is organized every year, with sports competition, while promoting the importance of protecting the environment to the public. Over 150 people attended this year’s event.
The event organizers presented promotion materials such as "Living Planet Report" summary and a calendar while highlighting the facts. They say, "It's a challenge for us to protect the environment and prevent climate change and meet the needs of population growth. The role and participation of governments, businesses, and individuals is essential. For example, wildlife populations have decreased by more than 60 percent over the last 40 years. We need a healthy, world-class ecosystem with rich flora and fauna, so we can live in the present and future world."

The launch of "Living Planet Report" shows important facts related to environment and wildlife, which was a very significant increase in public perception.

**Khar Yamaat Nature Reserve Value Is Promoted**

WWF-Mongolia is in charge of managing Khar Yamaat Nature Reserve since 2014, under the agreement with Ministry of Nature, Environment and Tourism and the Khentii and Sukhbaatar province administration. Within this framework, the conservation work is ongoing.

In order to promote the value of Khar Yamaat NR, "Steppe beauty-2019" event was held in Bayan-Ovoo soum of Khentii province and Tumentsogt soum of Sukhbaatar province on 22-23 January 2019. Over 150 people participated in the event organized by WWF-Mongolia. Q&A about the Khar Yamaat Nature Reserve during the event was an important step for improving the knowledge of attendees on protected areas. The five-year management plan for the Khar Yamaat NR has been completed, and successfully completed activities have been presented. Discussions took place with the local community on the key management plans for the next five years.

**Drones Help to Reveal Illegal Logging Sites in Primorsky and Khabarovsky Provinces**

On 5-8 February at the Forestry Innovation Center of the Primorsky State Agricultural Academy with the support of WWF Russia 25 specialists of Primorsky and Khabarovsky Forest Management Agencies and students of TIS nature protection brigade got trained to operate drones and use them to reveal illegal logging sites and check signals received via KEDR satellite forest monitoring system. The participants gained theoretical knowledge and learned to perform practical tasks such as take-off, landing and manual control
of unmanned aerial vehicles, as well as creating flight missions.

According to KEDR system data, 48 sites were inspected in Primorsky Province in 2018. Five facts of illegal cut were revealed and criminal cases were initiated. Drones are very useful in hard-to-reach areas. They help to significantly improve the work and to get high quality orthophoto plans.

When the Belt Is Green

Collared Mongolian Gazelle Was Caught in Poaching

The last remainder of largest Eurasian mega-herd-Mongolian gazelle—one migrated in thousands throughout the Mongolia, Eastern Kazakhstan, northern China and Zabaikalsk territory of Russian Federation is now confined Eastern Mongolian steppe due to habitat fragmentation, overharvesting and poaching. WWF-Mongolia’s recent assessment show that the Mongolian gazelle classified as least concern by IUCN, is facing serious and multiple threats that could lead to the extinction.

In the light of active exploration for building rail and paved road network to connect the mines in South and Eastern Mongolia to global and regional market, WWF-Mongolia has been working to identify crucial sections for wildlife crossing along the current and proposed railroads. Within this framework, a number of gazelles were collared with satellite collars to map out herd migration pattern.

Unfortunately, the exercise also revealed widespread poaching over Mongolian gazelle. In 2017 alone, out 13 collared gazelles, four (over 30%) were poached within a year, while only one collared gazelle were caught by wolves.

Until the ban in 2000, Mongolia exported annually 100 tons of gazelle meat (roughly 6,600 animals) to China and gazelle horns were of no interest to anyone. However, recent attempts for smuggling Mongolian gazelle horn to China in large quantities indicate that the species becoming victim of international illegal wildlife trade. Although, there is no concrete proof, it is likely being used as a substitute to rarer and better protected Saiga antelope to fill the demand for Chinese traditional medicine. Since 2010, in total approx. 100,218 (if we consider each horn weights 200 gr) individual Mongolian gazelle’s horn was confiscated in Mongolia and at the border points. The biggest case was detected by Chinese customs office at Mongolia-China border in 2015, involved with an attempt to smuggle 70,000 pairs of horns at once.

Local Authorities Support the "Plastic Free Rivers" Campaign

WWF-Mongolia initiated "Plastic free Rivers" initiative to engage stakeholders in the process of reducing plastic waste from rivers. The initiative started successfully and therefrom the "Plastic free Kherlen" plan is being carried out with the participation of the citizens to remove plastic waste from Kherlen River in the eastern part of the country.
It is very important to raise public awareness, especially promoting plastic waste importance to decision makers is essential. Consequently, the organizers started plastic use research starting from January 2019 in Khentii and Dornod province Governor’s Office. The local government is supportive of the research as well. They are able to sort out what kind of waste they are producing mostly, and measure ways to reduce plastic. The research will continue for 3 months. The Kherlen River Basin Administration and the Province Environmental Department will monitor and advice if necessary. Then the results are presented to the public and will urge other organizations to reduce plastic use.

In addition, the "Care for Water" competition was held on March 11- World Wide Day, under the "Plastic free Rivers" campaign. Also, within this framework, WWF-Mongolia initiated the "Dornod is with reusable cotton bag" campaign with government and private organizations of Dornod province.

**Mongolian Gazelle Study Was Conducted along the Border**

According to WWF-Mongolia experts, it is clear that Mongolian gazelles migrate along the border. Therefore, it is necessary to introduce and implement optimum management of the migratory route for gazelle. Within the framework of this work, field monitoring of Mongolian gazelle migration to determine the herd composition, population situation in winter along the state border was conducted in cooperation with Environment and Tourism Department of Dornod province during March 6-12, 2019. The researchers travelled total of 915 kilometers along the Mongolian border. It was also intended to determine main migratory routes and crossing stripes along the border fence between Mongolia - Russia and Mongolia – China and the effect of the fence to Mongolian gazelle.

According to the researchers, over 90,000 Mongolian gazelles and 24 roe deer were observed during the field survey. Most herds of gazelle were spotted near the Menen steppe, Mongolian Dauria SPA and Tari Lake. During the research, 183 gazelle carcasses were discovered and they were mostly eaten by wolves, eagles and dogs. Gazelles were crossing in some parts of the border between Russia and China. Mongolian Dauria SPA and Tari lake areas seem to be a main migratory corridors for the Mongolian gazelles to Russia with over 15,000 Mongolian gazelles in Russian territory and approx. 65,000 individuals in Mongolian side of the border fence. The research will continue.

**The First Musk Deer Survey Held in "The Sources of the Amur River" in**
Mongolia
In early March, the joint team of researchers from the Sokhondo NR (Russia) and the Onon-Balj NP (Mongolia) carried out a musk deer survey with the support of WWF. In the Sokhondo NR such counts are conducted on a regular basis, while in the Onon-Balj the census was done for the first time, and the experience of Russian experts was very useful in this joint research. Two groups - on foot and on horses – found tracks of musk deer in the snow, its feces in the most remote corners of the Bayan-Khan which prove that the deer inhabits the eastern edges of Mongolian Khentii, but its numbers are few and rare. This can be explained by the border of the home range which is not represented by its native biotopes.

World Water Day
The “wave” of events devoted to the conservation of water resources and salmon species united 2500 people in the Amur ecoregion. World Water Day is a special holiday for 5 provinces in the Amur River basin. The Amur River is one of the richest in salmon species rivers of Eurasia. Fish resources conservation is a very important issue for local people living on the spawning rivers where salmon is an indicator of water purity and human well-being.

Komsomolsky NR, Khabarovsky Province. A traveling photo exhibition “Salmon, which we can lose” started in the capital and will proceed exhibiting in other regions of the Far East. The student nature protection brigade “NEI” together with Komsomolsky NR organized an environmental holiday “Water Day”. Students traditionally took part in games, contests and quizzes.
Bolonsky NR conducted an informative-game for schoolchildren “Salmon is the fish of the world” in the city of Amursk.

Zeysky NR, Amurskaya Province. A bright festival “Underwater Carnival”. This costume party was prepared by children and their parents. Young actors presented 60 costumes on the stage. The program also included fun sports
games, creative workshops and handicraft exhibition.
Bastak NR, Evreiskaya Province. Educational classes for 5–7 grade students and the interactive game “Experts of the Amur Basin”.

“Berkut” student nature protection brigade organized the quest game “In the World of Wetlands”. The students learned interesting information about salmon and answered the quiz questions. Alkhanai NP, Zabaikalsky Province. A quest game “To the sources of Amur: the journey of fish”.

conducted the fire preventive treatment to the trees with nests and equipped trunks the against-bears protecting devices, and in 2019 they mounted artificial poles and conducted aeration of water bodies.

With the support of WWF two artificial poles for nests were mounted in Amurskaya Province. This year one can watch the Oriental storks online: 4 nests were equipped with video cameras purchased with WWF support. Live stream is available at AmurlInfoCenter – the information portal of the Amur-Heilong ecoregion.

Earth Hour 2019

“Earth Hour” is Celebrated under the Slogan "Let’s Say NO to Plastic"

WWF-Mongolia has been celebrating the “Earth Hour” in Mongolia since 2010. This year, a total of 12 provinces have participated, with more than 6000 people came together for “candle night”. In the past, typically 4-5 provinces used to join the event. This year, 12 provinces celebrated "Earth Hour" which proves that Mongolians are actively involved in protecting nature. For the first time the SCOUT Association of Mongolia joined to the movement. WWF-Mongolia eastern branch celebrated “Earth Hour 2019” under the slogan "Let’s say NO to plastic" in cooperation with Khentii and Dornod province. More than 600 people took part in the event to protect nature. During the event eco club students introduced guideline on how to reduce the use of plastic containers and how harmful it is to the nature.

The eco club students also performed a play on the harmful effects of plastics and presented a flash mob dance. In Dadal soum of Khentii province, many people have pledged to reduce their plastic use and not buy them. Also, the participants actively took part in the drawing contest and the theme was under nature and wildlife.

When Kung Fu Meets Panda, I Am Hardcore to Protect Environment

On March 30th, the Earth Hour Changchun Event made a pose in Jilin Natural History Museum. WWF China NEC and our partners (Jilin Natural History Museum, Jilin TV Channel 7, Northeast Normal University, Sheraton Changchun Jingyuetan Hotel and Four Points by Sheraton Changchun as well as Jilin Radio & TV Station Lifestyle Channel’s Culture Afternoon Tea Programme) co-organized the Earth Hour event of "Connect to Earth" in Changchun, Jilin Province. The theme of the event is "When Kung Fu meets panda, we are hardcore to perform environment conservation".

What’s hardcore environment protection? That is: “do not only talk! Take lifelong actions in conservation. Everyone is able to practice wildlife conservation, safeguard clear waters and green mountains, as well as Amur tiger and leopard and the habitats recovery in day-to-day activities.
Earth Hour Changchun Event has brought together volunteers of students from the universities in Changchun and children to spread the importance of biodiversity conservation and to disseminate the action plans how to practice wildlife conservation and how to protect natural environment in pleasant and innovative manners, including Kung Fu style flash mob as a tribute to Louis Cha (Jin Yong), sponsor’s earth message, small lectures on nature, interactive environmental protection tasks, wildlife conservation drama and children’s chorus etc., which influences thousands of environment protectors in all corners of the country on the scene and online. We call on all of you to become volunteers and actors to conserve biodiversity and safeguard Amur tiger & leopard and become the ray of sunshine on the road of environmental protection to illuminate the way home for Amur tiger and leopard and to light up the hope of restoring the wildlife population.
Brief News

Start of the 2019 Provincial Anti-poaching Campaign

On March 29th, with WWF’s support, Jilin Forestry and Grassland Bureau, initiated the “2019 Provincial Anti-poaching Campaign” at the 2019 Anti-poaching Operation Meeting in Changchun, Jilin Province. This campaign aims to execute anti-poaching works and optimize the anti-poaching effectiveness, with the active participation of 23 Forestry Bureaus and Nature reserves, covering a total area of 41,979 km². Mechanism of Evaluating and Supervising the Anti-Poaching Effectiveness (MEASPE) will be utilized in this campaign, which is expected to highly improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the anti-poaching work.

WWF Russia Held A Training Session for Protected Areas

WWF Russia held a training session for the staff of 22 protected areas of the Amur Ecoregion at the Forestry Innovation Centre at the Primorsky State Agricultural Academy as there are no specialized educational institutions in Russia that would train PAs’ staff. The courses are the first in the series. These five-day courses were attended by deputy directors on protection and senior inspectors from reserves and national parks in Zabaikalsky, Evreiskaya, Amurskaya, Khabarovsk and Primorsky provinces. Leading experts gave lectures on the work with conflict animals and supplementary feeding for ungulates; on difficult situations while detaining poachers; on the PA system in the Amur Ecoregion. Among other topics were drones operating, forest taxation, ensuring the safety of inspectors, legislation etc.


From Forest Lease to Production: TIS Student Brigade Learned How to Use Taiga Gifts Sustainably

A practical excursion for TIS brigade students and the teachers of the Forestry Institute was organized to Koksharovskaya nut-harvesting zone of Primorye with support of WWF Russia and the Forestry Innovation Centre of the Primorsky State Agricultural Academy. The training was devoted to sustainable use of non-timber forest products in Korean pine forests. The excursion began directly on the forest plot with the introduction and inspection of the Korean pine forest. The participants visited the Arsenyev processing plant - an enterprise for processing of wild and medicinal plants, in particular, Aralia root, Eleutherococcus, Schizandra berries, chaga and Korean pine nuts. Future forestry specialists, students of the Primorskaya State
Agricultural Academy, may benefit from this experience of Primorye entrepreneurs, aimed at the integrated use of Korean pine forests. It’s important to learn how it happens in practice: from land lease and patrolling a forest plot, to harvesting and processing forest products.


For more information, please contact:

**Selenge Gantumur**, communication manager, WWF-Mongolia, selenge@wwf.mn

**Yulia Fomenko**, communication manager, WWF-Russia, yfomenko@wwf.ru

**Chen Xu**, senior communication officer, WWF-China, chenxu@wwf-opf.org