Amur Tiger/Leopard census
Wildlife gets more protection
Ungulates throughout harsh winter
Saving the forest
Editors’ preface

This is issue of our quarterly newsletter has received the name of “Spring is in the air”. Spring is coming! Not only for us and our fellows but also for our conservation efforts. Like flowers, our protection efforts are blossoming which is shown by the preliminary results of tiger/leopard census in Russia. This survey is a rare event conducted every ten years and it shows that tiger/leopard population is growing or at least stable. The final results of this survey will be a big step towards our commitment to double the population of tigers in 2022. We hope that China will follow therefore giving us all necessary data on the status of tiger population in order to define adequate domestic and transboundary measure for its protection.

Winter has been long and hard but spring is just around the corner. Indeed, winter was harsh but we didn’t give up on our friends in the forest. We kept caring for them and watching over them by building capacities through discussion and training, by providing food and protection, by raising public awareness and by fighting all kind of crimes against wildlife.

We hope that you enjoy the 35th issue of AHEC newsletter. Earth hour was an inspiration for the cover and this issue is mainly focus on tiger/leopard protection efforts but also explores achievements on migratory birds, endangered fishes and law enforcement.

Happy spring!

Moses Diarso, Expert Consultant, AHEC acting coordinator
WWF-NEC
shanglong@live.fr Tel : +86 431 8111 2683 Fax : +86 431 8111 2671

Selenge Gantumur, Education officer
WWF-Mongolia
selenge@wwf.mn tel: 976-11-311659 fax: 976-11-310237

Yulia Fomenko, Communication Manager
WWF-Russia, Amur Branch
yfomenko@wwf.ru Tel: +7 423 2414868 Fax: +7 423 2414863
Contents

1. A word to the world
Mr Zhao Shucong, a Leader for a Living Planet. An inspiration for Tiger/Leopard conservation? (China) 4
Earth Hour 60+ was successfully celebrated in the Amur River Basin (China Mongolia Russia) 4
Notes from the field (Russia)  6

2. United for Conservation effectiveness
Cooperation (China) 6
An experience sharing tour of Sohond Park Administration Representatives to Mongolia 6

3. You said Big Cats?
About 2000 Russian trackers took part in the simultaneous Amur tiger survey across its entire range (Russia) 7
Wild Siberian tigers are breeding in China 7
At least 57 Amur leopards live in the Land of the Leopard National Park (Russia) 8
Towards Zero poaching in Asia (China) 8
WWF Russia joints efforts with the Government in tiger conservation (Russia) 9
SMART training (China) 10
Sniffer dogs help suppressing wildlife trafficking (Russia) 10
Camera trap monitoring workshop (China) 11
A video handbook for tiger trackers released (Russia) 11
Tiger corridor identification on He-Da highway (China) 11
Every person can count tigers (Russia) 12
Going towards wild Siberian tigers census in China 12
Ungulates survey (China) 13
WWF helps wild animals to survive harsh winter (Russia) 14
Training on forest fires combating in the Land of Leopard (Russia) 14
New wildlife reality show available online (Russia) 15

4. When the belt is green
Migratory birds’ population recovery and habitat protection (China) 15
Stop Fishnet! Action on Amur (Russia) 16
Important data on Taimen movements has been collected (Mongolia) 16

5. Walking through evergreen Forest
Cutting Korean pines punished by law (Russia) 17
Local communities are very happy for what they have learned and done during this year’s “Snow Festival” (Mongolia) 17

6. For better Ecoregion 18
1. A word to the world

Mr Zhao Shucong, a Leader for a Living Planet. An inspiration for Tiger/Leopard conservation? (China)

On March 18th, Mr Zhao Shucong (Head of SFA) and its organization received the highest environment award “Conservation Leaders Excellence Award” (LPP, Leaders for a Living Planet) from the hand of the global director general of WWF, Marco Lambertini, in recognition of their outstanding contributions and efforts to protect the giant panda and its habitat.

This award marks the success of more than 30 years of constructive cooperation with funding and technical supports between WWF and the China State Forestry Department (nowadays, State Forestry Administration, SFA) in the field of conservation of wild pandas and their habitat. It also acknowledges the strong willing of both parties to continue their partnership in a broader field of biodiversity conservation such as flagship species conservation, forest management, wetlands and migratory birds, protected area management, etc.

SFA being a privileged partner of WWF-NEC, we warmly congratulate the conferee and hope that someday we will be celebrating a similar award in the field of tiger/leopard conservation. The road is long and fraught with pitfalls but with our unfailing willing and the example set by panda’s conservation, we can reach our goal to give to tiger/leopard an environment where they can thrive. To do so, as for pandas, we need to start, without delay, a comprehensive analysis of tiger/leopard status and an integrative census in northeast China. Fortunately, the Chinese government attaches a great importance to the ecological construction of China and with all the forces concerting and converging towards Tiger/Leopard’s conservation, we will be very soon celebrating a similar award.

http://www.wwfchina.org/pressdetail.php?id=1597

Earth Hour 60+ was successfully celebrated in the Amur River Basin (China Mongolia Russia)

Earth Hour is a global WWF climate change initiative. It is an event that aims to create awareness of people taking responsibility towards a sustainable future by turning the lights off. Millions of people turn off their lights for Earth Hour at 8.30pm (20:30) in their local times on the last Saturday of March. This year, on March 28th, like all other countries, the three countries westerly by the Amur River, successfully celebrated the 9th Earth Hour 60+ “Use your power to change climate change”.

In Northeast China, to support this initiative, WWF-NEC organized different activities having an endpoint in the Jilin Provincial Natural History Museum. In collaboration with several universities' environmental
clubs, some elementary schools and a cyclists’ club, WWF organized this activity on the theme “use your power for a blue sky”. An exhibition held in the museum explained to the participants the concept of climate change, renewable energy, and protection of wildlife and environment. From this spot and via video-link, Dr Quanhua Shi (WWF-NEC, executive officer) gave the GO signal to 56 enthusiast cyclists to begin the 22km ride from the train station to the museum, in order to promote “green transportation”. Meantime, pupils presented their drawings from the painting courses they received with the support of WWF during the last week of March.

2015 Earth Hour was celebrated under the theme of renewable energy. To solve domestic air pollution, the central government of China has decided to promote the development of renewable energy technologies. That is why, on February 10th, in Beijing, the government officially announced and launched the theme of Earth Hour “能见蔚蓝 (neng jian wei lan)” which means “through renewable energy, embrace the blue sky (free of air pollution)”.

In Mongolia, four places of eastern Mongolia, three soums and the provincial centre. Three of them join for the first time.

In total, about 1500 people came to celebrate Earth Hour. The buildings surrounding the provincial centre turned off their lights for one hour. Iconic places have switched-off their lights, including the province Governance House. During this event, some entertainments and motivating actions including artistic performances, and flash mob were organized. Dozens of media, including TV, national radio and FM radios, newspapers journalists came to the candle evening to report on Earth Hour and make interviews from thousands of people who raised their voices by turning out their lights.

See more: http://mongolia.panda.org/en/news/?243434/Earth-Hour-60-was-successfully-celebrated-in-eastern-Mongolia

In Russia Far East, throughout the entire region, several activities took place to celebrate Earth Hour.

Vladivostok. The city TV tower switched off its lights. The Russian Youth Union conducted interactive lections for the volunteer movement participants, showed HOME documentary, and organized an acoustic concert of the local bands. Two city cafes lighted the rooms with candles instead of electric bulbs. The action spread across entire Primorye.

Khabarovsk. WWF together with All Russia Society for Nature Protection and the city Water and Wastewater Treatment plant played a table game “Eco-manager: battle for water” in one of the city’s cafes.

Nature Reserves: Sokhondinsky, Bastak, Daursky, and Dzhugdzhursky joined the event for the first time. They distributed leaflets, conducted presentations for the kids of local schools on the existing threats to the environment, flash-mobs, recite poetry dedicated to nature.
Notes from the field (Russia)

From late January throughout mid February, on wwf.ru, there was a blog of Pavel Fomenko, program coordinator of biodiversity conservation at WWF Russia Amur branch and one of the tiger census coordinator: http://wwf.ru/about/what_we_do/species/tiger/frtiger/eng

On this page Pavel Fomenko, tell us how the Amur tiger census is been carried out in the Russian Far East. It was a first trial of presenting the information in a more or less informal way when comms people sitting at the office receive notes, pictures and videos from the field and place them on the internet thus spreading the tiger survey stories via social media. It was exalting and comforting experience knowing that Facebook recorded 231300 followers for two weeks.

This survey, a rare event, is conducted every ten years and enables scientists to access the current status of the tiger population in order to define required measures for its protection.

The Amur tiger occupies the top of the food chain of the unique Ussuri taiga. Therefore, the health of the tiger population indicates the health of the entire Far Eastern nature. WWF Russia has been running tiger conservation projects for 20 years. Thanks to the efforts of WWF and other organizations the number of the Amur tiger has been stabilized.

2. United for Conservation effectiveness

Cooperation (China)

From Feb 1st to Feb 8th, Dr. Shinichi Kawae, conservation officer of forest program, WWF Japan, visited WWF NEC office to discuss issues related to forest management and timber trade. During his visit, he took the opportunity to join the ungulates density survey conducted in Wangqing and a one-day workshop was hold in Changchun office, which helped to understand the structure and the implementation situation of WWF NEC. Dr Kawae also gave large information on WWF Japan’s structure, its strategy development and supporting role.

An experience sharing tour of Sohond Park Administration Representatives to Mongolia

Onon-Balj National Park Administration in Mongolia and Sohond Biosphere Strictly Protected Area Administration in Russia do successfully cooperate and exchange their achievements and experiences. Recently, representatives from Sohond Biosphere Strictly Protected Area Administration in Russia visited Mongolia for a business meeting. They visited the Ministry of Environment, Green Development and Tourism in Mongolia for business meeting. The participants had
meetings with some conservation and biodiversity researchers and specialists in Mongolia.

3. You said Big Cats?

About 2000 Russian trackers took part in the simultaneous Amur tiger survey across its entire range (Russia)

The total length of survey transects reached 15 thousand kilometers, 150 000 square kilometers of tiger habitats were covered. The field workers recorded location of each tiger, identify their age and gender by the size of the paw print, and determine the size of their litters (number of cubs). These data, as well as a variety of other information about the tiger, its prey and other competing predators will be accumulated in trackers’ diaries and later will become a basis for a digital database. The interim results of the census will be summed up by the end of May 2015 with the final report to be released in October 2015. The census will help government agencies and non-governmental organizations to coordinate efforts in conservation of rare animals and the entire unique ecosystem of the southern Far East. The census of 2015 is organized by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Ecology of the Russian Federation, with the support of the “Amur Tiger Centre” and WWF.

Wild Siberian tigers are breeding in China

A remarkable footage of a never-seen-before tigress with her two cubs recorded in Wangqing nature reserve proves that wild Amur tiger population is settling and breeding in China.

The fact that the tigers have never been monitored before was confirmed by Professor Jiang Guangshun, Executive Vice-Director, of China’s State Forestry Administration’s Feline Research Center. Professor Jiang also identified that the two sub-adult tigers are about one and half years old.

“Many years of conservation work aimed at establishing an inland breeding Amur tiger population in China have lead to this stunning footage --- establishing the conservation areas, building up a population of prey animals, and installing over one hundred infra red cameras in some of the most inaccessible parts of the Wangqing Nature Reserve.” “this video was recorded at 30km far away from the sino-russian border proving that the wild Amur tiger population is steadily spreading into inland China and is settling down”, noted Dr Shi Quanhua, senior manager of the WWF-China Asian Big Cats Program.

“The infrared cameras installed in the Reserve have captured images of Amur tigers and
Amur leopards in the past two years,” stated Wang Fuyou, division head of the Wangqing Nature Reserve conservation department. “Now these cameras have photographed wild Amur tiger and Amur leopard breeding populations. It shows that Wangqing Nature Reserve has become a breeding site for Amur tigers and Amur leopards.

The WWF Amur Tiger Conservation Plan was developed in 2010, and it designated the combined Wangqing-Hunchun-Suiyang-Dongning Area as a priority zone for wild Amur Tiger conservation. With the strong support of the Jilin Provincial Forestry Department, three years ago, WWF began pilot projects to restore Amur tiger prey populations in the Wangqing area by the release of Sika deer and Red deer into the wild in order to tackle prey shortage which was the major threat to Amur tiger survival.

http://www.worldwildlife.org/stories/rare-video-of-amur-tiger-family

At least 57 Amur leopards live in the Land of the Leopard National Park (Russia)

The census carried out with camera traps proved that there are at least 57 Amur leopards in the Land of the Leopard National Park. This figure was announced at a meeting of the Supervisory Board of the Amur Leopards Center by Sergey Ivanov, its Chairman and head of the Presidential Administration. The camera traps covered about 380,000 hectares of the main leopard habitats, about 10,000 shots were received which enable the scientists to identify almost 60 individual animals. The Program for the Study of Amur Leopards is carried out by the Land of the Leopard National Park jointly with the Far Eastern Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences, with the support of The Amur Leopard Center, and WWF Russia.

More details are here: http://www.wwf.ru/resources/news/article/eng/13166

Towards Zero poaching in Asia (China)


First of its kind, this event brought together global anti-poaching experts, police forces, agencies, stakeholders and delegates from countries like Bangladesh, Bhutan, China,
Cambodia, India, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Russia, Thailand and Vietnam to learn from successful anti-poaching missions and initiate a regional timely coordinated action to stop poaching all across Asia.

The delegates from China included Mrs Wang Xiaoyan (Deputy Director of The Endangered Species Import and Export Management Center, China SFA), Mr Ma Tian (Section Member, Department of Wildlife Conservation & Nature Reserve Management), Mr Geng Yongping (Police Supervisor, Class III, Forest Police Bureau), Mr Liu Xiaohai (WWF conservation director) and Ms Peng Jianyu (WWF-NEC officer).

During this event, the delegation from China shared its anti-poaching experience, the measures taken by Chinese government to prevent and combat poaching and its achievement with the audience. The delegation advocated all the priorities actions of WWF TAI such as closer and stronger cooperation in combating illegal wildlife trade, strengthening the law and perfecting the legal framework, large-scale removal of snares, the development of a system which can reduce tiger-human conflicts, etc. They also expressed China great attachment to the protection of wild tigers and its determination to strengthen cooperation and exchanges on tiger conservation with other countries and relevant international organizations in order to promote tiger conservation.

WWF-NEC also participated in a side-meeting where experts discussed the rangers training guideline and shared experiences on best anti-poaching practices, and advanced poaching tools and technologies.

Driven by a solemn commitment taken in St Petersburg (Russia) during the Tiger summit in 2010, Tiger Range Countries (TRCs) have done great efforts to meet the goal of doubling the number of tigers in the wild. Nowadays, at almost halfway of the Tiger’s year, the number of tigers has increased which is mainly due to the protection work of wild tigers, the better management methods of tiger range areas and more advanced protection measures. But these efforts can be jeopardized by the great demand for tiger parts in Asia, supported by a thriving poaching industry. Therefore, in order to sustain the number of wild tigers, TRCs have decided to tackle the biggest threat to tigers, which is poaching.

See more at: [http://www.exameverything.com/2015/02/symposium-towards-zero-poaching-in-asia.html#sthash.pi3gMn2I.dpuf](http://www.exameverything.com/2015/02/symposium-towards-zero-poaching-in-asia.html#sthash.pi3gMn2I.dpuf)


**WWF Russia joints efforts with the Government in tiger conservation (Russia)**

On February 17 in Vladivostok, Sergei Donskoy, the Ministry of Natural Resources, and Igor Chestin, head of WWF Russia, signed a Cooperative Agreement aimed at the joint implementation of the Strategy for Conservation of the Amur Tiger in Russia. Under the
Agreement, WWF Russia plans to take part in the scientific research and monitoring of the tiger population status; to assist protected areas in their efforts on conservation of the tiger and its habitats; to contribute to restoration of the tiger habitats; to forward policy proposals on the Amur tiger conservation efforts; to participate in combating the illegal trafficking of the Amur tiger and its parts; to raise public awareness; to support international initiatives and projects on tiger conservation and protection. Proposals for further implementation of the Amur Tiger Conservation Strategy and Action Plan were announced by Igor Chestin at a meeting held by the Minister of Nature Resources.

More details are here: http://www.wwf.ru/resources/news/article/eng/13168

SMART training (China)

The biggest threats to the tiger’s survival are poaching, loss of habitat and the illegal trade. Poaching (of tigers and their prey) is the most immediate threat to wild tigers. Figuring out how to improve anti-poaching efforts is a major source of effort in tigers range countries (TRCs). The use of patrolling system, monitoring system and well-trained rangers are the ways used in many TRCs to improve their anti-poaching efforts.

To reinforce the capacity of its partners (protected areas technicians, wildlife managers, rangers), WWF is often organizing training session for them. That is how, since the beginning of the FY15, two rounds of training were organized for technicians, in the priority areas were tigers have been observed or tracked. Therefore, from Jan 14 2015 to Jan 17 2015, the second round of training was organized for 5 participants from Suiyang Forestry Bureau (1), Muling Protected Area (2) and Dongning Forestry Bureau (2), were trained for 4 days on technical operation in SMART system environment. This is another step forward for WWF in its never-ending fight against wildlife crime, knowing that the evaluation of this training showed that all the participants are now competent in the use of SMART software which makes them the spearhead of anti-poaching in their regions.

SMART is a powerful software application that improves the ability of protected area offices and other ranger-based programs to efficiently combat poaching and wildlife crime. It’s a suite of best practices aimed at helping protected areas and wildlife managers better monitor, evaluate and adaptively manage patrolling activities.

Sniffer dogs help suppressing wildlife trafficking (Russia)

WWF has been supporting Sniffer Dog Service at the Far Eastern Custom since 2008 when the Service was established. Every year the Customs sums up the results and WWF always awards the best customs officers. In 2014 with the help of sniffer dogs 104 facts of smuggling of rare flora and fauna species were revealed. At a meeting of the Service held in Vladivostok in February the names of the best officers and their dogs were announced.
WWF awarded three customs officers with the Letters of Gratitude and valuable gifts.

**Camera trap monitoring workshop (China)**

In partnership with WWF-NEC, the following forest bureaus Hunchun, Wangqing, Huangnihe, Tianqiaoling organized a 3-days workshop in Hunchun. During this workshop, monitoring data recovered from different areas of the network were reviewed and discussed; tigers and leopards numbers were also collected for different areas; the problems faced during the monitoring implementation were also discussed and ways of solving them laid out; and to finish, the next monitoring framework was discussed and adopted.

**A video handbook for tiger trackers released (Russia)**

WWF Russia and The Amur Tiger Center have released an educational “The Handbook for Trackers” to help the Amur tiger survey coordinators to train forest animal trackers. The video handbook has turned instructions for trackers, existing previously on paper as dry and boring phrases, into more lively and interesting video materials.

The documentary is primarily oriented for survey participants from Amurskaya and Evreiskaya Provinces, where the full range Amur tiger survey will be held for the first time. This educational documentary was translated into Chinese, to help Chinese tiger experts and now is being dubbed.

Despite the fact that this training video is produced for rather a specialized audience, the film has already aroused great interest amongst the general public.


**Tiger corridor identification on He-Da highway (China)**

National-level tiger corridor analyses are valuable approach that can inform both the National Tiger Action Plans, as well as tiger-friendly infrastructure planning. These analyses identify particularly important migratory corridors for tiger populations, and can help to ensure connectivity between source populations and habitats. Avoiding infrastructure development in these corridors should be a primary policy aim and should be a part of a comprehensive land use planning process.

Actually such analysis is being done by WWF-NEC, in partnership with Jilin forestry department, following the building of HeDa high speedway.

Hegang-Dalian Expressway, referred as HeDa high speedway, is a part of China national highways network (numbered G11). It starts in Hegang City and runs through Heilongjiang province, Jilin province, and the eastern region...
Due to its location, some section of the highway split the habitat of tigers and leopards. According to previous report tigers are moving from the Sino-Russia border towards inland China (form East to West), and this infrastructure represent a serious threat to their movement. That is why, WWF organized a survey aiming to identify the corridors and potential corridors for tigers population. Therefore, from Jan 15 2015 to Jan 22 2015, a field survey was conducted in Dunhua city with the help of experts from Jilin Forestry Department. During this event, the impact of HeDa highway on Amur Tiger dispersal was assess by surveying the tunnels, bridges, vegetations, settlements, fences, and other infrastructures along the road of 60km long spanning from Xingshan to Fuxing (representing the border between Heilongjiang and Jilin provinces). Amur Tiger potential corridors were identified and will be monitored for the next following periods.

HeDa expressway, with a total length of 1474 km, is a part of the "National Transportation Planning Framework" included as Jilin Province Highways Network Planning Framework and was approved by the Ministry of Transport and the State Council in the "Northeast China revitalization plan" as one of the main six transportation channels. It connects Hegang, Jiamusi, Qitaie, Jixi, Mudanjiang, Dunhua, Hakusan, Tonghua, Dandong, and Dalian. The section from Dunhua to Tonghua crosses 18 towns, 2 forestry bureaus, 45 administrative villages and 61 natural villages. Moreover, the part in Dunhua city has 4 service areas, 7 toll gates, 7 interchanges, 16 bridges and 5 tunnels.

Every person can count tigers (Russia)

In late February WWF kicked off a new online project dedicated to the Amur tiger [http://tigerstrail.ru](http://tigerstrail.ru)

The online project is aimed to attract the most active part of the society – school kids and students who “live” in the social network and have lots of friends across the globe”. The internet resource is getting more popular with every passing day. One can get a Tiger Passport, “leave” his own track on the interactive map, participate in several contests, and propose his own project on tiger conservation. Stories, pictures, photos and videos are coming from all over the Amur tiger range to explain the tiger print on the map. So far there are 108 geopoints on the map, 1315 tiger passports issued, over 30 essays submitted. The overall coverage of the project in social media is over 100 000 persons.

Going towards wild Siberian tigers census in China

China is going to conduct a national survey of wild tigers to provide bases for their research...
and management, said Zhao Shucong while he was receiving a WWF award as one of its Leaders for a Living Planet on March 18th. The award was given for his administration’s outstanding contribution to the conservation of the natural world and sustainable development.

“The tiger is one of our working priorities and we are planning an overall tiger protection program with local governments from Northeastern China and experts from Beijing Normal University, Peking University, the Academy of Forestry, the Chinese Academy of Sciences, etc” said the Head of SFA.

China has carried out a national survey on the giant panda’s status and its habitat every 10 years since the 1970s. Experts have been calling to have the same census for the Siberian tiger, which mainly lives in the northeastern part of China.

Discussion of tiger conservation at China’s top political meeting (the National People’s Congress and Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference) closely follows the release of WWF camera trap footage demonstrating that wild Amur tigers are breeding in China and the visit of the President Xi Jinping in Jilin Province where he heard that tiger population is growing.

“We congratulate President Xi Jinping for putting wild tiger conservation on China’s highest political agenda,” said Marco Lambertini, Director General of WWF International. “This gives us tremendous optimism not just for the Amur tiger but for wild tigers and our dwindling biodiversity globally.”

Alongside its goal to build an ‘ecological civilization’, the Chinese government is strongly supporting tiger conservation and joined other tiger range countries in a pledge to double global tiger numbers by the year 2022 through an initiative known as ‘Tx2’.

“This shows that China is paying attention to economic development and at the same time to environmental and ecosystem sustainability,” said Sze Ping Lo, CEO of WWF China. “We are inspired by this footage and a full census can help to ensure that Siberian tigers have the space, food and protection they require to thrive.” said Dr Shi Quanhua, head of the Asia Big Cats Program of WWF China.

WWF is excited to recognize that tiger conservation in China received top political attention at this year’s meeting and the next step is for the government to carry out a full census.

http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/cndy/2015-03/19/content_19850861.htm

**Ungulates survey (China)**

WWF-NEC is doing great efforts in the recovery and protection of tiger/leopard prey population. Knowing that low prey density is one of the most serious threats to Amur tiger/leopard survival, WWF-NEC has conducted several campaigns such as prey reintroduction, feeding stations installation and vaccination.
In order to assess the impact of prey reintroduction on prey density and also to underlined future challenges, WWF-NEC organized an ungulate population survey covering Wangqing, Dongning and Suiyang. For 10 days, experts from WWF (10 in total, 6 from Beijing and 4 from Changchun), 7 volunteers and 12 rangers covered the two main regions of tigers habitat.

Since 2008, this was the first major event of its genre ever organized by WWF; it got a large media coverage by the presence of not less than 6 media following the different surveying teams.

**WWF helps wild animals to survive harsh winter (Russia)**

Late February and March snowfalls threaten the survival of wild ungulates, especially in the northern areas of Primorsky and Khabarovsky Provinces. In the mountainous areas of the Sikhote-Alin the snow height reached 60-80 cm, sometimes more than one meter. March added another 20-30 cm, and snow piles reached one and a half meters – unseen amounts for Khabarovsky province.

In November-December 2014, harsh abnormal snowfalls in Khabarovsky Province and in the south of Primorye caused wild animals many troubles. Deep snow significantly limits the movement of wild ungulates in their search for forage. Besides, in these unfavorable for wild animals conditions the poachers become very active - they easily catch their victims on snowmobiles and off-roaders. Therefore, urgent measures were taken. In January, WWF allocated about 5000 Euros for ungulates restoration activities. But this money was not enough and WWF launched a campaign to raise funds. Over one week WWF supporters invested about 20 000 USD to provide urgent help for the Amur tiger. This assistance enables 15 hunting estates of Primorsky Province to provide wild ungulates with 150 tons of supplementary forage. The problem of starvation is worsen by poachers. Thus, in Primorye on March 7, the police and the operative group of the Directorate for wildlife and protected areas management detained a group of poachers with 7 roe deer, some of them had been killed without the use of firearms. In Dalnerechensky district of Primorsky Province three stabbed roe deer were confiscated from a poacher who hunted with dogs. In total, beginning from the 1st of January 2015, the operational groups of the Directorate of wildlife and protected areas management of Primorsky Province issued 300 protocols on poachers, and confiscated 50 killed ungulates and 58 firearms.


**Training on forest fires combating in the Land of Leopard (Russia)**

With the support of WWF the training was held for inspectors of the Land of the Leopard National Park, rangers of hunting societies, foresters, and heads of volunteer fire brigades, altogether 13 persons. The
training session was held for the third time over recent seven years. The attendees received theoretical knowledge on monitoring of forest fires danger, on how to prevent forest, what infrastructure is needed, and got practical skills of how to combat fires. All attendees received certificates. Another step in fire prevention and combating was signing an Agreement on forest fires combating in the Amur leopard range between WWF and Air Station of Primorsky Province in early March.

On March 20 Khasansky District hosted all-Primorye exercise to practice forest fire combating techniques. WWF actively participated in the event.

**New wildlife reality show available online (Russia)**

Following the success of “Spotted family 1&2”, a new TV series called “Nature Chronicles” is now available online. Like its predecessors, this TV series is about wild animals captured by automatic camera traps installed in the Land of the Leopard National Park. Produced by the “Land of the Leopard” with the support of WWF Russia and The Amur Leopards NGO, “Nature Chronicles” will be released four times a year and will tell the audience about seasonal life of animals in the national park. Thus becoming a window into the world of wildlife for many people, by telling to everyone what’s going on in the Land of Leopard (LoL). The premiere series of “Nature Chronicles”, an eight minute video clip, is now available on LoL, Zov taiga, and Youtube websites with the intriguing title “The truth of those who invented Facebook”. It is a kind of a report about what happened under the canopy of protected forests last spring and autumn. The next release of “Nature Chronicles” will be coming soon to show to everyone what happens in the «Land of the Leopard» during winter.

### 4. When the belt is green

**Migratory birds’ population recovery and habitat protection (China)**

After several workshops and discussion rounds between Changbaishan Natural Reserve directorate and WWF about Scaly-sided Merganser (also known as Chinese merganser) distribution and conservation status, the two parties agreed on setting up nest boxes in the Natural Reserve as a pilot program of artificial nest boxes in order to support population recovery of the merganser in China.

From Feb 11-15 2015, WWF’s expert, Liu Peiqi went to Changbai Mountain to set up ten (10) nest boxes by hanging them in the trees near the river. During 4 days, in partnership of NR staff, sites and trees were chosen then nest were hanged. These nest boxes were obtained thanks to our partners Dr. Diana Solovyeva (Coordinator of EAAFP Scaly-sided Merganser Task Force) and Mr. John Bradburn, chairman of the US BCSD (US Business Council
for Sustainable Development) Executive Committee which in partnership with General Motors converted Chevy Volt battery covers into Scaly-sided Merganser nest boxes; and also thanks to Rufford Grant’s partial support.

The Scaly-sided Merganser Mergus squamatus is an endemic bird to East Asia. It is mainly found in the Russian Far East and northeastern China for breeding and wintering; a small population of birds appears in the freshwater and the river of the southern and central China, while a tiny wintering populations occurs in Japan, Korea, and Taiwan.

**Stop Fishnet! Action on Amur (Russia)**

On March, 22 students nature protection brigade Bars, AmurSEU and Club of sport fishing Amur-Taimen hold an action in the city of Blagoveshensk with the support of WWF. The action was focused on uncontrolled mass use of fishnets in water reservoirs of Amurskaya Province. The students distributed leaflets with information on rare fish species of the Amur River and the lakes, informed passersby about the damage done by common usage of fishnets, and collected signatures under the Appeal to the Chairman of the Russian Government to strictly regulate fishnet turnover in the country. Such action is aimed at drawing people attention towards conservation of fish. Besides, the students and sport fishermen provide practical assistance. From early February with the support of WWF they conduct aeration of water reservoirs. Aeration, antipoaching are very important tools for conservation of the food supply of Oriental stork.

**Important data on Taimen movements has been collected (Mongolia)**

Researches and studies are vitally important for efficient conservation of rare and endangered wildlife species and optimal conservation activities for a species are proposed and planned based on research and study findings. A study on Siberian Taimen (Hucho taimen) and its population size, movement, and distribution was started in 2013. Exactly one year ago eleven H. taimen were captured and implanted with an acoustic transmitter and 24 signal receiving stations were placed in designated points along Onon and Balj rivers under the study. The study and observation was done with efforts from the WWF-Mongolia, Onon-Balj National Park Administration officers, researchers from Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research (Germany), and Onon River Fishers’ Club members. Researchers and officers took apart the stations in last autumn and have almost done the data analysis. When putting acoustic transmitters in the fish, slight cuts are made. See more: http://mongolia.panda.org/en/news/?243432/Important-data-on-Taimen-movements-has-been-collected

**5. Walking through evergreen Forest**
**Cutting Korean pines punished by law (Russia)**

Though there is a ban on cutting Korean pines some savages break all written and unwritten laws. In November 2014 in the north of Primorye an illegal logging site was revealed with over 60 Korean pines cut down. Two suspects, citizens, aged 28 and 17, confessed in cutting these trees within two weeks. They admitted they knew about the ban but nevertheless cut the trees to harvest the nuts. The cost of nuts turned to be very high. The damage to the Russian forests was estimated at about 14 000 USD. A criminal case has been initiated.

WWF keeps tracks of all such cases and warns general public to obey the rules. “In general 90% of the cases when culprits are not caught right on the spot the criminal cases are left unsolved. But this is the very rare case which proves that it is feasible to investigate such crimes if there is a strong wish and concerned people” said Anatoly Kabanets, forest projects coordinator at WWF Russia Amur branch.

More details are here: http://www.wwf.ru/resources/news/article/eng/13092

**Local communities are very happy for what they have learned and done during this year’s “Snow Festival” (Mongolia)**

Conservation tasks are successfully undertaken when local communities have better understanding on importance and values of Protected Areas. One of motivating and encouraging actions for local communities residing Onon-Balj National Park (NP) is a snow festival. This year’s event was organized within six soums in buffer zone of the NP for a period from January 17 to February 25, 2015. It was attended by over 500 local people. Organizers of the event inform that a focus was given for improved understanding on Protected Area related laws and regulations specifically their conservation regimes and norms, and ecological education of local communities. Participants from different local entities and organizations invented images of seven representative biological species of Onon-Balj NP by ice and made short presentations on the species significance. Moreover, a contest “Questions & Answers” pertinent to the environment, wildlife, and Protected Areas was organized among youths.

See more: http://mongolia.panda.org/en/news/?243431/Local-communities-are-very-happy-for-what-they-have-learned-and-done-during-this-years-Snow-Festival

**An assessment of Protected area management effectiveness has been performed (Mongolia)**

To improve conservation efficiency, tracking and monitoring is important and should be carried out on regular basis. These regularized efforts enable actors to find out and correct weak performances and limitations in their efforts undertaken. In this line, an assessment of Management Effectiveness of Protected Areas was conducted in Onon-Balj.
National Park (NP) by using the tracking tools jointly developed by the World Protected Area Commission, World Bank, and WWF. This type of assessment, which has been conducted three times in the National Park, was addressed at five soums located in Onon-Balj NP and a total of 72 individuals represented local communities, herder communities, economic entities, and organizations took part in the assessment.

When compared results and findings of the current assessment on constraints to Onon-Balj NP against those of previous years’ assessments, the negative effects related to forest pests, unsustainable natural resource use, lowering of surface water tables, dryness of small rivers and streams, soil erosion, and fires have reduced.

See more: http://mongolia.panda.org/en/news/?243430/An-assessment-of-Protected-area-management-effectiveness-has-been-performed

6. For better Ecoregion

This sentence for Dr Quanhua Shi concisely expresses the achievements of tigers conservation’s efforts in our ecoregion. Tears of happiness showing that the goal of doubling tigers population is a winnable fight.
1. River Ecoregion Vision

2. Migratory species: Mongolian gazelle and Taimen

3. Key species: Tiger, Leopard and Oriental Stork