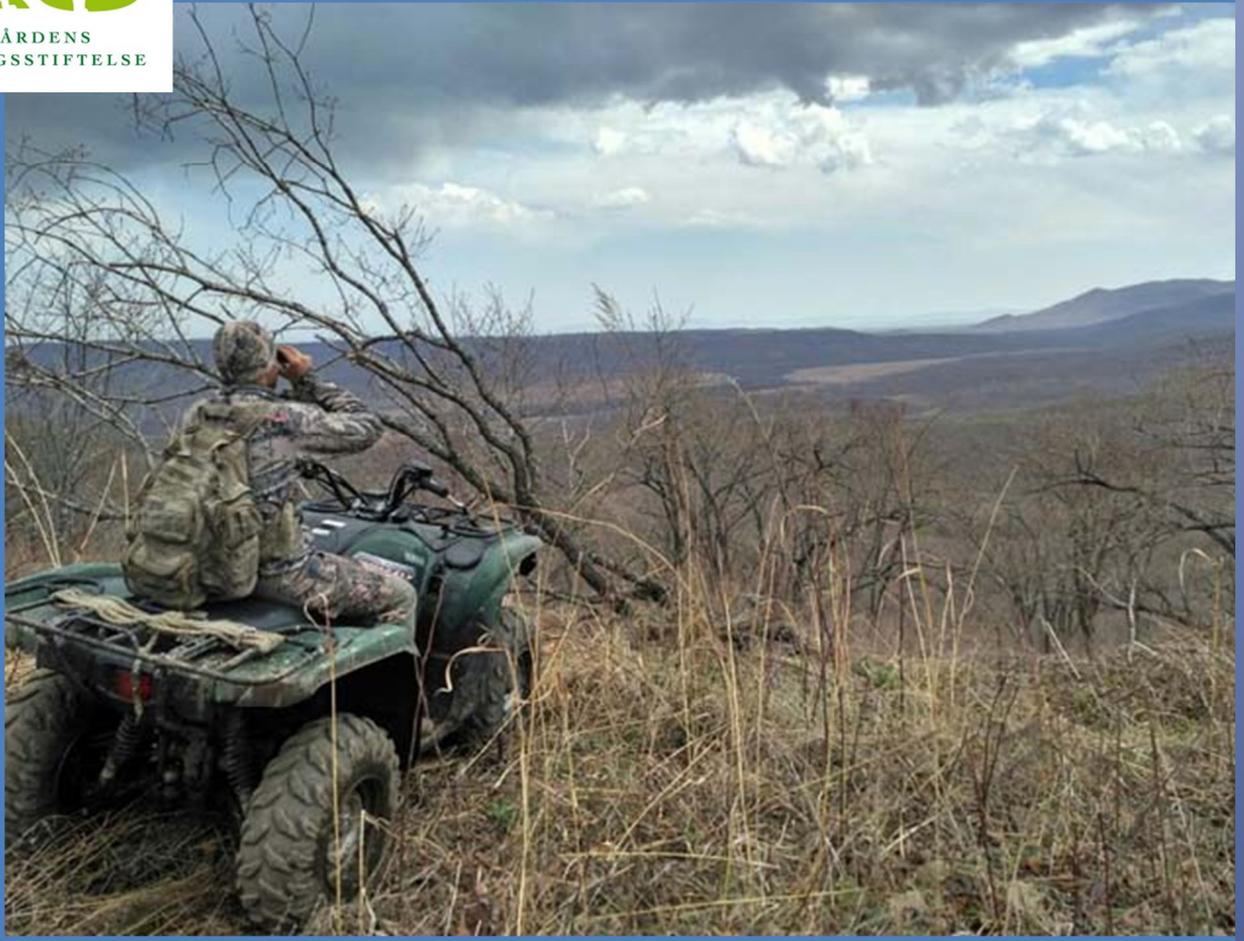




KOLMÅRDENS
INSAMLINGSSTIFTELSE



Amur Tiger Conservation in Russia in 2017

Progress report by Phoenix Fund

January 1 – June 30, 2017

SMART

In February 2015, the simultaneous count of Amur tigers and Amur leopards showed that about 523-540 Amur tigers occur today in the Russian Far East (comparing to 430-500 individuals recorded during the previous count in 2005). Same upward tendency was registered with the global population of Amur leopards, which numbers grew from 30 to 60-70 species in a decade.

Despite sustained conservation efforts over recent years and encouraging recent monitoring results, the big cats still remain at risk due to poaching, logging, forest fires, and prey depletion. Every year the wild populations of Amur tigers and Amur leopards officially lose up to ten individuals due to poaching, collisions with vehicles and other causes of death. According to official statistics and trusted sources, as many as 11 Amur tigers died from January through June 2017.

The ongoing alarming mortality in these species requires powerful and innovative solutions that leverage and build on existing capacity if we are to be successful in halting the loss of invaluable endangered wildlife.

In this regard, thanks to continuous support from the Kolmarden Fundraising Foundation Phoenix continued implementing its complex conservation programme with the following objectives:

- 1) to reduce poaching of Amur tigers and their prey species and improve protection of their habitat;
- 2) to improve law enforcement efforts within federal-level protected areas;
- 3) and to raise people's awareness about the state of, and the threats to, the Amur tiger population and involve the public in nature conservation actions.

Well-run protected areas (PAs) are a safety zone for the Amur tiger and other wildlife populations, but with limited resources and lack of monitoring, conservation management is challenging. In most protected areas, systems to assess threats, monitor performance, and evaluate success and failures were largely absent before MIST/SMART introduction. The Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool (SMART) is a tool for measuring, evaluating and improving the effectiveness of anti-poaching patrols and site-based conservation activities, and has already had a significant impact in a number of Amur tiger conservation sites. Overall, Phoenix, WCS and ZSL have jointly introduced SMART to seven sites in the Russian Far East.



During the years of SMART implementation (since 2010), we recognized that effective management can only be secured through supporting monitoring systems that document efforts, motivate and empower staff, and allow PA's managers to efficiently assign inadequate resources.

Within the framework of this project we selected five protected areas, tiger "source" sites, as a basis for population recovery and intend to improve tiger protection there; namely the Land of the Leopard National Park, Sikhote-Alin Nature Reserve, Ussuriisky Nature Reserve, United Directorate of Lazovsky Nature Reserve and Zov Tigra National Park. Protected areas are the foundation of holistic biodiversity conservation strategies, but due to direct threats, such as wildlife poaching, they are on the frontlines of efforts to conserve their fauna and flora. In order to adapt and respond effectively to these threats, Phoenix and its partners – WCS and ZSL - rolled out SMART in these five protected areas providing their managers and staff much needed support, including the tools enabling to collect

information on where threats are occurring and the capacity to address them quickly.

SMART program integrates data from law enforcement patrols, analyses current on-site poaching trends and measures progress of patrol efforts to help rangers improve their effectiveness. It has already enabled PA's managers to curb poaching and allocate scarce resources more effectively by identifying areas that are most at risks.

Regular feedback meetings conducted in all five project areas create and sustain information flow between rangers and conservation managers. During the reported months, five feedback meetings were carried out:

- In February 2017 and June 2017 - Ussuriisky Nature Reserve,
- In March 2017 – Sikhote-Alin Biosphere Nature Reserve,
- In March 2017 and June 2017 - Anyuisky National Park,
- In May 2017 - Land of the Leopard National Park.



Since 2010, the situation in all SMART territories has progressed from having undocumented patrols, driven in an uncontrolled and reactive manner to a state where management is using information from patrols on a quarterly basis to identify gaps and other deficiencies in patrolling, and ranger teams are competing to meet performance targets and reach threat hotspots. The quarterly feedback process of peer review of patrol results using SMART data was found to motivate the rangers as they could see the impacts of their work, could participate in the planning of the protection strategies for the next months, and it created healthy competition between ranger teams. During the reported period we did not attend rangers' meetings at the United Directorate of Lazovsky Nature Reserve and Zov Tigra National Park. The PA's administration received all necessary consultations and report development support by Skype.

In addition, a larger proportion of the protected areas is now reached by law enforcement patrols as weak spots and sites where there were no patrols at all are better identified through SMART maps. Some threats also appear to be trending lower as we witness the decline in registered violations and especially poaching. Finally, the SMART methodology could effectively control for variables and standardize data over time, therefore allowing for effort and impact to be recorded in the long-term.



In 2017, rangers of the five PAs continued carrying out regular anti-poaching and habitat protection patrols using SMART. Overall patrol quality at existing sites remains good and we witness a continuing diminishing dependency on technical and management assistance from us. We are not able to provide full analyses of patrol efforts and results for the first half of 2017, because we have only five months of SMART data available. We will provide a full account of efforts and results in our final report. At this point we hope it suffices to say that overall patrol quality at the existing six sites has remained satisfactory.

The Ussuriisky Nature Reserve is now almost fully independent from our technical and management support. We continue to participate in feedback meetings, and provide suggestions for improving presentations, but our input has become minor and it is clear that SMART would continue without major problems at this site if we would no longer provide technical support.

Dependence of SMART sites on technical support

SMART Sites in Russian Far East	No. of years SMART	SMART tasks				
		Patrol data collection	Data storage & database management	Data processing & Periodic reports	Patrol evaluation & Feedback meetings	In-depth analyses & Patrol management evaluations
Annui National Park	1	Dependent	Dependent	Dependent	Dependent	Dependent
Ussurisk Nature Reserve	3	Almost independent	Almost independent	Almost independent	Almost independent	Almost independent
Sikhote Alin Nat. Reserve	5	Almost independent	Almost independent	Almost independent	Almost independent	Almost independent
Zov Tigra National Park	5	Almost independent	Almost independent	Almost independent	Almost independent	Almost independent
Lazovskii Nature Reserve	6	Almost independent	Almost independent	Almost independent	Almost independent	Almost independent
Land of Leopard National Park	6	Almost independent	Almost independent	Almost independent	Almost independent	Almost independent

Dark Blue	Fully independent
Medium Blue	Almost independent
Light Blue	Dependent

In order to motivate rangers to work with SMART we continue using a bonus system. Patrol teams are given specific patrol targets which reflect the priorities identified at the latest patrol review meeting. For example, this may be to increase intensity of patrolling in a particular part of the reserve, or to conduct a certain number of night patrols. If they meet the targets, inspectors receive bonuses, which may be paid at the team or individual level.

Bonuses are provided quarterly on the basis of the patrol performance that is documented in the quarterly patrol reports. One protected area – Land of the Leopard National Park - has begun to pay bonuses from its own resources. This year, we decided to start handing out an attractive present to the best performing ranger at each patrol feedback meeting at a site, in order to foster the interest of rangers and commitment to the program. At Sikhote-Alin Biosphere Nature Reserve, we decided to put a larger focus on results in the bonus system and introduce minimum effort-levels that rangers need to achieve to be applicable for bonuses.



Expansion of the SMART program to new sites is progressing exceptionally well. Up to date SMART is running in Anyuisky National Park, where it was launched in April 2016. Rangers are now consistently collecting good quality data for SMART on all patrols, and these data show that initial patrol quality at the park is satisfactory. Exciting news is that we have recently started work at a seventh site in the Amur tiger's range in the Russian Far East, the Bikin National Park, after its director secured political support for the introduction of SMART from his superiors at the ministry in Moscow. He wants to introduce SMART purely because he is enthusiastic about it, and at this site we will for the first time attempt introducing SMART without providing funding for patrols and ranger bonuses, at least not from the start. The Bikin National Park is by far the largest protected area where we have worked up to date; it is in fact the largest protected area with tigers in the world.



Ecological Education

Nowadays Ecological Education (EE) has occupied a role in conservation strategy based on the belief that EE has the potential to instill knowledge on, and values for, the preservation of biodiversity—and ultimately to change the behavior of the country's next generation of resource users.

The Phoenix Fund has early recognized the instrumentality of EE in their conservation efforts. Since 1998 the Phoenix Fund has been working with outreach professionals and opening ecological centers across the region to coordinate conservation activities of educators in Primorye.

Phoenix Fund's Ecological Education program is rooted in a way that is compatible with and supportive of the standards-based school curriculum, complementing it with regional component. To this end, Phoenix has developed cross-cutting materials connecting species conservation and environmental protection framework with Ecology, Biology, Literature, English Language, and Geography literacy.

We believe in the critical role of the educator and the importance of a holistic approach that actively engages learners in a complete experience. Our educators use best practices that appear to drive positive results in knowledge, awareness, skills, attitudes, intentions, behavior, and enjoyment that include (according to the survey conducted by Phoenix in March 2017):

- Dosage (longer experiences) (80% of educators);
- Experiential approaches (100% of educators);
- Investigation, issue-based, and project-based approaches (60% of educators);
- Reflection and relevance (100% of educators);
- Efforts to explicitly provide students with a sense of empowerment (100% of educators);
- Incorporating social components, such as involvement with communities facing real environmental problems and active group discussion(80% of educators);
- Designing programs with specific goals in mind (100% of educators).



To ensure the programme feasibility, the Phoenix Fund has focused on five factors: 1) buy-in from the beginning, such as cultural appropriateness and local ownership; 2) support materials, including curriculum guides, textbooks, and teaching resources; 3) teacher training, particularly teacher involvement in materials development and evaluation of educational efforts; 4) providing funding for EE programme implementation, including supplies, educators' salaries, travel costs, eco-centres maintenance; and 5) assuring program support.

Phoenix Fund's EE program is conducted in eight eco-centres, including four supported by the Kolmarden Fundraising Foundation:

1. Khasan district

Rodnichok Eco-club led by Natalia Drobysheva is a place-based ecological learning centre in Slavyanka village. The educator regularly visits other villages of Khasan giving ecological lessons to schoolchildren. Centre's programmes connect to the school general education curriculum while encouraging pupils to develop deeper understanding than the curriculum requires.



From January through May 2017, Natalya Drobysheva held 36 eco-lessons for 1,121 children. During the lessons with primary school children, she told about rare wild animals and domesticated animals. Natalia used a kit of posters on the Amur tiger developed and published by the Phoenix Fund.



2. Lazovsky district

Since 2007, Phoenix has been cooperating with Galina Dikalyuk and other specialists of educational department of the United direction of Lazovsky Nature Reserve and Zov Tigra National Park. The specialists established systematic work with schools, kindergartens, and people of Lazovsky district. Educators developed a large number of ecological games, holiday scenarios, training programs for pre-schoolers and children of primary school. "Ecological teams" consisting of teachers and club members are sent to district schools. With the help of traveling exhibitions, discussions, theatre performances, film screenings and games, schoolchildren and teaching staff of village schools become familiar with ecological education. Not only theoretical knowledge is involved; pupils also plant trees, make and set up birdfeeders, and collect rubbish. There is a Nature Museum at the Reserve, where thematic excursions are organized.



From January through June 2017, the educators gave 178 eco-lessons for 3,610 children aged 3-17 and adults. The eco-lessons covered different problems of eco-system with focus on endemic species.



For example, in spring, a number of lessons devoted to forest fires were given to familiarize locals with fire-fighting efforts in nature reserves and national parks as a measure to conserve Amur tiger habitat. As many as 119 residents of Lazo town participated in the action devoted to prevention of forest fires. Young members of the eco-team met people in the streets, handed out leaflets and gave talks about the start of fire hazardous season, basic rules of human behaviour and administrative liability for violations during state of emergencies.

3. Terneisky district

In 2005, Phoenix established ties with the Uragus Ecological Centre led by Galina Maksimova who devoted the greater of her life to teaching children Biology and Ecology. Central to the philosophy of the educator is the conviction that ecologists and community inform each other and are partners in their contribution to nature conservation. Since very beginning, Uragus started collaborating with the scientists in education and outreach among the youth, inviting them to lessons and ecological festivals, such as Tiger Day. Schoolchildren take care of a wonderful garden in the club's yard and Zamanikha Park, go hiking to picturesque corners and have visits with performances by their peers from villages, at times very remote ones. The eco-centre offers lectures, workshops and seminars, produces public actions, and provides a variety of environmentally oriented actions and information to Terney community.



All in all, from January through June 2017, Galina Maksimova held 237 nature-oriented events for 4,331 children and 288 adults.



4. Vladivostok

Green Whirl Eco-Theatre led by Alexandra Vinogradova provides a service to young people who are committed both to acting and nature conservation. Acting is not only a fantastic profession but it is also an absolutely essential and important part of a child's development. Theatre, like all forms of the arts, seeks to create awareness and to inspire people to make them think and act differently. At the Green Whirl acting has been used to communicate and educate children and young people in such issues as environmental consciousness and species conservation. In a playful yet theatrical context adults as well as young people get informed, educated and entertained.



During the reported period, Alexandra Vinogradova conducted 67 classes, including Acting Technique, Dance, Improvisation, Voice, Body Mobility, Scenic Speech, and other.

At present, there are two young actors groups: Juniors group (age 8-10) consisted of 14 children and Seniors group (age 10-14) consisted of 17 children. During first half of 2017, the children were pleased to spend time in an environment with deep emotion and strong team work. The two hours of dedicated acting teaching were given three times per week. The children participated in two different classes per day given by acting instructor Alexandra Vinogradova. Classes included Acting, Dance, Voice and Diction, Masks, Improvisation, and more. Moreover, the children were given lessons devoted to local wildlife, including Amur tigers, Amur leopards, and others. We are impressed by Alexandra's ability to energize a group of young actors. Her passion and enthusiasm motivates children from the start. Each lesson at the eco-theatre begins with breaking the ice. Alexandra asks kids to do fun exercises to loosen up, gain confidence and sharpen focus, concentration and listening skills. The young actors learn how to relax, be still, make eye contact and use voice projection - still keeping it fun and allowing their personalities to shine.

In January, there were preparations and rehearsals of a "Dog-Sleigh" Show at the eco-theatre. The main point of the play is to show harmony between people and the environment and consequences that could arise from the careless and excessive consumption of natural resources. Moreover, Juniors and Seniors groups attended all scheduled classes (14), including Acting Technique, Dance, Improvisation, Voice, Body Mobility, Scenic Speech, and other.

In February, young performers had chances to give fancy-dress lessons to their mates. While playing, the kids reported on forest dwellers of Primorsky krai, did exercises to prepare body and voice for acting and showed their own performances. The Juniors group prepared fancy-dress classes on the following topics: “Sisters-Squirrels”, “Big Wolf”, “Mandarin Duck”, “Woodpecker”, “Crow Karla Karlovna and Magpie Varvara”, “Red Deer”, and “Mister Leopard”. Juniors and Seniors groups continued attending all scheduled classes (12), including Acting Technique, Dance, Improvisation, Voice, Body Mobility, Scenic Speech, and other. Students learned to use techniques to memorize text, rehearse scenes, and perform in front of an audience.

In March, Alexandra Vinogradova gave 15 classes for young actors, teaching them Body Language, Voice and Diction, Personality and Spontaneity, Physical, Psychological, and Emotional Improvisation.

It is worth mentioning that since September 2016 when the eco-theatre officially opened its doors, the young actors have gained artistic skills, and in March achieved a great success. During VII Regional Children’s Theatrical Contest for Amateur Theatre Groups “Kids Play for Kids” they won GRAND-PRIX for “Dog-Sleigh” Show in Ethnical and Folkloric Performance Nomination and awards for the Best Actress (for Husky Kustuk at “Dog-Sleigh” Show) and Best Featured Actress (for Shaman at “Dog-Sleigh” Show). Also, with “How Tiger and Leopard Lost Their Colouration” Show, the young performers won a medal, diploma and award for the Best Actress (for Magpie Varvara). At XVI Open City Children’s Festival-Competition «Live Theatre – the Eighth Wonder of the World”, the “Dog-Sleigh” Show was awarded a diploma in Directing Crafts and Innovations Nomination. The brightest performances produced unforgettable impressions and were warmly accepted by the spectators.



The eco-theatre welcomes any group of schoolchildren from any districts of Primorye to show their theatrical performances and share their artistic skills and experience. For example, on March 27, the eco-theatre hosted 20 schoolchildren aged 6-15 from Alekseevka village (Primorsky krai). The guests together with young actors were pleased to take part in open Scenic Speech class. Then, young performers showed the guests an ecological fairy-tale “How Tiger and Leopard Lost Their Colouration”, and at the end of the meeting all had tea together. The doors of the eco-theatre will be always open for such meetings. Recently, the young actors have received an invitation from administration of Land of the Leopard National Park to perform in Khasansky district.

On March 29, the “Green Whirl” Eco-Theatre took part in Innovations in Education Festival “Education – 2017” and ranked second in nomination “Innovative programs and supplementary education methods”. On March 30, the eco-theatre welcomed about 30 educators and teachers from Primorsky and Khabarovsk krais, and Amurskaya and Jewish Autonomous provinces. The young actors demonstrated the guests how they learn at Acting Technique class and showed “Dog-Sleigh” ethnical performance. In April and May, the young actors gave a series of performances to children and adults at school #28 in Vladivostok. The audience always burst into thunderous applause when the kids performed two shows, “Dog-Sleigh” and “How Tiger and Leopard Lost Their Colouration”.

We are proud of such tremendous children’s achievements in a very short time and hope that it will give them more inspiration and motivation to study well at classes during the new school year starting in September 2017. Up to date, a lot of children desire to enrol for drama lessons at the eco-theatre for next school year. There are too many willing ones, and it is likely that there will be competitive enrolment.





Credits: Phoenix Fund, Land of the Leopard National Park, Lazovsky Nature Reserve, Sikhote-Alin Nature Reserve, Ussuriisky Nature Reserve, WCS, GTI, SMART

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