

Amur Leopards



“Amur leopards are teetering on the brink of extinction. With the establishment of the Land of the Leopard National Park, in conjunction with other conservation efforts, we can now start to focus on how to begin bringing them back.”

A SAFE HAVEN

Amur leopards received a safe haven in 2012 when the government of Russia declared a new protected area. Called Land of the Leopard National Park, this marked a major effort to save the world’s rarest cat. Extending nearly 650,000 acres it includes all of the Amur leopard’s breeding areas and about 60 percent of the critically endangered cat’s remaining habitat. The park is also home to 10 endangered Amur tigers. WWF lobbied for the establishment of this park in the Russian Far East.



In an amazing tale of recovery, Amur leopard populations have more than doubled in just seven years. New census data reveals Amur leopards in Russia’s Land of the Leopard National Park now number at least 57 cats (up from just 30 cats in 2007). And an additional 8-12 leopards were counted in adjacent areas of China.

There are still large tracts of suitable habitat left across the Amur in Russia and China. In China the prey base is insufficient to sustain large populations of leopards and tigers. Prey populations will recover if measures are taken to limit the poaching of prey species and the forests are managed for logging more sustainably. For the Amur leopard to survive for the long term, it needs to repopulate its former range. But for that to happen, prey populations need to recover first.

The Amur leopard is poached largely for its beautiful, spotted fur. In 1999, an undercover investigation team recovered a female and a male Amur leopard skin, which were being sold for \$500 and \$1,000 respectively in the village of Barabash, not far from the Kedrovaya Pad reserve in Russia. Agriculture and villages surround the forests where the leopards live. As a result, the forests are relatively accessible, making poaching a problem—not only for the leopards themselves, but also for important prey species, such as roe deer, sika deer and hare, which are hunted by the villagers both for food and cash.

