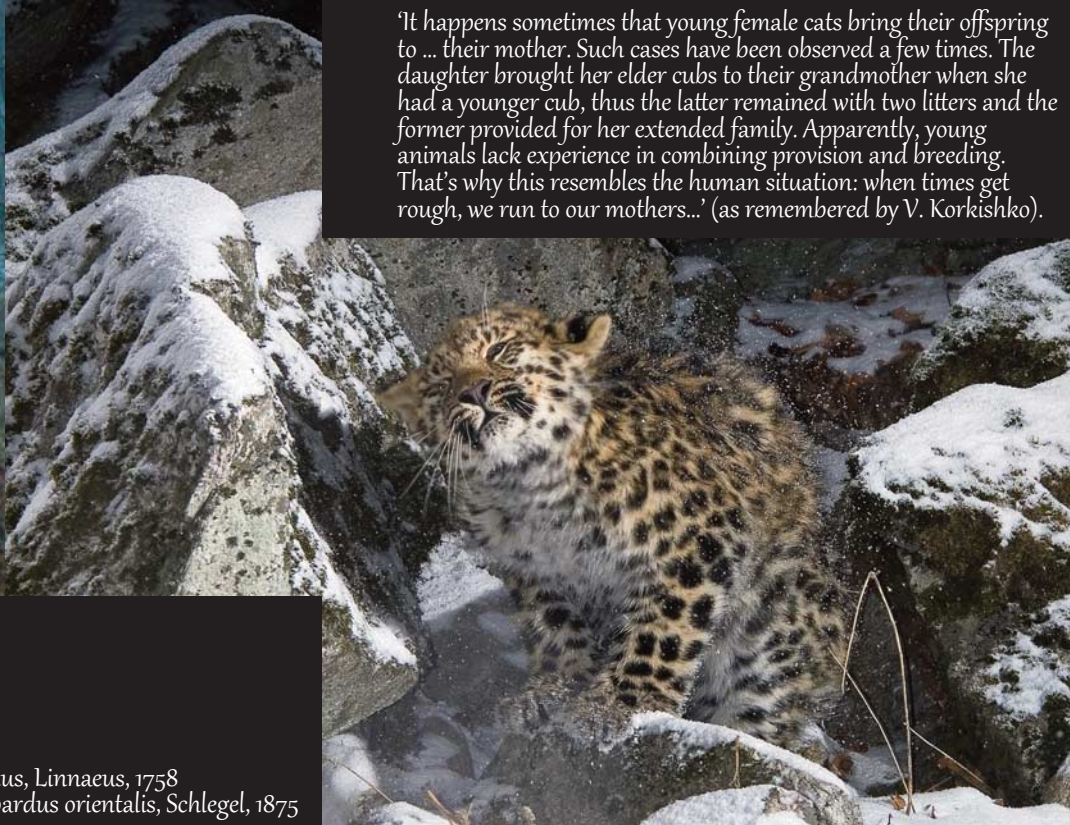


the beauty the world must save!



leopard's land
земля леопарда



'It happens sometimes that young female cats bring their offspring to ... their mother. Such cases have been observed a few times. The daughter brought her elder cubs to their grandmother when she had a younger cub, thus the latter remained with two litters and the former provided for her extended family. Apparently, young animals lack experience in combining provision and breeding. That's why this resembles the human situation: when times get rough, we run to our mothers...' (as remembered by V. Korkishko).

Kingdom: Animalia
Phylum: Chordata
Class: Mammalia
Order: Carnivora
Family: Felidae
Genus: Panthera
Species: Panthera pardus, Linnaeus, 1758
Subspecies: Panthera pardus orientalis, Schlegel, 1875



A leopard (*Panthera pardus* – a spotted panther) appeared presumably in Africa about 470-825 thousand years ago and about 170-300 thousand years ago its distribution reached Asia. As an autonomous specimen, the Amur leopard emerged in the course of its exploration of the southern areas of the Russian Far East.

Beauty will save the world! The contemporaries of the great Russian writer Fyodr Dostoyevsky shared this view for that was the time when the development of the civilization and the urbanization were treated with optimism. Nowadays the



majority of people think differently: it is the beauty that has to be saved. First of all, the fragile beauty of nature that keeps counting losses in different corners of the planet. One of such places is the south-west of the Primorye region – the modern habitat for one of the most beautiful subspecies of the feline family – the Amur leopard, the northern representative of the species. The world is teetering on the brink of an irreversible ecological disaster – a complete extinction of these graceful predators, whose amount does not exceed 50 individuals altogether. In the course of ages their life was safeguarded by nature itself: forests of the Far-East, China and the Korean Peninsula were a perfect place for hunting and fostering the offspring. Unfortunately, nature is tremendously running out of resources and it is the time for human beings to take charge of it. In other words, the future of the Amur leopard is in our hands.

Power and Grace of Wild Beauty

An apt and keen predator, the Amur leopard is famous for its enchanting grace. It is a lone hunter with a noble spirit.

The Amur leopard is able to spot the prey at a distance of up to 1,5 km. The whole hunting process amounts to one prodigious leap. The wild cat strictly follows the nature's law: 'Do not take more than you can eat.' Usually a deer, a roe deer and a wild boar are a favourite quarry the wild cat tows up a tree or a rock.



The Amur leopard poses no threat to human beings. In the last 150 years no deaths from the Amur leopard were recorded in Russia. There were only few cases of an induced attack. A chased wounded animal attacks its hunter to survive, for thus it seeks ways to run away. In most cases, the leopards manage to do it. Young leopards are likely to follow human footsteps driven solely by curiosity. Sometimes a leopard can hunt dogs, small cattle, deer in deer

A leopard is one of the most popular symbols used in heraldry for bravery, ardour and courage.

'Our encounter occurred in winter. I was not very much familiar with the territory, that's why I didn't manage to find the chalet before dark, so I kept searching at night till I came across a leopard. It must have been accompanying me for a couple of kilometers. I tried to cross the river but there was no way further. All I could do was make a bonfire and listen to the leopard going in circles around my spot all night long.' (as remembered by V. Korkishko – a world famous explorer of a Far-Eastern leopard, the chief of Kedrovaya Pad Nature Reserve)

parks. Such cases are called a conflict between a leopard and a human, with the latter solving it in a violent manner with a help of a rifle, a loop or a trap.

Nevertheless, the cautious wild cat prefers to stay away from people. A constant encroachment of a human being on the leopard's territory is regarded as an



emergency call: it is time to move to another habitat.

However, the Far-Eastern cats are not inclined to migration. Mature cats define own segregated habitats the size of which may make up to 300 km² for a mature male specimen and 100 km² for a female one. On this territory the leopard is bound to live for 10-15 years keeping up the breed and na-

tural cycles. This lifespan has been significantly reduced by people.

Despite this, the Amur leopard keeps struggling for its existence. Unfortunately, the death of 2-3 female species entails serious problems in breeding. Hence people must take the leading role in preserving the leopard population by restoring the environment appropriate for conservation of this amazing wild cat.

Territory of Survival

At the beginning of the 20th century the Amur leopard could be found in North-Western China (up to Beijing), on the Korean Peninsula and in Russia – within modern Primorye and Khabarovsk regions, including the Amur's left bank. During the 20th century the area was shrinking. In the last 20 years it has reduced twofold.

These days the Amur leopard has gone extinct on the Korean Peninsula. In China one can come across single species. In Russia its

Due to its paucity the Amur leopard has always been a valuable specimen for zoos, circuses and private nurseries. Uncontrollable poaching was stopped only in 1966. Hereinafter the withdrawal from nature was allowed only on a special permission.

population has been preserved only in the south-western part of Primorye region and spans over a limited mountain forest 400 000 – 600 000 ha in size.

Perils and Threats

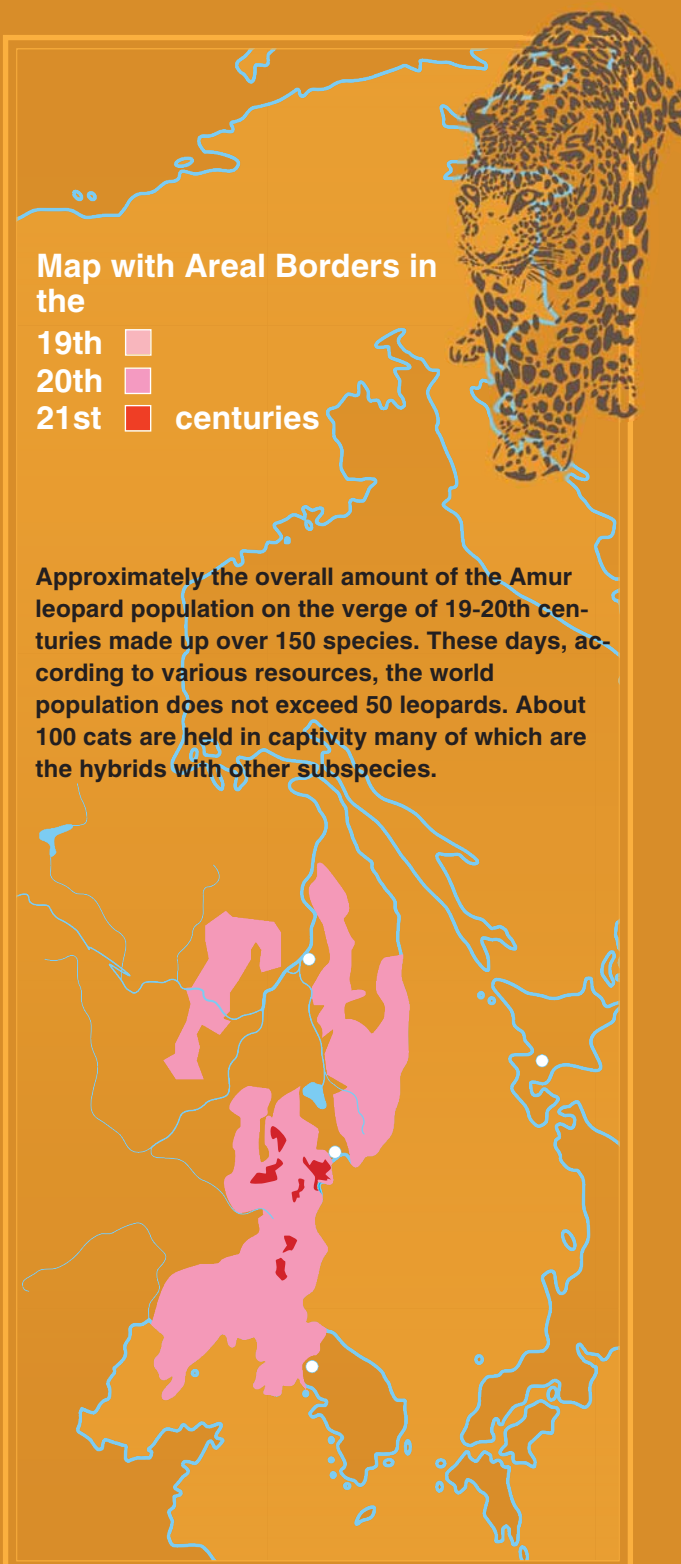
What can threaten a fearless and skilled predator? In the wild – not so much: a rival or a bigger aggressive animal; a wound in a fight; natural disasters. In the modern world, where the humans have left almost no place or thing untouched, a good-natured Amur leopard is exposed to threats of a different kind.

Reduction of habitats as a result of human activities (industrial exploration of the habitat; forest fires triggered by human activities and human recklessness; deforestation)

Poaching, deliberate and undeliberate shooting (for selling the leopard's fur, for the usage in the traditional Eastern medicine)

Exhaustion of food resources (livestock)





Conservation

Russia was the first country with the Amur leopard inhabiting its territory to undertake conservation measures.

To preserve the Amur leopard and mitigate the negative impact on its population a regulatory framework was drawn up.

In 2001 the leading Russian and world experts came to the resolution of creating the reserve captive population of the Amur leopard within its historic habitat.

The concept of 'natural preservation' concession has been in development since 2008, concerning the forest lease aimed at expanding territories of temperate broadleaf and mixed forests and broadleaf forests in the leopard's habitat.

Special attention is devoted to enhancing efficient

2011 Is the establishment year of the Autonomous noncommercial organization 'Eurasian center of study, saving and renewal of population of leopards' with S. Ivanov as the chairman of Observational Council – the immediate Chief of the Staff of the Presidential Executive Office. The main goal of the Centre is gathering and accumulation of recourses and means for creating and developing the infrastructure of Protected Areas of Russia; proposal and realization of measures targeted at preservation and restoration of the population.

Specialists carried out a number of studies to provide scientific proof and

National park – is a much more flexible governance form of natural resources than a reserve. Due to a thoroughly planned functional zoning, the territory of a national park comprises strictly protected areas as well as leases for human activities and ecological paths. Thus a national park enhances the preservation of rare animals and plants and the sustainable development of the region.



S. Ivanov delivers a report at the Russian Geographical Society's Board of Trustees meeting in Saint-Petersburg on 10 April 2012



Leopards are confined to the territories of the Primorye region distinguished through dense vegetation, which entails active hunting and recreational activities on such territories. The habitat itself contains about 60 settlements, many of them are near its borders including such big residential areas as Vladivostok, Ussurisk, Artem, Razdolnoye village, Vol'no-Nadezhinskoe village and others.

preservation of the leopard in the hunting lease zones.

Since the beginning of 2010 the Government along with scientific community undertook urgent measures to save the Far-Eastern leopard.

2010 Chairman of the Russian Government Vladimir Putin gave a number of orders to the Ministry of Natural Resources of the Russian Federation targeted at addressing the issue of the preservation of unique natural territories, enhancing the survival of the Amur leopard's population. For that moment more than a half of leopard's habitats were off the list of Protected Areas of Russia. Sergei Ivanov was chosen the curator of the project, then First Deputy Chairman of the Government of the Russian Federation. By common effort of executive bodies, scientists, environmental and social organizations the concept of establishing a new national park of federal significance was substantiated.

The Amur leopard is listed in Red Data Book of the Russian Federation and the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. Since 1956 any attempt of hunting this animal was prohibited, for the Amur leopard had been reclassified from a malicious specimen into a protected one. In 1966 the Amur leopard was enrolled on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species and the entrapment of the species was forbidden. According to the last version of the List, the subspecies were classified as critically endangered.

of leopards' the Government of the Russian Federation on 5 April 2012 issued the order to establish 'Zemlya Leoparda' (eng. Leopard's Land) National Park. It stretches over 260,000 ha which will provide the preservation of 60% of the leopard's habitat.

functional zoning of the national park which is established to optimize the territorial preservation of the Amur leopard.

2012 On the initiative of 'Eurasian center of study, saving and renewal of population

Russian Geographical Society allocated a grant to 'Eurasian center of study, saving and renewal of population of leopards'. The project deals with works targeted at the implementation of scientific knowledge about the leopard for preservation purposes: samples of relief, flora and fauna for designing a new model of the park's territory, realization of bio-technical activities for sustaining and expanding the population of prey for the Amur leopard. The outcome of preliminary works will serve the basis for functional zoning of the national park, development of eco-tourism on its territory, adaptive resource management.

Russia has assumed the responsibility for the efficient preservation of the Amur leopard. However, the programme will be maximally efficient only in terms of multilateral partnership – inside Russia, on the international and universal level.

The population of big carnivores standing at the apex of the chain pyramid cannot be either high or low for it fully reflects the condition of eco-systems which these carnivores inhabit. Apparently, the modern taiga in the south-west of the Primorye region is able to feed no more than 50 leopards.



The Amur leopard is a wild beauty that must be saved! Everyone can contribute to the victory, namely the rescue of this amazing animal

It is our common duty to nature and future generations! Our children must stand the chance to witness one of the most unique creatures!

It is time to realize the danger and unite in order to avert the extinction of the Amur leopard!

Together we can save them.

For further information visit:
Autonomous noncommercial organization 'Eurasian center of study, saving and renewal of population of leopards'

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