

Amur Leopard Project Update Autumn 2007 season



Trapping and health assessment

Two wild leopards were trapped and given full health checks this season—a very successful trapping rate when perhaps only 25 animals remain in an area of 20,000 square kilometres!

One Asiatic black bear was also trapped, and this too was sampled to get a better idea of wildlife diseases in the area.

Veterinary capacity building

Training was given to vets, veterinary students and rehabilitation centre staff in handling wild animals, wildlife disease and investigation, carnivore anaesthesia, pathology and practical laboratory skills. Discussions were also held on the development of the wildlife component of the veterinary undergraduate curriculum at the local veterinary academy.

Progress on the refurbishment of the building to be used for the Wildlife Health Monitoring Unit was reviewed, and advice was given on its future operation.

- By supporting John Lewis's work on Amur leopards, **WVI has rapidly become the main agency providing veterinary support for conservation efforts to save the Amur leopard.**

- By becoming a member of ALTA, WVI has become further integrated into the network of organisations working to save the Amur leopard and tiger from extinction.

- By engaging the interest and expertise of specialists from UK universities, a wider range of veterinary issues concerning the leopard can be addressed.

- By supporting ongoing efforts to train Russian veterinarians in wildlife health issues, WVI is playing an active role in creating future conservation-minded professionals locally.

- By cooperating and communicating with as wide a range of conservation agencies as is possible in the Russian Far East, WVI is engaging in the highest standards of modern conservation practice.

Thank you to all our supporters for helping us to achieve so much this season.



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Captive breeding and reintroduction update

Dr Lewis is currently working on a disease management strategy for the reintroduction phase of the project, based on his research into the veterinary status of captive and wild leopards. Of huge benefit to this is the production of a comprehensive database of veterinary data collected on captive European leopards, which is being compiled by Imperial College London post-graduate student Samantha Earle. This data will prove vital when breeding stock is selected for future reintroductions.



New research in the UK

During the health checks on the two leopards trapped this season, obvious heart murmurs were detected in both animals. Further investigation of this is needed—whilst the murmurs could be totally benign, perhaps as an effect of certain anaesthetics, they could indicate more serious problems. To explore this, WVI have been offered expert assistance from Professor Malcolm Cobb at the University of Nottingham Veterinary School.

The University of Cambridge has also provided expertise, through the involvement of Dr. David Sargan's laboratory investigating the occasional occurrence of captive leopard cubs born with abnormally short tails. It is hoped that Cambridge University will obtain funding to continue to support this work in the future.



The Amur leopard is the world's most endangered cat, with as few as 25 individuals now surviving in the Russian Far East. This population is in grave danger of extinction due to numerous factors including ongoing development in the region, logging activity, hunters and poachers in the forests, forest fires, inbreeding depression due to low genetic diversity within the remaining leopard population, and the potential for disease transmission from domestic animals.

However, a large coalition of foreign non-governmental agencies (NGO's) and regional agencies of the Russian Federation are currently working together to secure a future for this leopard through vigorous conservation activities to protect the existing small population and an imaginative reintroduction scheme to establish a second population in former leopard habitat.

Wildlife Vets International (WVI) is a British charity through which the specialist veterinary services of Dr. John Lewis is provided to this project. WVI is committed to supporting this project long-term, and further funding is urgently required. Your support of this project is greatly appreciated. Thank you.