

Scientists track Siberian tiger cubs

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U.S. Wildlife Conservation Society researchers and their Russian colleagues have fitted three 40-day-old Siberian tiger cubs with radio tracking collars.

The tagging, involving the youngest wild tigers ever tracked by scientists, uses elastic collars that eventually fall off as the tigers grow.

The collars give researchers crucial insights into the needs of tiger cubs and may help improve the survival and reproduction of the largest of the cat species.

Working near Russia's Sikhote-Alin mountain range reserve, the researchers located the tiger's den by tracking a radio-collared 13-year-old tigress named Lidya.

The scientists waited until Lidya left the den before searching for the cubs. After collecting hair and blood samples for genetic and disease analysis, the team fitted them with radio collars and returned them to their den.

John Goodrich, a WCS researcher and the head of the Siberian Tiger Project, said Siberian tigers are so elusive, few field researchers have seen them in their natural habitat.

Researchers say they are particularly interested in understanding more about the mortality of tiger cubs, only half of which survive their first year.

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