

Update on census of world's most endangered cat -- Female Amur leopard found dead

April 23 2007

Following the April 18 announcement that only 25 to 34 of the Amur or Far Eastern leopard (*Panthera pardus orientalis*) remain in the wild, World Wildlife Fund says the number must now be revised because a female Amur leopard was killed.

Anonymous tips led officers of two leopard anti-poaching squads to the body of the leopardess on April 20 about two miles from Bamburovo village within the watershed of Alimovka River on the territory of Barsovy National Wildlife Refuge.

The next day veterinarians from the Zoological Society of London found that the 77 pound mature female leopard was shot in the back side. The bullet came through tail bone, crushed the hip bones and lodged in the belly. She was then beaten to death with a heavy object.

“The killing of even one female is a huge loss for a cat on the brink of extinction,” said Darron Collins, managing director of the Amur-Heilong Program, World Wildlife Fund. “This year’s census showed a desperate situation, with just seven female Amur leopards left in the wild and four rearing cubs. Now we’ve lost a mature, reproductive leopardess and her potential cubs in a senseless killing. This is the third leopard killed within this area over the last five years and underscores the desperate need for a unified protected area with national park status if the leopard is to survive in the wild.”

In February and March, World Wildlife Fund, along with the Wildlife

Conservation Society and the Pacific Institute of Geography of the Russian Academy of Science, conducted a routine snow-track census of leopard numbers. World Wildlife Fund led the 2007 census of Amur leopards.

WWF says encroaching civilization, new roads, poaching, exploitation of forests, and climate change had contributed to the leopards' plight.

Source: World Wildlife Fund

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