

Decline in Russian tigers renews calls to end all trade

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A shocking decline in the Russian Federation's wild tiger population highlights the importance of eliminating trade in and demand for tiger parts, the International Tiger Coalition (ITC) said today. The alliance of 40 organizations worldwide issued the statement upon news that Siberian tigers may have suffered a serious drop in numbers over the past four years.

New census figures indicate that [tiger](#) populations in the Russian Far East, which in 2005 numbered nearly 500, have declined significantly due to poaching of tigers for their skins, bones and meat as well as poaching of tiger prey and habitat degradation. The seriousness of the news was underscored the day before, when a young male tiger was found dead in the region with two bullets in its head.

"Russia's tigers have been a stand-out success story," said Judy Mills, the ITC's moderator. "This apparent sudden, marked decline should act as a reminder of why regional efforts must be strengthened in response to increasingly sophisticated criminal networks."

The ITC recommends concerted bilateral law enforcement between the Russian Federation and China to address illegal cross-border wildlife trade, especially in tigers, as an immediate first step. Furthermore, the ITC encourages countries to remind potential consumers that tiger trade is illegal and destroy existing stockpiles of tiger parts and products, as their existence raises expectations of a future resumption of trade.

A meeting in Kathmandu, Nepal at the end of this month will bring together 13 of 14 tiger range countries, including the Russian Federation, to discuss how to reverse the precipitous decline in all wild tiger populations. The meeting is the first step in preparations for a summit of heads of tiger range states next year to mark the 2010 Year of the Tiger in the Chinese calendar.

Without urgent action, the ITC warns, there may not be wild tigers when the Year of the Tiger comes around again in 12 years.

Source: World Wildlife Fund

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