

Report shows dramatic decline in Siberian tigers

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This is a Siberian tiger photographed in the Russian Far East. A new report released today shows a dramatic decline in Russian tigers due to poaching and habitat loss. Credit: Dale Miquelle/Wildlife Conservation Society

The Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) announced today a report revealing that the last remaining population of Siberian tigers has likely declined significantly due to the rising tide of poaching and habitat loss.

WCS says the report will help inform Russian officials of what needs to be done to protect remaining populations of the world's biggest cat.

The report was released by the Siberian Tiger Monitoring Program, which is coordinated by WCS in association with Russian governmental and non-governmental organizations. It revealed that a recent tiger survey over a representative part of the tiger's range showed a 40 percent

decline in numbers from a 12-year average.

Annual tiger surveys are conducted at 16 monitoring sites scattered across tiger range to act as an early warning system to detect changes in the [tiger population](#). The monitoring area, which covers 9,000 square miles (23,555 square kilometers), represents 15-18 percent of the existing tiger habitat in Russia. Only 56 tigers were counted at these monitoring sites. Deep snows this past winter may have forced tigers to reduce the amount they traveled, making them less detectable, but the report notes a 4-year trend of decreasing numbers of tigers.

The total number of Siberian tigers across their entire range was estimated at approximately 500 individuals in 2005, having recovered from less than 30 animals in the late 1940s.

"The sobering results are a wake-up call that current conservation efforts are not going far enough to protect Siberian tigers," said Dr. Dale Miquelle, of the Wildlife Conservation Society's Russian Far East Program. "The good news is that we believe this trend can be reversed if immediate action is taken."

"Working with our Russian partners we are hopeful and confident that we can save the Siberian tiger," said Dr. John G. Robinson, WCS Executive Vice President for Conservation and Science. "The Siberian tiger is a living symbol for the people of Russia."

The authors of the report say the decline is due primarily to increased poaching of both tigers and their prey species in the region, coupled with a series of reforms in Russia, which reduced the number of enforcement personnel in key [tiger](#) areas.

Russian scientists and non-government organizations are recommending changes in law enforcement regulations, improvements in habitat

protection, and a strengthening of the protected areas network to reverse the downward trend.

"While the results are indeed bad news in the short term, we believe the overall picture for Siberian tigers remains positive," said Colin Poole, director of Asia Programs for the Wildlife Conservation Society. "There is an enormous amount of good will for saving Siberian tigers. We just need to translate this into action."

Source: Wildlife [Conservation](#) Society ([news](#) : [web](#))

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