

Global Survival Network
Programmatic Progress Report
Operation Amba

July 15, 1998

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Summary

In October 1997, GSN led a trip to the Russian Far East to review the progress made by Operation Amba. Steve Galster was joined by Karin Elliot, a Russian speaking consultant to GSN, Dr. Gerard Baars, Director of the International Bear Foundation, and Michiel Hotte of Stichting Tigris of the Netherlands. The primary objectives were to:

- Review the problems and progress of Operation Amba;
- Expand Operation Amba to cover: anti-poaching, education, science, prey base management, anti-logging, and public relations;
- Sign a contract for 1998 with Primorsky Krai Committee on Environmental Protection to continue GSN's support of Operation Amba;
- Explore the feasibility of developing a wildlife education and rehabilitation center;

The methods, information learned, results and decisions for the future are detailed in the attached November 13, 1997 trip report.

One of the primary outcomes of the above review trip was the decision to create "Phoenix: A Collective Biodiversity Recovery Program." Phoenix will serve as an all-Russian NGO, whose main objective is to seek funding and do public relations work for tiger and wildlife conservation programs, of which Operation Amba is the current top priority. The mission of Phoenix is to ensure the success of continued and expanded efforts to protect the rich biological diversity of Primorsky Krai.

The goal is to coordinate the activities of Operation Amba, local scientists, wildlife specialists and the local government to:

- Protect habitat for the Amur tiger, the Far Eastern leopard, and other endangered species of animals and plants;
- Restore a healthy prey base of wild boar and ungulates;
- Educate the general public about the value of conserving the natural world of Primorsky Krai;
- Coordinate data collection for scientists doing genetic and behavioral research on tigers and leopards;
- Support continued anti-poaching and anti-logging work.

Operation Amba will be the core element of Phoenix.

During GSN's visit, GSN and Amba decided that Amba would host GSN consultant, Karin Elliot, from January 15- March 15, 1998 to help jump-start Phoenix. A brief report on her stay is attached.

Amba also hosted Dutch film crew in October to do an educational piece on Amba's mission. The film crew was brought to Primorsky Krai by GSN.

Education

Amba has been expanding its public outreach programs and has begun to develop ties with local schools and orphanages. Amba's Bikin group, led by Yuri Trough, meets with 9th and 10th graders and talks to them about their anti-poaching work. In March the Vladivostok team established ties with a local kindergarten that has a strong environmental awareness and education program. The Iman team, as other teams, donates poached venison to the local orphanage. One of its goals for this year is to start interacting with the children in the orphanage to teach them about tigers, tiger habitat and behavior, and nature conservation.

To expand on its educational activities, Amba has begun to work closely with the Ussurisk Wildlife Preserve. A bus is being purchased that will be painted in the flora and fauna of Primorsky Krai. It will transport children from towns and villages to the Ussurisk Wildlife Preserve. On the way to and during the visit, an Amba ranger will accompany the children. While at the preserve, the children will visit an existing ecology museum, an interpretive nature trail, and soon a new wildlife education and rehabilitation center. Initially, the center will be home to bears that, due to health reasons or exposure to humans, are no longer able to live on their own in the wild. Eventually, other animals may be added.

Operation Amba and the Primorsky Krai Committee on Environmental Protection have been working closely with the Ussurisk Wildlife Preserve to secure the land for the wildlife education and rehabilitation center, develop plans for its construction, and to help purchase the bus that will bring children to and from the preserve.

Anti-logging

At the request of the Forestry Ministry Amba has created an anti-logging group called "Cedar". Currently, Cedar, supported by GSN, has 2 team members and one vehicle.