

Tiger Day-2008 in Vladivostok

History

Celebration of the Tiger Day is a wonderful tradition in the Russian Far East and especially in Vladivostok. The holiday reminds people about the uniqueness and beauty of the territory they live in. Amur tiger is a symbol of Vladivostok city and Primorsky krai, the animal most respected in the Russian Far East. That is why in 2000 Phoenix Fund and other environmental organizations and enthusiasts initiated the Tiger Day holiday in Vladivostok. The main goal of the holiday is to help save the Amur tiger in the wild for the future generations, not just on logos and coats of arms, and draw international attention to the plight of this endangered species. Within one year, Tiger Day has developed into a wonderful festival that is celebrated across the country, from Moscow to Vladivostok. Then, zoos all over Russia, CIS and Europe became involved in Tiger Day celebration. Starting from 2008, the status of Tiger Day has been elevated to a "Regional Holiday" which means that the holiday may be celebrated officially in every corner of Primorye.

Run-up to Tiger Day

In 2008, Tiger Day Festival in Vladivostok was organized by Phoenix, Amur branch of WWF-Russia, International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) and Wildlife Conservation Society in conjunction with regional and municipal administrations and was supported by Whitley Fund for Nature and David Shepherd Wildlife Foundation. Besides, this year we have managed to attract local businesses, news agencies, and other small sponsors that provided informational support and special prizes. The City Administration showed more interest in the Tiger Day celebration than in previous years and prepared prizes for the best three columns of schoolchildren – ecological trips to Kravtsovskiy cascade waterfalls, Eco-Centre in leopard's land and Mr. Leschenko's farmstead, a shelter for rescued wildlife. Additionally, "Schastlivoye Detstvo" (Happy Childhood), "Fantasia" (Fantasy) Amusement Park, "Peresvet" Publishing House, local confectionery and other companies provided lovely gifts.

Phoenix and its partners run an advertising campaign. A special commercial on Tiger Day events was aired on local TV channels and radio stations. An article inviting citizens and guests of Vladivostok city to Tiger Day celebration was published in "Chudo Chado", a magazine for parents. Also, there was a flyer in the magazine with which one could come to the central square, where the holiday took place, and receive a small prize with a Tiger Day logo. Small posters with common information on the plight of the tiger population and specifically on Tiger Day were distributed among people who go by ferry from Vladivostok to Russky (Russian) Island.

On September 26, a "Conflict Tiger" film screening was organized by IFAW in Ussury Movie Theatre in Vladivostok. Over 200 people came to watch the film. The Conflict Tiger is a great film produced by Sasha Snow, a British filmmaker with family roots from Russia, and it was a great idea to show it in the area, where the events did happen. The main goal of screening the film was to raise public awareness at the Tiger range areas. On September 13, residents of Terney and Luchegorsk towns celebrated joyously the Tiger Day holiday. On September 20, over 500 people paraded the streets of Kirovsky and Novopokrovka towns during the Tiger Day.

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This year the ninth anniversary of Tiger Day Festival was celebrated in Vladivostok on Sunday, September 28th. The holiday attracted many high-level representatives of international nature conservation organizations (WB, WWF, WCS, IFAW, AMUR, etc.) as well as celebrities, such as Nikolay Drozdov, Russia's famous "Animal World" TV anchor man, and Evgeny Zvidionny, the bass player of Mumiy Troll, a Russian rock group. Evgeny Zvidionny came to Tiger Day in Vladivostok to award the winners of contests with CDs/DVDs of album AMBA kindly presented by Mumiy Troll. Ilya Lagutenko, lead singer of Mumiy Troll, is a patron of AMUR, an Anglo-Russian charity that contributes to conservation activities to save the Amur tigers and leopards from extinction. Aksinia Malenkova of AMUR also attended all relevant events. IFAW team including Masha Vorontsova, Director of IFAW-Russia, Igor Belyatski, Anna Filippova, Elena Averianova, and He Jianguo from IFAW-China took an active part in the celebration. Among the guests were the representatives of the World Bank (Andrey Kushlin and Sergey Milenin) and Save The Tiger Fund (John Seidensticker and Mahendra Shrestha) who came to participate in Tiger Day events to announce an exciting new program – The Global Tiger Initiative. This group of eminent Russian and international experts hopes to assist both regional and federal authorities in the development of tiger conservation strategies in the Russian Far East. It is great that we could join our efforts to involve the celebrities and representatives of international NGOs this way, with their appeals to create public support for conservation at Tiger Day.

In Vladivostok, the Tiger Day, as usual, began in the afternoon, with a street parade. The march included children and their parents, groups of schools and children's clubs, all in costumes of forest dwellers (animals, birds, insects, and plants). The carnival march was followed by various theatrical performances. The main idea of the carnival

procession was as follows: Amur tiger invites tigers from other countries, such as India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Burma, China, Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia and Malaysia to participate in the holiday celebration. Thus, many children dressed in tiger costumes, with national flags of tiger range countries in their hands, marched with citizens and guests.

When the carnival procession reached the central square, school teams and children's clubs gave a small performance and the Jury of holiday organisers chose the winner in "the best column" competition. Then, the opening ceremony followed with welcome speeches by Deputy Mayor, representatives of Russian and international environmental NGOs, famous wildlife biologist Nikolay Drosdov, and Evgeny Zvidionny. At 1:00 p.m. the theatrical performance was played on the main stage. Games and educational quizzes were essential part of this event. The winners received prizes for the best painting, the best costume of a tiger and the best drawing of a tiger on asphalt, with lots of media coverage. Children, and even adults, were pleased to paint their face and body in yellow, orange and black colors. One of the most favorite contests was the drawing on asphalt – 500 participants. All drawings were focused on Amur tiger, the master of Ussuriisky taiga. Over 150 children were awarded with small gifts such as bookmarks, badges, calendars and sweets for taking part in contests. Also, there was a special ground where anyone could sing a song, recite a verse, or dance and receive an incentive gift.

Dozens of children's paintings, which Phoenix staff had received from its Sweden partner Kolmarden Fund Raising Foundation, were put on display on the central square of Vladivostok near to works of Russian children. Thanks to this art exhibition local people learnt that Swedish children are well aware of conservation issues in Russia and deeply concerned about the fate of Amur tiger.

Additionally, there were boards around the stage with information about environmental NGOs and protected areas, such as Wildlife Conservation Society, Phoenix Fund, WWF, and Udege Legend National Park. People took keen interest in conservation issues and participated in various discussions with conservationists.

Also, a dog show, organized by a local kennel club, and a menagerie had mass appeal. The celebration was festive and there was a vibrant energy amongst the guests. Every year the Tiger Day Festival in Vladivostok attracts more and more people and companies as well as local authorities and helps ensure safe future for both animals and men in taiga. Vladivostok City passed the baton on to other towns of Primorye to celebrate the Tiger Day holiday, namely Lazo, Partizansk, Chuguevka, Ussuriisk and Bichevaya village of Khabarovskiy krai.



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Paintings from Swedish children



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