

FIRST PLACE WINNER

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A Proposal to Stopping the Poaching of the Siberian Tiger

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English 101

One of the world's most beautiful creatures, the Siberian tiger, has been roaming earth for many years. The Siberian tiger subspecies has been subjected to many obstacles, which make it very difficult for it to survive. Their main threat is not lack of food, but "man," one of God's most fierce and cruel species. Because of man the tiger population has reduced to approximately 400 in the wild, and restricted their remaining habitat to the Russian Far East (Field Projects). Man has done many things to destroy the Russian Siberian tiger. They have cut down forests and moved in on the tiger's territory, causing them to flee and become fragmented throughout Siberia making it hard for them to mate and hunt. Poaching has also made it difficult for the tiger to survive. Man has illegally killed this magnificent animal over decades for sport, food, trade, medicinal purposes, and to protect their livestock. Though man is very powerful and capable of causing the extinction of the Siberian tiger, they are also capable of helping the tiger to survive. Many people are supporting conservation organizations in order to help the surviving population of the Siberian tiger. These conservation organizations are trying to stop the annihilation of the Siberian tiger by strengthening anti-poaching patrols, establishing a compensation program for farmers, and educating people.

According to researchers, "between 1990 and 1994 approximately sixty tigers were poached a year" (Field Projects). Some Russian experts predicted, "that, if no immediate measures were taken, the Siberian tiger would go extinct soon after the year 2000" (Field Projects). The Russian ministry of environment began a project called, "Amba," which means tiger in the language of the Udege, a local tribe. The Amba organization has seven anti-poaching teams, and they are trying their hardest to stop the killing. The Amba organization says, "their rangers know the environmental legislation, and are trained in the use of firearms and can handle criminals" (Field Projects). Amba rangers try to stop poaching by searching vehicles on secluded forest roads and looking for firearms, animals, or any other item that may be

suspicious. This project of anti-poaching teams has proven to be successful, but it only stops some of the poachers. Until they stop the main cause of poaching, which is trade, the killing will still go on (Field Projects).

Poachers know they will always make money on tiger derivatives, because of Traditional Chinese Medicine. The World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and TRAFFIC, the wildlife trade monitoring program of WWF, are trying to find ways to discourage the use of tiger parts for medicinal purposes and encourage the use of effective substitutes. TRAFFIC has significantly extended its operation in Asia and Russia. According to researchers, “Russia has become the biggest supplier of Traditional Chinese Medicine trade and exports” (Field Projects). TRAFFIC investigations have led to numerous seizures such as, “tiger bones and skins, the arrest of an important smuggling gang, and the uncovering of illicit trade routes between India, Nepal, Bhutan, and East Asia” (Field Reports). WWF is also campaigning for strengthened national legislation to ban imports and sales of these medicines in North America. If the organization stops the selling of these medicines, less tigers will be killed. Not only is there a problem with poaching for trade, but there is also a problem with farmers poaching to protect their livestock (Field Projects).

Many farmers have taken over the Siberian tiger’s territory, because of this, the tiger has trouble finding food to eat. In order for the tiger to fight starvation, they must eat the farmer’s livestock. This, in turn weakens the farmer’s financial stability, forcing the farmer to kill the tiger. Farmer’s are only protecting their finances. For farmers to stop killing the tiger, farmer’s need to be compensated by organizations for their financial loss. The Tigris Foundation funded a Compensation Act which began in 1999. The foundation made it possible for farmer’s to receive compensations for livestock that is killed by leopards and tigers. According to researchers, “Between September 1999 and November 2000 a total of twenty-four deer, on horse, and one cow were killed by leopards and tigers on farms in Khasan” (Field Projects). All the livestock killed was compensated for by the Tigris Foundation. The Tigris Foundation funded compensation payments of approximately \$1,360,000 to support the farmer’s loss in livestock (Field Projects). It is good for organizations to try to stop trade and compensate farmer’s financial losses, but that will not completely end the killing. After one generation of poachers ends another generation will begin. The only way to stop generations of poachers is to educate the people about their ecosystem.

Many poachers do not realize they are not only destroying the animals habitat, but they are also

destroying their own. If one animal is completely wiped out a part of the ecosystem is set off balance, causing more catastrophe, until there is nothing left. Educating the people may persuade the people not to kill the Siberian tiger. At present an education center is being constructed at the Ussurisk Nature Reserve about 180 km from Vladivostok, Russia. According to the Tigris Foundation, "the center will provide a natural setting for animals that have had too much contact with humans or are wounded and cannot survive in the wild" (Field Projects). Most importantly it will provide "an educational experience for school children as well as the general public on the rich biodiversity of the region, and what must be done to conserve it" (Field Projects). Knowledge is power; if the people know what they are doing to their environment and how important every creature in it is, they will be less likely to kill or destroy their ecosystem.

It is amazing how the Siberian tiger could survive deforestation, population fragmentation, and most of all poaching. The Siberian tiger proves to be a very strong subspecies willing to do anything to survive. The tiger has done all they can to do survive what we humans have put them through. It is now our job to clean up what we started and end the illegal killing and help the tiger population to expand and survive in their habitat. Many foundations have been funded in order to make this possible, it is also our job to make sure they stay in effect to eventually end the poaching of the Siberian tiger. Richard Burge noted in Riding the Tiger, "The tiger is more than a charismatic predator: it is a keystone subspecies in its environment. By saving the tiger in the world, we save complex ecosystems and habitats that would otherwise be destroyed in the relentless march of human need and, all too often, greed" (U. S. Fish & Wildlife Conservation Act).

Works Cited

"Field Projects." 5 Tigers. 3 October 2001. < <http://web.intern.nl.net/users/tiger/fieldprojects.html> >

United States Fish & Wildlife Service. Rhinoceros & Tiger Conservation Act. Summary Report 1999-2000.