

## Amur Leopards Near Extinction

**Fewer than 35 Amur leopards remain in the wild, according to the World Wildlife Fund.**

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With fewer than 35 remaining in the wild, Amur leopards are in serious danger of becoming extinct. (Stock photo) A new census that was conducted in February and March of the world's most endangered cat, the Amur — or Far Eastern — leopard, shows that as few as 25 to 34 are left in the wild, according to the World Wildlife Fund (WWF).

"The recent census confirmed once again that the Amur leopard survives on very shaky ground," said Pavel Fomenko, the biodiversity conservation program coordinator at the Far Eastern branch of WWF in Russia.

At least 100 Amur leopards are needed to ensure long-term survival, the WWF said.

"From my perspective, the leopards' exact number is not the big question. What is really important is that the predator is on the brink of extinction. And still a unified protected area with national park status has not been established, which is the most important thing for the leopards' survival," Fomenko said.

New roads, poaching, growing civilization, depletion of forests and climate change are contributing factors to the disappearance of Amur leopards, Fomenko said.

"Conservation of large predators needs vast territories with minimal anthropogenic changes, which is difficult," said Dmitry Pikunov, head of the laboratory of animal ecology and conservation of the Pacific Institute of Geography of the Russian Academy of Science and coordinator of the 2007 leopard census.

The census covered about 5,000 square kilometers of land close to the border between Russia, China and North Korea where researchers counted Amur leopards' tracks in the snow. Scientists determined how many Amur leopards there were by examining the shape, size and patterns of the tracks. They also could tell the direction and time of the animals' movement. In all, 35 field workers participated in the census.

The census estimated between 25 and 34 Amur leopards. Researchers found evidence of seven to nine male Amur leopards, three to seven females without cubs, four females with cubs, five to six cubs in all and six to eight undefined track. This is an improvement compared to 2003's census that estimated between 28 to 30 Amur leopards existed. Researchers found evidence of nine males seven females without cubs, four or five females with cubs, four or five cubs in all, and four undefined.

For more information on the census or the WWF, [click here](#).