

Farmer spots footprints of rare tiger



Footprints left by a wild Siberian tiger have been discovered in northeast China's Heilongjiang Province. [Photo/people.cn]

Footprints left by a wild Siberian tiger have been discovered in northeast China's Heilongjiang Province, further evidence of the species' presence in the region.

Xu Jinxue, who lives in Hulin's Zhenbaodao Township, stumbled upon the footprints when he was tending his paddy field.

"The footprints were larger than my palm and were shaped like those of cats," Xu said. He took pictures of the prints and sent them to the local authority. The footprints were later identified by wildlife experts as belonging to a Siberian tiger.

"From the footprints we concluded that the tiger had been walking slowly and was quite heavy," said Zhou Haixiang of the Chinese National Committee for Man and the Biosphere Program.

Evidence of wild Siberian tigers has been confirmed several times this year

by Raohe County and Dongfanghong forestry bureau, close to Hulin, meaning it is highly possible that the big cats live in the area. The footprints also prove that there are adults and cubs among the tigers.

China has strengthened ecological protection in recent years, resulting in the gradual increase of wildlife living in areas near the Russian border.

Siberian tigers are one of the world's most endangered species.

They predominantly live in northeast China and eastern Russia.