

Footprints of wild Siberian tiger spotted in NE China

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

Xu Jinxue, who lives in Zhenbaodao Township, in Heilongjiang's Hulin City, stumbled upon the footprints when he was tending his paddy field, according to the local government.

"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 the Siberian tiger.

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

Evidence of wild Siberian tigers has been confirmed this year several times by Raohe County and Dongfanghong forestry bureau, close to Hulin, meaning it is highly possible that the big cats lives 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 China-Russia border.

Siberian tigers are one of the world's most endangered species. They predominantly live in northeast China and eastern Russia.

Heilongjiang has reported evidence of frequent activity by wild Siberian tigers in recent years. Local authorities said the province has witnessed a rise both in the population of wild tigers and their prey.