

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Wildlife Without Borders Russia

Summary Report

2001-2002



The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's mission is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are the only agency of the U.S. Government with that primary mission. The Service also supports the Department of the Interior's Strategic Plan to involve various partners such as State and local governments, communities, federally recognized Tribes, non-governmental organizations, and private citizens.

The Service's Division of International Conservation and its partners worldwide support these goals through cross-border cooperation to preserve the habitats that sustain migratory and endangered species. The leadership, knowledge, and cooperation of international partners is crucial to ensure the global conservation of these species and their habitats.

Cover:
Khingansky Nature Reserve
Amur Oblast, Russian Far East
© David Pitkin

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Polar bear
USFWS



Sockeye salmon
© Timothy Knepp



Steller's sea eagle
© David Pitkin



U.S., Russian, Canadian, and Japanese participants in the September 2003 FWS/DIC sponsored North Pacific Migratory Bird Conference in Vermont.
Tad Merrick/USFWS

The Agreement between the United States of America and the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on Cooperation in the Field of Environmental Protection was signed on May 23, 1972 by U.S. President Richard Nixon and U.S.S.R. Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet Nikolai Podgorniy.

Following the dissolution of the U.S.S.R., the Agreement was renegotiated between the Governments of the U.S. and the Russian Federation. The new Agreement was signed by the U.S. Vice President and Russian Prime Minister on June 23, 1994.

***Area V* of the Agreement, "Protection of Nature and the Organization of Reserves" is coordinated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for the U.S. Government.**

***Area V* conservation partners include the U.S. Geological Survey, U.S. National Marine Fisheries Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, State Fish and Game Agencies, and university, non-governmental and Native American organizations.**



Introduction

In 1972, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and its counterpart agencies in the Soviet Union launched a cooperative program to study and protect wildlife and their habitats under the newly signed U.S.-U.S.S.R. Agreement on Cooperation in the Field of Protection of the Environment and Natural Resources. That relationship, known as *Area V* and formally labeled “Protection of Nature and the Organization of Reserves,” has continued uninterrupted for 30 years and has grown to encompass a broad range of joint activities focusing on shared species of migratory birds, fish and marine mammals; refuges and parks; and the vast ecosystem represented by the Bering and Chukchi Seas, which link the two countries. The resulting data have enabled both sides to conserve and manage wildlife and their habitats more effectively than would have been possible without such collaboration.

A list of current *Area V* topics of cooperation is contained in Appendix I to this report.

In FY 2001, the FWS Division of International Conservation (DIC) allocated approximately \$400,000 for activities with Russia; FY 2002 expenditures totaled about \$450,000. Appendix II shows how those funds were apportioned.

Opposite

Laplanskiy Reserve in winter: western Russia's Arctic reserves face threats from airborne pollution.

Steven Kohl/USFWS

Russia contains 20% of the world's forests. Russia contains 50% of the world's coniferous forests. Two-thirds of the world's remaining temperate forests are in Russia.

World Bank's
Environment Department

“Area V has served as an effective vehicle for Russian and American scientists to conduct field work together and compile data on populations of marine mammals shared by our two countries.”

Thomas R. Loughlin,
Ph.D.

Alaska Ecosystem
Program Leader,
National Marine Mammal
Laboratory,
U.S. National Marine
Fisheries Service

U.S. Fish and Wildlife biologists have conducted aerial surveys of migratory birds in remote regions of northeastern Russia. They were the first foreign visitors since World War II to arrive there in their own aircraft.



Declining numbers of Arctic nesting emperor geese have prompted Russian and American biologists to count and band them, and track their migration.
USFWS

Shared Species: Alaska's Neighbor

Eastern Russia provides habitat to numerous birds and mammals migrating to North America. Joint population and range surveys conducted by air and from shipboard have led to better informed management decisions affecting waterfowl, polar bears and walruses.

Declines among populations of eider ducks and seabirds (Aleutian tern, short-tailed albatross) have spurred consultations between American and Russian biologists. As once-daunting barriers to cooperation are removed, newly created joint databases and publications are helping to overcome decades of inadequate information.

Wrangel Island snow geese have been marked with bands and radio and satellite transmitters to determine movement, survival rates, and causes of mortality during their migration to the west coast of North America. An ongoing effort to vaccinate these birds against avian cholera has also contributed to improving survival rates.

FWS has provided grants to the Russian Bird Ringing Center in Moscow for the

purchase and distribution throughout Russia of more than a million bird bands. Information on the dates and locations of band recoveries help biologists understand migration patterns of birds between countries and continents. A bilateral migratory bird conference, held in September 2002 in Vermont, brought together 50 Russian and American bird biologists to set conservation priorities for the coming decade.

In the 1990s, sea otter numbers decreased dramatically throughout much of Alaska. Cooperative field studies of this species in the U.S. Aleutian and Russian Commander Islands, in conjunction with periodically scheduled consultative meetings, may provide insight into the underlying cause.

Both the U.S. and Russia regularly monitor subsistence harvest of walruses by Native hunters. Periodic workshops train workers to collect data from hunters, ensuring a unified reporting system.

Appendix III lists FWS Alaska Region activities with Russia which received funds from DIC in 2001 and 2002.

“In its history, the Russian Bird Ringing Center has had 200,000 band returns. Of those, 70,000 were birds migrating between Russia and North America.”

Sergei P. Kharitonov,
Ph.D.
September 2002



Grants to Russia's Nature Reserves and Parks

At the dawn of the twenty-first century Russia is a vastly changed nation. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union harsh economic circumstances significantly reduced Russia's ability to fund its extensive network of nature reserves and national parks. In 1995, FWS responded by initiating a program of competitive grants to assist Russian protected territories. The Fourth Call for Proposals in 2001-2002 resulted in awards to 31 nature reserves and nine national parks totaling \$240,000. The grants are used for strengthening wildlife law enforcement, improving radio communications among staff, maintaining infrastructures, acquiring field gear, and conducting conservation education. Each recipient provides a final report of disbursements and work accomplished. Examples of grants awarded in 2001-2002 are:

- Astrakhanskiy Reserve (Volga River delta): purchase mobile radio units to cut response time on threats to unique species such as sturgeon, Dalmatian pelican and white-tailed eagle.
- Bashkirskiy Reserve (Ural Mountains): upgrade ranger communications to enhance protection of peregrine falcon, golden eagle, osprey, lynx and wolf.
- Dauriskiy Reserve (eastern Siberia): repair facilities and purchase fuel for patrol vehicles in critical habitat of Mongolian gazelle, white-naped crane and Pallas' cat.

- Kaluzhskie Zaseky Reserve (European Russia): purchase patrol snowmobiles for protection of last remaining 300 year-old oak forest in western Russia.
- Lazovskiy Reserve (Pacific coast): install new communications system to improve ranger capability to protect Amur tiger, Asiatic black bear, mandarin duck and Japanese yew.
- Sayano-Shushenskii Reserve (southern Siberia): build remote ranger post for enhanced protection of snow leopard and other endangered species.
- Stolby Reserve (central Siberia): construct facility for rehabilitation and release of injured wildlife.
- Wrangel Island Reserve: purchase electric generator and boat motors to widen range of patrols to protect polar bears and nesting waterfowl in Russia's most remote reserve.

Averaging about \$5,000 each, these grants support a remarkable range of activities and illustrate the ability of Russia's resource managers to accomplish much with modest funds.

Another way in which FWS has assisted Russia's protected areas is through the donation of surplus refuge uniforms. In 2000, more than 2,000 items of clothing were collected and shipped to Russian reserves for staff use.

In 2002 Russia had 100 federal nature reserves comprising 83,750,000 acres and 35 national parks covering 17,500,000 acres, together nearly 2% of Russia's land area.

Sikhote-Alin Reserve on Russia's Pacific coast is a haven for numerous wildlife species, among them musk deer and Blakiston's fish owl.

Steven Kohl/USFWS

Conservation Education and Training: Preserving Natural Wonders

The forested area of Russia would completely cover the continental U.S.

International Forestry,
U.S. Forest Service

FWS was a major contributor to an International Symposium on the Far Eastern Leopard, held in 2002 in Vladivostok, Russia. Only about 30 Far Eastern leopards remain in the wild; its survival is threatened by poaching, habitat loss and a shrinking prey base.

Russia's network of federal lands, spanning 11 time zones, includes forest reserves created in the early years of the Soviet Union and vast Arctic tracts added more recently. The managers of those areas are struggling to overcome increased demands on their resources, austerity-level budgets, and the challenge of attracting and retaining staff.

In view of the importance of these refuges and parks to wildlife, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has organized law enforcement and conservation education courses for Russian nature reserve and

national park personnel. Educational publications and signage also have been financed by FWS. At training seminars and during joint migratory bird banding and mammal tagging, Russian and American wildlife managers recognize that their work affects ecosystems far beyond their own country's borders.

In 2002, FWS hosted nine staff members from Russian reserves and national parks in Missouri and Virginia for a workshop on the design, production, installation and display of educational exhibits in visitor centers.



Biologists from Russia and the U.S. are working to save the endangered Amur tiger. Additional information about the more than \$640,000 FWS has provided for tiger conservation in Russia can be found at <http://international.fws.gov/>.

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Resource Management: Finding a Balance

By far the world's largest country in land area, Russia is rich in natural resources. The challenge lies in promoting sustainable development that benefits the human population economically while preserving a diverse natural heritage for future generations. During the 1990s, a number of international conservation organizations established branches in Russia, and many local grassroots groups sprang up as well. The result is a better informed public that follows domestic and global environmental

issues and makes its voice heard in economic development policy decisions affecting natural resources.

Since 1977, a series of five joint shipboard expeditions have brought biologists together in a study of the ecosystem health of the Bering and Chukchi Seas, which link the U.S. and Russia with their vast marine mammal, fish and migratory bird resources.

The FY'99 Russian Budget for Russian national parks and nature reserves was 123 million rubles, about \$5,350,000 U.S. dollars.



Floating stations for extracting and processing sturgeon caviar are a common sight on the Volga River near Astrakhan. Continuing declines in their abundance have called into question the future survival of sturgeon species.

Steven Kohl/USFWS

Looking Toward the Future

In 2002, FWS assisted with the funding of a saiga antelope conservation workshop in Kalmykia, Russia, and has awarded grants to reserves providing a safe haven for this species, poached for its horns and considered critically endangered by the World Conservation Union (IUCN). Since the mid-1990s the saiga's abundance has decreased from over one million to fewer than 50,000 animals.

The 30-year conservation relationship between the U.S. and Russia has provided the good-will and organizational structure to make significant advances in understanding and managing shared resources. This circumstance, coupled with a modest increase in available funding, bodes well for an even more successful partnership in years to come. Future joint efforts will focus on:

- Ensuring geese and other waterfowl are effectively monitored and managed so as to sustain their populations indefinitely.
- Working in partnership with Alaska and Chukotka natives to implement the 2000 bilateral Agreement on the Conservation and Management of Polar Bears, so that these magnificent animals are managed to meet the needs of all involved and for the benefit of posterity.
- Maintaining shared walrus and sea otter populations at abundance levels identified jointly by the two countries.
- Conserving and enhancing Russia's vast network of nature reserves and national parks.
- Strengthening control of non-native injurious fauna and flora species so as to minimize their adverse impacts on both the environment and local economies.
- Reinforcing joint efforts to combat poaching and illegal trade in imperiled plants and animals.
- Partnering to conserve a wide array of shared species and their habitats to the benefit of both nations.



In less than 10 years, saiga antelope numbers have declined twenty-fold throughout their range in Central Asia.

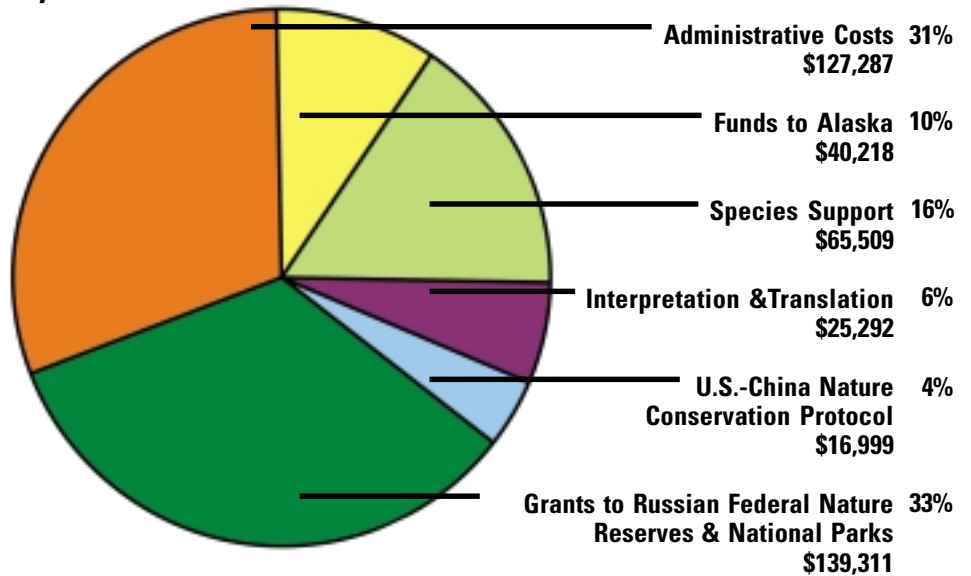
Michael Dunbar/USDA

Topics of Cooperation under U.S.-Russia Environmental Agreement

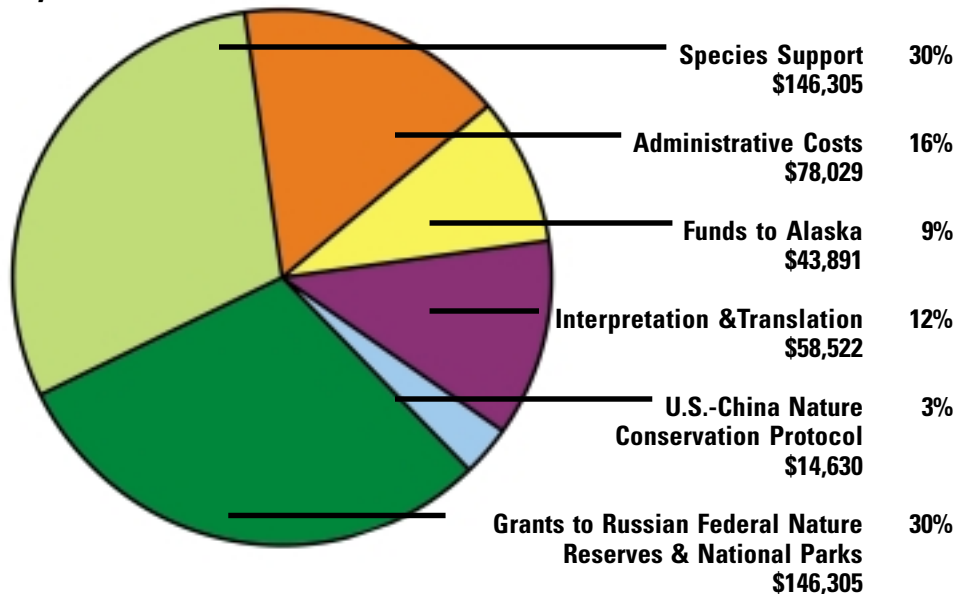
- Conservation of Wild Species of Fauna
 - Implementation of the 1976 U.S.-Russia Convention Concerning the Conservation of Migratory Birds and Their Environment
 - The Study and Conservation of Cranes, Raptors and Other Rare Birds
 - The Study and Conservation of Polar Bears
 - Cooperation among Zoos in Captive Breeding of Rare and Endangered Animals
 - Conservation and Management of Marine Birds
- Aleutian Chain Biodiversity: common species and ecosystems on the island chain stretching from Alaska (Aleutians) to Kamchatka (Commanders)
- Cooperation in Wildlife Trade and Law Enforcement - CITES
- Ecosystem Biodiversity
 - Biosphere Reserves
 - Desert and Steppe Grasslands
 - Alpine Ecosystems
- Protected Natural Areas
 - Refuges and Nature Reserves
 - Conservation Education
- Marine Mammals
 - I. PINNIPEDS: Harbor Seals, Northern Fur Seals, Steller Sea Lions, Walrus, Sea Otters
 - II. CETACEANS: Whales, Dolphins
- Animal and Plant Ecology
 - Conservation of Rare and Endangered Species of Plants; Comparative Studies of North American and Eurasian Flora
 - Northern Migratory Waterfowl (ducks, geese, swans)
 - Holarctic Mammals
 - Chemical Senses/Pheromones and Communication in Animals
 - Application of Satellite Technology in Ecological Studies of Large Mammals
 - Wildlife Health, Disease Prevention and Treatment
 - Invasive Species of Fauna and Flora
- Ichthyology and Aquaculture
 - Fish Culture, Nutrition and Disease
 - The Study and Conservation of Sturgeon
 - The Study and Conservation of Salmon
 - Comparative Studies of Fishes in the U.S. Great Lakes and Russia's Lake Baikal
- Ecology and Dynamics of Arctic Marine Ecosystems (abbreviated "BERPAC"): periodic, systematic joint oceanographic expeditions for environmental evaluation of the Bering and Chukchi Seas)

Russia-East Asia Program Expenditures

Fiscal Year 2001
\$414,616



Fiscal Year 2002
\$487,682



For more information on cooperative conservation activities with the Russian Federation, please contact:

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