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As Russia Celebrates Tiger Day, Putin Hails 'Beautiful Carnivore'

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An Amur tiger approaching a slab of meat carved with 'Happy Tiger Day.'

President Vladimir Putin sent his greetings to big-cat enthusiasts nationwide as Russia marked Tiger Day, an annual celebration held in Russia's Far East.

"For 15 years now one of the most remarkable environmental festivals in Russia, Tiger Day, has been bringing together those who care about the future of this beautiful carnivore, those who love wildlife and strive to live in harmony with it, protect it and thereby create a healthy environment for themselves and for future generations," Putin said in a statement published on the Kremlin's official website.

"Special greetings to those for whom protecting tigers is a daily job. Park rangers, zoologists, staff of nature preserves and parks — you all made a conscientious choice to work here; you all sincerely care about the common cause. The gradual growth of the tiger population in Russia is your achievement," Putin lauded.

More than a thousand people donned tiger costumes and marched across central Vladivostok

on Sunday. The march ended with a rock concert in the city's main square. A tiger monument was installed near the local opera and ballet theater.

Putin has frequently demonstrated an affection for the rare big cats, posing for photos with them and calling for more to be done to protect them from poachers.

The Amur tiger, also known as Siberian tiger, inhabits Russia's Far East. Its total population is estimated at about 400.

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