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'Putin's Tiger' Roams Into China in Search of Food

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The tiger, named Kuzya, spent summer in the Far Eastern Amur region, where it was released by Vladimir Putin.

A tiger released into the wild this spring by Russian President Vladimir Putin seems to have struggled to find food and has crossed the border into China in search of nutrition, a news report said.

The tiger, named Kuzya, was tagged with a satellite tracking collar when Putin released it from an animal-care center in May. The young tiger spent summer in the Far Eastern Amur region, where it was released, before migrating to the Jewish autonomous region in September, and finally swimming across the Amur river into China this weekend, Novaya Gazeta news site reported.

However, environmentalists are worried that the endangered animal may run into danger in the southern Chinese provinces, where villagers are known to hunt down tigers for preying on their livestock, an official from Russia's nature watchdog was quoted as saying.

Novaya Gazeta speculated that Russia's Foreign Ministry may have to notify Chinese officials about the immigration by "President Putin's tiger," but it remained unclear whether any warning would come in time to protect the animal.

Kuzya was released into the wild by Putin along with two other young tigers, named Borya and Ilona — all orphans that had been rescued and placed in a care center as part of the efforts to preserve the endangered Amur tiger population.

The Amur tiger is a highly endangered species, with its total population estimated at about 400, most of them inhabiting the Russian Far East.

About 3-5 of the tigers live in the Jewish autonomous region — most of them orphaned animals that have been raised by humans and released back into the wild as part of the presidential "Amur Tiger" program, Novaya Gazeta reported.

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