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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Unusually Old Leopard Found in Russia's Primorye Park

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Experts have found the third longest-living Amur leopard in Russia's far eastern Primorye region, the Interfax news agency reported Monday.

The Amur leopard subspecies lives, on average, for 12 years. The leopard, named Alex, is at least 16 years old and was identified in the region's "Leopard Land" nature preserve, Interfax reported.

"Far eastern leopards that live to that age are a rarity. Previously, scientists have recorded only two longer-living leopards," the national park's press service said, Interfax reported.

The leopard Alex was first captured on camera in 2003 and was tagged with radio collars from 2007 to 2012. He was again captured by cameras in February, Interfax reported.

"Leopard Land" researcher Viktor Storozhuk said of the discovery: "Nearly nine years ago, we caught this leopard, and even then he was no longer young. We were very pleased to see an old friend. On the trail we were able to recover pictures of him hunting. It turned out that Alex still has not lost his grip — the experienced predator demonstrated high speeds and sharp

reactions, overtaking his victim with about 20 leaps."

Amur leopards are a highly endangered species and the rarest of the planet's big cats. In the early 2000s, the population in Russia had dwindled to approximately 30.

Today, the population has grown to about 70, with about 90 percent of the leopards residing in the "Leopard Land" national park, Interfax reported.

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