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First Endangered Tiger Footprints in 50 Years Found in Northeast Siberia

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Trail camera photo from Far East Russia

Amur tiger footprints have been discovered in the northeast Siberian republic of Sakha for the first time in 50 years, a signal that the endangered species' population is recovering, the state-run TASS news agency reported Tuesday.

Russia's forest protection service found the rare footprints on the right bank of the Aldan River in southeastern Sakha, where zoologists say Amur tigers find it difficult to gain a foothold due to a lack of deciduous forests and wild boars.

The tracks signal "the first tiger entry into Yakutia in the 21st century, even in the last half-century," Viktor Nikiforov, head of the Tigrus environmental charity, told TASS, using Sakha's other commonly used name.

The Amur tiger, also called the Siberian tiger, is a protected species in Russia after hunting brought the big cat to the brink of extinction in the mid-20th century.

Thanks to ongoing conservation work, the tiger's population in Russia's Far East has grown from 330 tigers in 2005 to over 600 today, Nikiforov told TASS.

“The fact that the tigers are exploring their ancestral hunting grounds indicates that the number of the northernmost tigers is not a cause for concern,” Nikiforov said.

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