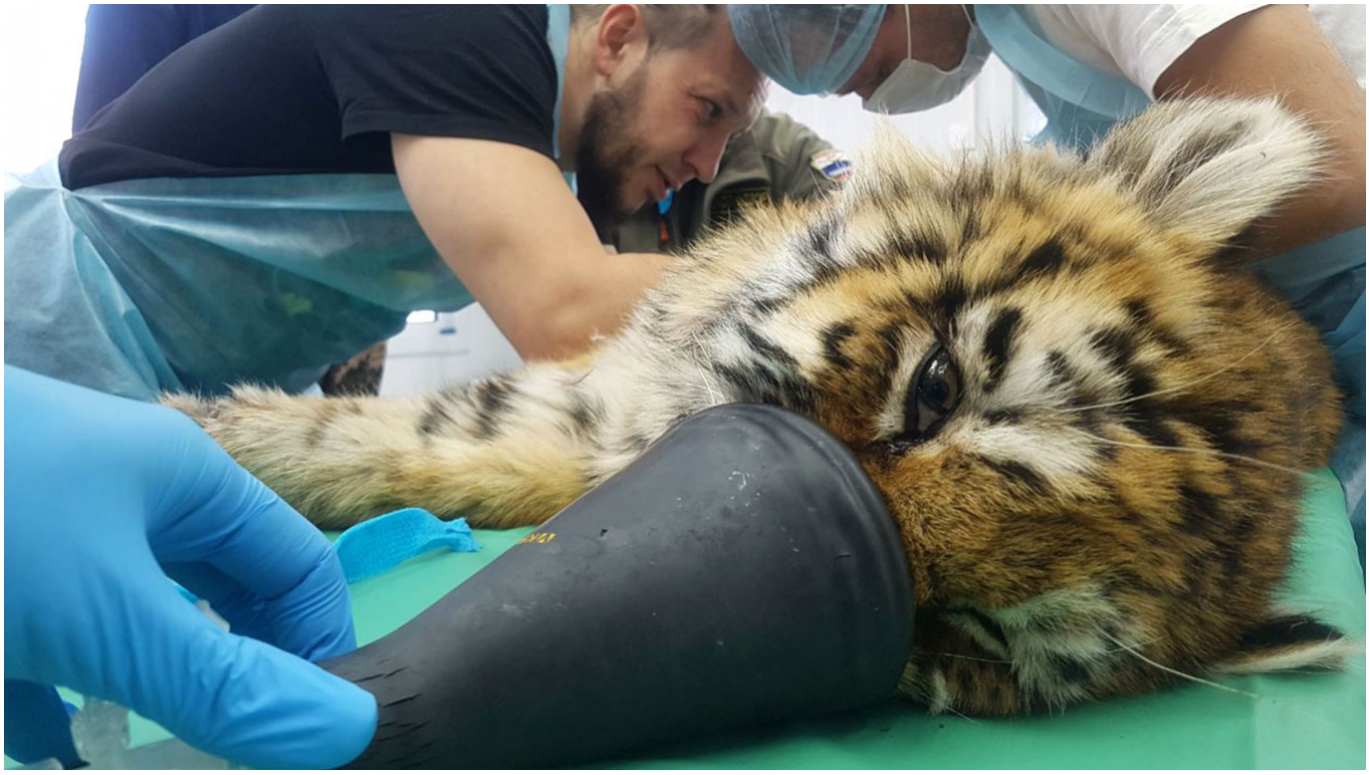
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Russian Baby Tiger Fights for Life after Frostbite, Surgery

By AFP

January 13, 2022



There are around 600 tigers in Russia. **Oleg Kabalik / Amur Tiger Center**

Russian animal rescuers said Wednesday they were fighting for the life of an Amur tiger cub who had been found dying from exhaustion and frostbite in the country's Far East.

An emaciated female tiger cub aged around four or five months and suffering from severe frostbite and injuries was found by a local fisherman on a river bank in the south of the Primorye region late last year.

The fisherman reported the find to wildlife carers who evacuated the cub to a rehabilitation center, said Amur Tiger Center.

"External examination showed that she was severely exhausted as a result of which the tip of her tail was frostbitten," the center said, adding that the cub's lower jaw also became necrotic after an injury.

The tiger, who weighed just around 20 kilograms (44 pounds) — roughly half the norm — when she was found, underwent an intense rehabilitation course and gained about 10 kilograms in preparation for surgery. The dead tip of her tail was also cut off.

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Late last week the cub underwent a 2.5-hour operation, with doctors transplanting healthy tissue to repair her jaw.

The surgery was successful but it is too early to make any predictions and say if it will be possible to release the cub back into the wild, said Amur Tiger Center.

"The most important thing right now is to halt the tissue necrosis and save the tiger's life," said Sergei Aramilev, the center's head. "People are doing their best."

Russia and China are home to the big cats which are also known as Siberian tigers and are listed as "endangered" by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature's Red List.

There are around 600 tigers in Russia, said Pyotr Osipov, head of the Amur branch at WWF.

"Heavy snowfall and changes in temperature have significantly complicated tigers' life this winter," Osipov told AFP, adding that two tiger cubs had recently been found frozen to death.

President Vladimir Putin has personally championed the protection of the Amur tiger.

In 2010, Putin, then the country's prime minister, hosted an unprecedented 13-state summit that aimed at doubling the big cat's population.

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