

# Local markets give deadly twist to Siberian tiger trade

**RUSSIA** Funding from conservation groups still essential.

Thanks to the operations of the Russian Far Eastern anti-poaching brigades – set up in 1993 and 1994 in response to estimates of 60-70 Siberian tiger deaths a year – the annual toll has dropped to fewer than 20 in both 1995 and 1996. On the other hand, ominous new internal markets for tiger parts have been opening up, and the future of the brigades themselves remains uncertain.

That uncertainty is blamed on a lack of both political will and funds. Commander Vladimir Shetinin, head of Department Tiger, which co-ordinates the brigades, says, "The Russian government is not funding the brigades, and if funding from international conservation groups such as WWF stopped, the situation would be disastrous for the tiger."

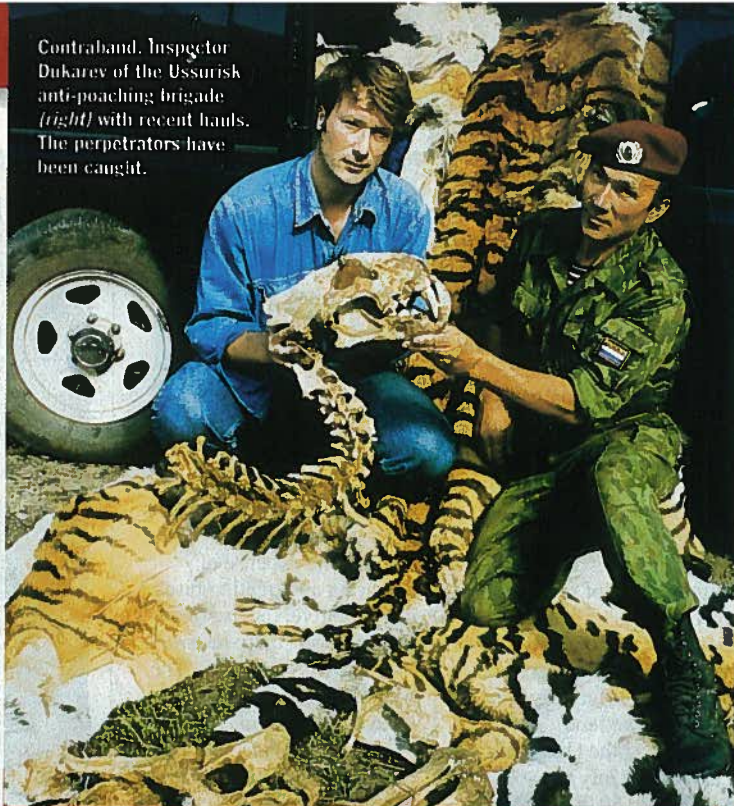
Despite the reduction in tiger poaching, the brigades investigating the trade in tiger skins and bones have uncovered a worrying new development. Vladimir Dukarev, captain of the Ussurisk brigade, which operates near the border with south-western China, says, "We have good evidence that tiger skins are being bought by wealthy Russians, mainly from Moscow. They like to show them off to demonstrate their affluence and their disregard for the law."

According to Pavel Fomenko, co-ordinator for WWF's anti-poaching brigades, "The increasing problem of professional poachers shooting tigers for Russians, who then trade bones with European buyers, is a new and serious threat."

Tiger bones are still being smuggled into China for use in traditional medicine, but China's new stiff penalties for this appear to be working as a deterrent.

PAUL TOYNE

Contraband. Inspector Dukarev of the Ussurisk anti-poaching brigade (right) with recent hauls. The perpetrators have been caught.



## ACTION/INFORMATION

◆ UK fundraisers for the Siberian anti-poaching patrols are: David Shepherd Foundation (☎ 01483 208 220), Tusk Force (☎ 0181 743 8855) and WWF (☎ 01483 426444).

◆ Siberian tiger population increases: 1930s – 20-30;

1940s – 50; 1960s – 200; 1985 – 250; 1996 – 415-476. It's not yet certain whether the population of Siberian tigers has stabilised or is still increasing.

◆ The other subspecies are, however, declining: Bengal tigers now number about 3,000; South China tiger, less than 20; Sumatran tiger, 400-500; Indochinese tiger, 1,180-1,790.

Help protect our birds, wildlife and countryside

# ENJOY 3 MONTHS FREE MEMBERSHIP OF THE RSPB



WORTH £10.99

## PLUS THIS FREE VIDEO

You'll receive this Videoguide to British Garden Birds narrated by David Attenborough if you reply within 28 days.

OUR WONDERFUL birdlife and countryside need protecting. Help them – join the RSPB – and by using the form on the right you'll get all these superb benefits too:

- Your first 3 months membership absolutely free...
- FREE entry to over 100 RSPB nature reserves...
- *Birds*, the RSPB's award-winning 96-page colour magazine 4 times a year...

And when you join, you know you're helping to protect our beautiful natural heritage for generations to come.



BIRDS magazine 4 times a year

## YES - I would like to join the RSPB FREE for 3 months

and have completed the Direct Debit form opposite. If I do not wish to continue my membership after the 3 month free trial period I can cancel the Direct Debit instruction at any time.

- I am applying within 28 days and claim my FREE Videoguide to British Garden Birds.

(BLOCK CAPITALS PLEASE) INITIALS  
Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

### CHOOSE:

- Single membership £5.50 a quarter  
 Joint membership £7.00 a quarter  
 Family membership £8.50 a quarter for two adults and all children under 16 at one address.  
(Please attach name and date of birth of each child)

JOINT MEMBER SURNAME: INITIALS  
Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms \_\_\_\_\_



Send to: The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, FREEPOST, Sandy, Beds SG19 2BR.  
The charity that takes action for wild birds and the environment

## DIRECT DEBITTING INSTRUCTION

Originator's ID: 9911172

I/We instruct you to pay Direct Debits from my/our account with you at the request of the RSPB.

Please pay the RSPB Direct Debits from the account detailed on this instruction subject to the safeguards assured by the Direct Debit Guarantee.

I/We will inform the bank in writing if I/we wish to cancel this instruction.

Name and address (BLOCK CAPITALS PLEASE) of your bank \_\_\_\_\_  
Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

Bank account in the name of: \_\_\_\_\_

Bank sort code: [ ] [ ] [ ] - [ ] [ ] [ ]

Bank account number\* [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]

\*Banks may refuse to accept instructions to pay Direct Debits from some types of accounts.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL. Registered charity no 207076.

Ref: \_\_\_\_\_