

# Amur Leopard - Diet



**Prey:** Amur leopards hunt an indiscriminate variety of animals including roe deer, sika deer, badgers and hares. Unlike tigers, if hungry leopards will happily seek out very small prey, such as squirrels or rodents until the opportunity for a big meal presents itself!

**Hunting Habits:** Amur leopards normally hunt at night and need large territories to avoid competition for prey. They silently watch their prey and ambush them using a burst of energy reaching speeds of up to 35 miles per hour. They then carry and hide unfinished kills, sometimes up trees, so that they are not taken by other predators.

**Dietary requirements:** Some *Carnivora* species are considered omnivorous and can live on a mixed diet of meat, fruits, seeds and vegetables. The Amur leopard is a strict carnivore, it cannot survive on a mixed diet because of how it metabolises its food, they must always eat other animals in order to acquire energy to live.



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# Amur Leopard - Biology



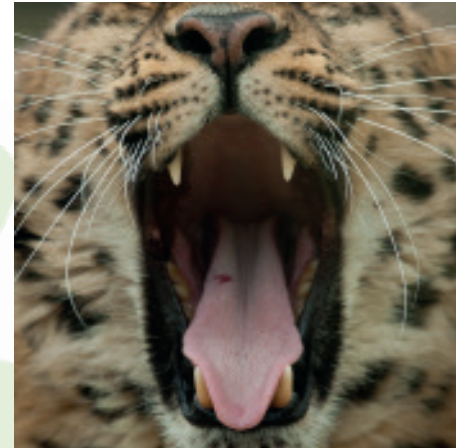
**Description:** The Amur leopard is adapted to the cool climate by having thick fur which grows up to 7.5 cm long in winter. For camouflage in the snow their coat is paler than other leopard subspecies. The Amur leopard's rosettes are widely spaced and larger than those seen on other leopards. Their tongue has tiny rasps or hooks, called denticles, which are used to scrape the meat off of the bones of their prey.

**Weight:** Males generally weigh 32-48 kg, but can weigh up to 75 kg. Females are smaller than the males at 25-43 kg.

**Breeding:** Females first breed at an age of 3-4 years. After a gestation period of around 12 weeks, cubs are born in litters of 1-4 individuals, with an average litter size of just over 2. The cubs stay with their mother for up to two years before becoming fully independent. Amur leopards in zoos show some evidence of breeding seasonality with a peak in births in late spring/early summer.

**Longevity:** In the wild, leopards live for 10-15 years and they may reach 20 years in captivity.

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# Amur Leopard - Threats



With a wild population of fewer than 80 individuals, the Amur leopard is critically endangered as a result of human activities.

**Poaching:** Poaching of both leopards and prey species is a serious threat. Forests in Southwest Primorye are relatively accessible, the area is more densely populated than most of the Russian Far East, and Russia has a hunting culture both for sport and for food. The two main cities of Primorski Krai – Vladivostok and Ussurisk – are only two or three hours drive away, so the leopard's range holds some of the most popular hunting grounds for city residents.

**Forest fires:** Forest fires are a direct threat to Amur leopards as they reduce the animals' natural forest habitat, replacing it with grasslands that leopards prefer to avoid.

**Disease:** Diseases such as Canine Distemper Virus (CDV), are threatening the isolated and vulnerable Amur leopard population. We are working with scientific partners to understand exactly how this disease is contracted by leopards, and its origins.

**Inbreeding:** With a population that dwindled to 35 individuals only a few decades ago, this is the only big cat with international approval to be considered for reintroduction using captive bred Amur leopards.

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# Amur Leopard - Reintroduction

The Amur leopard is probably the only large cat for which a reintroduction program using zoo stock is considered a necessary conservation action with some prospect of taking place in the near future.

A reintroduction plan has been prepared by local and international experts, including Lazovsky Zapovednik, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Primorski Krai Administration, WCS, ZSL and WWF amongst others. Given political support and the necessary funding, it is possible that in 1-2 years from now preparations in the field (building of holding facilities and other infrastructure) will have begun.

With improved conservation in both Russia and China, we could expect an increase in the present population in the wild from 70 animals to approximately 90 animals in 15-20 years. We hope a second population of at least 30 animals will also have been established by that time.



# Amur Leopard - Habitat



**Habitat:** Amur leopards live in the temperate forests of Far Eastern Russia, experiencing harsh winters with extreme cold and deep snow, as well as hot summers.

**Location:** The Amur leopard is the northernmost of all leopard subspecies. Its historic range extended throughout northeastern (“Manchurian”) China, the southern part of Primorsky Krai in Russia and the Korean Peninsula. This range shrank dramatically during the 20th century, due primarily to habitat loss and hunting. The Amur leopard probably went extinct in the wild in South Korea in the late 1960s, although some recent, unconfirmed reports suggest that a few leopards may remain in and around the demilitarized zone between North and South Korea. There are likely still leopards in the rugged northern region of North Korea near the Chinese border, and also animals from Southwest Primorye in Russia occasionally crossing the border into North Korea.

**Competition:** Although in other regions it seems leopards do not do well in areas where they share territory with tigers, this has not proved to be the case in Russia. Studies have indicated that an increased tiger population in the Southwest Primorye area has not adversely affected the leopard population.

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