

Russian Cats Amaze With Impressive Swimming Feats

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Common knowledge dictates that cats hate water. But no one told that to the Russian house cat and its snow leopard compatriot who made headlines Wednesday for their swimming skills.

One story saw a black tomcat survive a marathon swim halfway across a two-kilometer stretch of the Volga, Europe's biggest river.

Semyon the cat plummeted into the Volga while attempting to jump from the river tug he calls home to a passing barge, local news website Om-saratov.ru said Wednesday.

The plucky cat emerged at a nearby boating station 10 days after the miscalculated leap. He was identified by his collar and fed. He is presently awaiting the return of his tug at the boating station, the report said.

Though Semyon bears no blood relation to a Siberian snow leopard named Ikhtiandr, the latter has proved equally impressive, WWF Russia reported on Wednesday.

Trail cameras in the Sayano-Shushensky nature reserve show that the leopard routinely swims across the 800-meter-wide Yenisei River, WWF said on its website.

The habit is highly unusual for the endangered felines, which is why he was named after the hero of a classic Soviet sci-fi novel "The Amphibian Man" (1928) by Alexander Belyayev, who had shark gills grafted on his body by his scientist father, which in no way simplified his social life.

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