

activity 2016/2017 report



The IUCN SSC Cat Specialist Group

The Cat Specialist Group is responsible for the global assessment of the conservation status of all 40 extant cat species. As co-chairs, we coordinate and support the activities of our members, currently 190 leading scientists, nature conservation officers and wild lifemanagers in currently 62 countries.

The main tasks include:

- to maintain the network of cat experts and partners;
- to continuously assess the status and conservation needs of the 40 cat species;
- to support governments in strategic conservation planning;
- to develop capacity in felid conservation;
- to provide services to members and partners;
- to assure the financial resources for the Cat Specialist Group.

For the activity reports we present some of our achievements against these six main tasks.

Christine Breitenmoser-Würsten and Urs Breitenmoser
Co-chairs IUCN/SSC Cat Specialist Group

Cover photo: Pallas's cat (Photo U. Breitenmoser)

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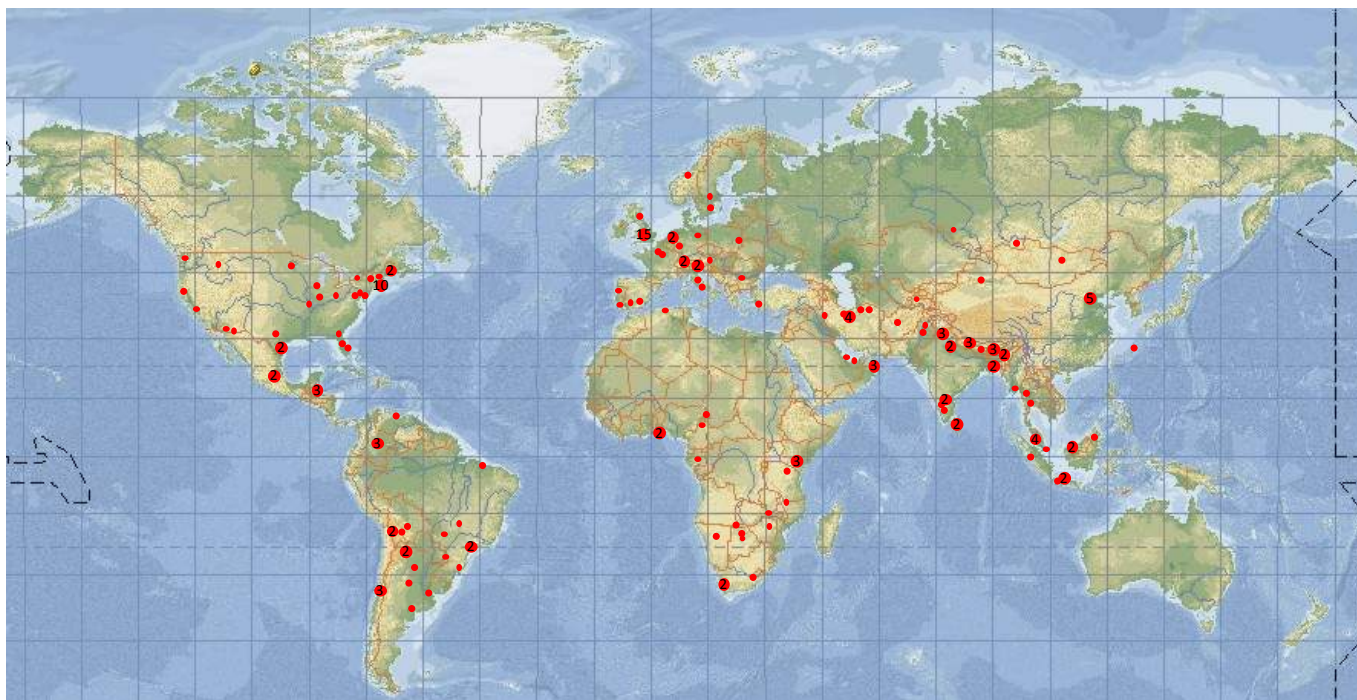
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The Network

Reconstitution of the Cat Specialist Group

IUCN SSC Specialist Groups have to be reconstituted every quadrennium. After the World Conservation Congress in Hawai'i, U.S.A., in September 2016, the Specialist Groups, chairs and members had to be reappointed. In November 2016, we were invited by the SSC Chair, Jon Paul Rodriguez, to continue chairing the Cat Specialist Group SG. Before re-inviting experts to join the Cat SG, we sent a questionnaire to the members who have not been strongly involved in the group's activity in the past quadrennium to evaluate their activities and commitment to continue serving as members of the Cat SG. The Cat SG has currently 190 members from 62 countries, among which 35 are new (see pictures) from 27 countries. The new members have further helped to close gaps in cat range countries. On the website (www.catsg.org) members present themselves with a picture and a short CV.



Distribution of Cat SG members around the globe.



Tiasa Adhya
India



Ayda Ajdary
Iran



Laila Baha-el din
Botswana



Mike Baltzer
Malaysia



Anna Barashkova
Russia



Matthew Becker
Zambia



Jo Cook
UK



Tashi Dhendup
Nepal



Stephanie Dloniak
Kenya



Peter Gerngross
Austria



Yadav Ghimirey
Nepal



Thomas Gray
Cambodia



Wlodek Jederzejewski
Venezuela



Yadvendradev Jhala
India



Jan Kamler
U.S.A.



Khalil Karimov
Tadjikistan



Jennifer Korn
U.S.A.



Nicolas Lagos
Chile



Peter Lindsey
Zimbabwe



Jennifer McCarthy
U.S.A.



Moheb Zalmai
Afghanistan



Pedro Monterosso
Portugal



Marzieh Mussavi
Iran



Stéphane Ostrowski
France



Alfredo Romero-Muñoz
Bolivia



Tanya Rosen
Tadjikistan



Cristian Spulveda
Chile



Ahmed Shakeel
U.A.E.



David Shindle
U.S.A.



Cintia Tellaeche
Argentina



Carlos Valderrama
Colombia



Muhammad Wasseem
Pakistan



Peter Zahler
U.S.A.



Alexandra Zimmermann
UK



Diana Zlatanova
Bulgaria

Big Cat Landscape in the WAP complex, Benin

2016 - 2018



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The WAP (W-Arly-Pendjari) complex, including W Regional Park (Benin, Burkina Faso and Niger), Arly National Park in Burkina Faso and Pendjari National Park in Benin, is the last relatively intact savannah ecosystem (photo above) in West Africa, a truly transboundary landscape encompassing almost 35,000 km² of protected areas, buffer zones and hunting concessions. It is the last redoubt of African elephants in the region with approximately 60% of the total West African population, estimated at 1,500-2,000 individuals. It is also a key landscape for other threatened species, home to the last population of cheetah in the region and the biggest population of the Critically Endangered West African lion.

Thanks to funding from a Swiss foundation, we have been able to add cat conservation parts to the original project *Protecting the Afri-*

can elephants of the Pendjari and W National Parks in Benin: securing the last stronghold for the species in West Africa. Besides site security, mainly funded by USFWS, Panthera and ZSL, the project has now the following additional components: *Big cat population assessment and monitoring* and *Understanding trade affecting cats, cat products and other trafficked wildlife.*

Audrey Ipavec, coordinator for the Northern, Western and Central Africa office of the Range Wide Conservation Program for Cheetah and African Wild Dogs RWCP, Vincent Lapeyre, Technical Advisor for ZSL, Sarah Durant, RWCP Leader, and Philipp Henschel, Panthera coordinator for West and Central Africa, have organised a camera trapping session from 18 January to 6 February 2017 in Pendjari National Park, Benin. Aurlus Ouindeyama, a Beninese student, specialised on camera trapping, was recruited to ensure the follow-up of this study. The camera traps were rechecked in early May. A total of 59,000 pictures were taken with the 70 camera traps. We can already confirm the presence of leopards (photo to the left), cheetahs, lions and servals, and of many other carnivore species, amongst a large diversity of wildlife. A second session will start in January 2018.

In June 2017, ZSL hired two investigators for the 6-months study on trade in products of big cats and other trafficked wildlife. They were trained in investigation protocols, security and undercover techniques. The training took three days, mixing theory and practical tests, with a last exercise conducted at Dantokpa Market, a major hub for illegal wildlife products in Benin. The survey is expected to end in January 2018.





58 experts met at Oxford University's Wildlife Conservation Research Unit's centre (photo above) in Tubney Village to seek innovative solutions to conserving African lions in response to a widespread collapse in their numbers and distribution in the wild. Global attention had been drawn to this issue in July 2015 through the killing of Cecil by a trophy hunter, a lion satellite-tracked by WildCRU since 2008. Accordingly, this brainstorming meeting was called the Cecil Summit.

The summit was summarised by David W Macdonald (WildCRU), Luke Hunter (Panthera), and Urs Breitenmoser (IUCN Cat Specialist Group) on the behalf of the participants, using text drafted by five break-out groups at the Summit.

The Cecil Summit concluded that it is urgent to ensure:

- The protection and recovery of lions and their ecosystems;
- A greater desire for lion conservation, both in Africa and at global scale;
- Large financial support from wealthy countries to pay for lion conservation in poorer countries.

The Summit identified five headline issues to be tackled in a new, holistic and inter-disciplinary approach to lion conservation:

- (1) Restoring Lionscapes: Reinstating the ecological, economic and social value of lions across key African landscapes;
- (2) Inspiring National Communities: Increasing the pride of local people for their lions and establishing fairness in conservation practices;
- (3) Inspiring a Global Community: Increasing international interest in lion conservation as a prerequisite to mobilising financial resources;

(4) Enacting the Robin Hood Model: Harnessing members of the global public with the greatest interest and financial resources to support conservation in lion range states;

(5) Fairness and the International Financing of Lion Conservation: Generating significant financial support at governmental and multi-national levels to assist African nations to save the lion.

Although the Cecil Summit focused on lions, it did so in the conviction that they are a metaphor for wider biodiversity conservation, and that lions serve as both umbrellas and ambassadors for African wildlife conservation more generally.

Photo below: Craig Packer, Tom Kaplan, David Macdonald, Achim Steiner (from left to right).

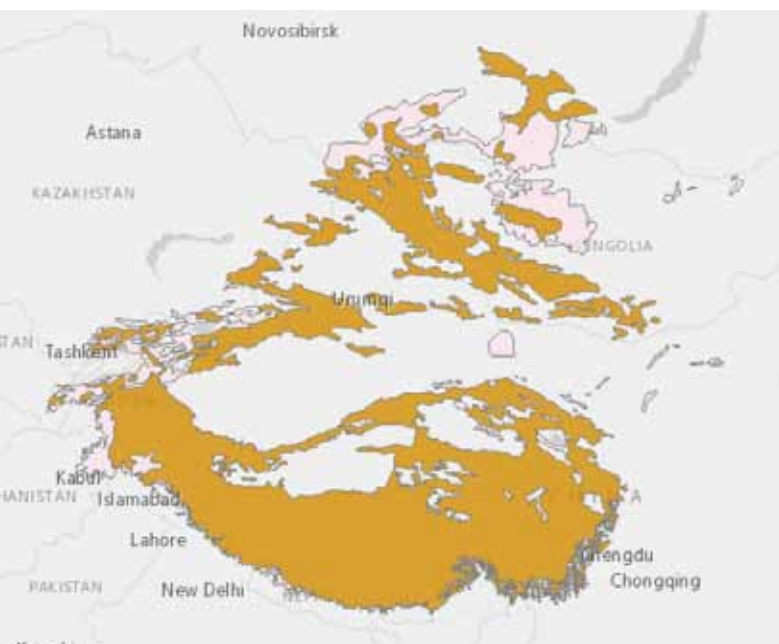




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Change in IUCN Red List Status of the Snow leopard

In the September 2017 update of the IUCN Red List, the listing of the snow leopard changed from Endangered EN to Vulnerable VU. The justification section of the assessment explains why: "The previous assessment in 2008 (Endangered C1) was based on <2,500 mature individuals and an estimated decline of 20% over 16 years (two generations). However, in that assessment, effective population size (N_e) was incorrectly used as a surrogate for 'mature individuals' and produces a lower figure (50% of the adult population of 4,080). Therefore, the species should have been listed as Vulnerable in 2008.



Moreover, given the apparent limits to dispersal, it is questionable whether such a small number of individuals capable of breeding (and therefore fewer actually breeding) is demographically viable over such an extensive range (see map to the left). Recent survey information indicates that snow leopard densities in several areas are higher than previously believed, implying that the overall population size is also likely to be larger than the minimum estimates. The revised estimate of the number of mature individuals addressed the earlier mistake, in combination with new information, and the change from EN to VU is therefore a non-genuine change.

The estimated 20% decline over 16 years in 2008 included a documented upsurge in poaching for skins and body parts in the countries of Central Asia, following the break-up of the Soviet Union around 1991. While this threat has since subsided, it is unlikely to have completely disappeared. The other traditional threats still exist, alongside emerging potential threats such as mining and other infrastructure development (roads, railroads, hydro-dams, etc.), some of which will have intensified in recent years.

There have also been very significant investments in conservation measures to reduce threats or to mitigate their effects. These include: establishment of new protected areas in snow leopard range; more effective anti-poaching measures; training and capacity-building of range country conservation professionals; a number of independent initiatives to reduce conflict with herders (e.g., strengthening livestock corrals, vaccination, handicrafts and alternative livelihoods, grazing set-asides); community engagement programmes; the illegalization of guns in China since 1989; and education programmes to raise awareness of the snow leopard and its habitat." The change in listing has been supported by an additional external review.



After a thorough evaluation of the first ten years of the Balkan Lynx Recovery Programme BLRP using the Open Standards for the Practice of Conservation, we planned and entered the fourth phase from 2016 – 2018.

In Albania, the Munella Mts. region, where the only population nucleus in the country exists, was again surveyed by means of camera-traps from February to May 2017. It resulted in 30 pictures belonging to at least four mature lynx, the same number as in previous years. Lynx have to cope with heavily degraded areas in this region (see photo above), which are however still amazingly rich in fauna and flora. In order to secure lynx survival there, a report containing a biodiversity assessment and justifications for proclaiming Munella region as protected area was prepared and submitted to the Albanian Ministry of Environment. Earlier this year, a Cooperation Agreement for the protection of Balkan lynx had been signed between the Albanian partner organisation PPNEA and the National Agency of Protected Areas.

On 18 February 2017, the first Balkan lynx female was caught for the telemetry study in Macedonia. In the years before, four male lynx were equipped with GPS collars, thus a female was more than welcome. Maya had one kitten in May. The GPS locations and Maya's movements however let us assume that she must unfortunately have lost the kitten during summer. In spring a camera trap survey was conducted in several hunting grounds of Kichevo area. Four individuals were pictured. For the first time lynx presence was proven in Bukovikj area, an important bio-corridor between Mavrovo National Park with Suva Gora and Jakupica Mts.

Despite continuous camera-trapping efforts in southern Kosovo and Montenegro, no lynx has so far been photographed in these regions. In western Kosovo however, a lynx has been pictured several times in 2016 and presumably another one in March 2017. Since then, ho-

wever, there are no further signs of lynx but increasing signs of illegal activities, particularly illegal logging.

The BLRP is jointly implemented by EuroNatur Foundation, KORA (Carnivore Ecology and Wildlife Management), MES (Macedonian Ecological Society), and PPNEA (Society for the Protection and Preservation of Natural Environment in Albania). Activities in Kosovo are carried out by the NGOs Finch and ERA (Environmentally Responsible Action) and in Montenegro by CZIP (Center for Protection and Research of Birds of Montenegro). The BLRP is financially supported by MAVA Foundation, Switzerland, and advice is given by the IUCN/SSC Cat SG.





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The Pallas Cat International Conservation Alliance PICA project aims to improve the knowledge on the ecology and conservation status of the Pallas's cat and enhance and facilitate collaboration on conservation and research of Pallas's cats by existing organisations and networks. One of the key objectives of the project is to develop a range-wide conservation action plan at the end of the project period where various experts on Pallas's cats will be invited. The hope is to collaborate with as many of the existing projects or organisations working with Pallas's cats. The project was founded by Nordens Ark (Emma Nygren), the Royal Zoological

Society of Scotland (Sarah Robinson and David Barclay; see photo to the left from right to left), the Snow Leopard Trust (Gustaf Same-lius) and is supported by the Fondation Segré. The project aims at

- Increasing the knowledge on the threats and conservation status of Pallas's cat by creating a standardised survey that can be used across range countries;

- Improving and update the knowledge on the distribution of Pallas's cats by collaborating with existing organisations and networks that perform camera-trapping throughout the potential distribution of the species. By using shared data for presence versus absence, we aim to provide new information to create new or update existing distribution maps for Pallas's cats.

- Increasing the knowledge on the basic ecology of the species by conducting field work and research in Tost mountains in Mongolia.

- Raising awareness of Pallas's cats globally and within range countries by various media campaigns and by developing educational material to be distributed across range countries.

- Developing the first-ever global conservation plan together with various stakeholders and experts that will be invited to participate in the workshop where the conservation plan will be drafted.

We support the project with advice on status assessment, monitoring and conservation planning. The goal of the meeting, generously hosted by Nordens Ark, was to review progress and to plan for the next steps. We recommended to follow strictly the Assessment – Planning – Action APA approach according to the planning cycle de-scribed in Cat News Special Issue 9.





On 21–22 November 2016, a group of wildlife biologists from Germany, Great Britain, Iran, Macedonia, and Switzerland met at the University of Bern (see photo to the right) to present and discuss new approaches and methods for a robust monitoring of large mammals. The main purpose of the workshop was (1) to review concepts and useful methods for the monitoring of leopards, co-predators, and prey species in the Caucasus with regard to proposing a practical wildlife monitoring concept for the Caucasus ecoregion.

The workshop was one stopover in our work on guidelines for the monitoring of leopards, co-predators and prey in the Caucasus. We have analysed the information on wildlife monitoring and hunting systems in the Caucasian countries as provided by our colleagues from the range states and “all readily available” information on distribution and abundance of wildlife species in the Caucasus. We can presently draw the following conclusions:

The comprehensive work of Mahmood Soofi and Arash Ghoddousi in the Hyrcanian forests of the Alborz Mountains in Iran indicate that the populations of wild ungulates (except wild boar) and of the leopard are continuously declining. Leopard reproduction is confirmed in the eastern part of the range and as far west as Deilaman Drofak No-hunting Area. There is evidence for leopard presence further west and as far to the north-west as the Hirkan National Park in the Talish Mountains in Azerbaijan, but no reproduction has been documented in the western parts in recent years. Wild ungulate abundance in the western part of the Iranian Alborz range seems to be so low that we assume that leopards depend on livestock as staple prey.

High availability of wild prey is the ecological key factor for the recovery of the Caucasian leopard population, and hence, the conservation and sustainable management of the large ungulate species is a prerequisite for the success of the leopard conservation efforts.

However, the knowledge on the status of these ungulate populations is generally low.

A rather wide array of methods for the scientific robust monitoring of wild ungulates in different habitats is presently available. The quality of the estimations however strongly depends on the input (manpower, technology, analytic tools) and hence on the available capacity (trained scientific and field staff), infrastructure (e.g. road net) and budgets. The first step towards a more robust and more comprehensive monitoring of the prey species is building a broad awareness for the challenges identified during the workshop and outlined here, hence to agree on the necessity to improve the monitoring of wildlife species at all levels.



Status and conservation needs of the Asiatic cheetah in Iran

Trip to Iran, 5-8 June 2017



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Urs has visited Teheran from 6-8 June 2017 to discuss various cat conservation issues with representatives from the Department of Environment (DoE), the Conservation of the Asiatic Cheetah Programme (CACP), some colleagues from universities and NGOs, among them the Persian Wildlife Heritage Foundation (PWHF) and the Iranian Cheetah Society (ICS), Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) and Cat SG members.

The population size of the Asiatic cheetah population in Iran is still not known. Population guesses since the end of CACP I have fluctuated between an optimistic 110 animals to a pessimistic estimation of not more than 20 cheetahs. Recently released estima-

tions were 50 individuals to "only two females remain in the wild". Indeed, there is no robust data that can confirm any population estimation. However, there is today a consensus that the Iranian cheetah population consists of a northern and a southern nucleus or subpopulation, each of them including some important PAs. While the situation in the north seems to be stable (Touran PA) or has even improved (Miandasht PA) as a result of an increasing gazelle population, the situation in the south is described to be dramatic in the three continuously observed PAs: No cheetahs left in Bafgh (where however the leopard presence has increased), no female cheetahs left in Dare Anjir, and no reproduction observed in Naybandan (the largest of the CACP areas).

The main threats in the north seem to be human-induced mortality, mainly the traffic losses in a stretch of 20 km of the highway running between the Touran and Miandasht PAs, and the losses to guardian dogs or retaliation killing in Touran, where livestock abundance is still very high due to traditional grazing rights. The situation in the south is less clear, also due to the scarcity of data. But it seems that lack of "typical" cheetah prey (gazelles) is a problem. We I suggest the following steps to be taken immediately:

1. Call immediately for the support of the conservation community, e.g. the national and international institutions so far involved, but also international organisations;
2. Develop a new action plan (CACP III) and implement it in an adaptive process, including external assistance and frequent reviews and adaptations whenever needed;
3. Organise an Asiatic cheetah conference with Iranian and international conservation organisations and experts, and potential funding organisations, under the hospice of the DoE and international institutions that can help with conceptual support.



Revision of the Regional Conservation Strategy for the leopard in the Caucasus eco-region

23–28 April 2017, Tbilisi, Georgia



Ten years ago, in a workshop organised by the WWF Caucasus Programme in Tbilisi, Georgia, from 30 May – 1 June 2007, the first “Strategy for the Conservation of the Leopard in the Caucasus Ecoregion” was developed by a group of 37 representatives from governments, experts from all six Caucasian countries and international experts, and facilitated by the Cat SG. The Strategy 2007 has guided leopard conservation in the past years and facilitated the development of the National Action Plans (NAPs) in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia.

In an expert workshop in 2014, the conservation status of the leopard in the Caucasus, implementation of the Strategy 2007 and of the NAPs was reviewed and assessed. The conclusion of the workshop participants was that, although the Strategy 2007 provided an important framework for the conservation of leopards and its prey in the eco-region, not all parts of the plan had been implemented directly or indirectly through the NAPs. The reasons for shortcomings in the implementation of proposed conservation measures were (1) too ambitious Targets/Results, (2) lack of responsibility and/or funding for tackling certain tasks, and (3) incorrect input assumptions (e.g. with regard to leopard distribution and abundance) for the development of the Strategy in 2007. The experts at the workshop concluded that a revision of the Strategy for the Conservation of the Leopard in the Caucasus Ecoregion would be topical and urgent. On 25–26 April 2017, a group of 47 conservationists, scientists and country representatives gathered again in Tbilisi to review and update the Strategy.

The guiding statements – the Vision and the Goal – were retained from the Strategy 2007, as they were considered to still be valid. The Objectives have been revised and adapted where needed; the Strategy 2017 now presents 10 Objectives compared to 11 in the Strategy 2007. These 10 Objectives are concretised by 29 Results (synonym to “Targets” in the Strategy 2007) and should be implemented through

76 Activities. Threats, Gaps, and Enabling Conditions as presented in the Strategy 2007 were found to be mostly still valid, and hence the problem analysis was not repeated in detail.

After the workshop, a Drafting Team compiled the results from the Working Groups and the plenary discussions and compiled the first draft of the new Strategy that was then submitted to all workshop participants for review.

With the assessment at the expert workshop in 2014 and the revision and the release of the updated Strategy 2017, the cycle for the strategic planning for the conservation of the leopard in the Caucasus has been completed. The Strategy 2017 must now be concretised through National Action Plans and then implemented in the range countries.



Reintroduction of the leopard in the Greater Caucasus

Meetings in Zurich in January in 2017, and in Muri b. Bern in June 2017, Switzerland



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On 24 January 2017 we met with Irina Fominykh, Russian Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment MNRE, Svyatoslav Vilks, ANO "Caucasus Nature Center", Nikita Shashkin, Joint-Stock Company Northern Caucasus Resorts, Natalia Dronova and Igor Chestin, WWF Russia, Marianne Hartmann, Cat SG, Alexander Sliwa, EAZA Felid TAG Chair, and José Dias Ferreira, EAZA Persian Leopard EEP, to discuss the situation around the reintroduction of the leopard in Sochi and other areas in the greater Caucasus, and the upcoming renewal of the Memorandum of Understanding MoU between the MNRE, IUCN and EAZA.



We presented the situation and recovery of the leopard in the Caucasus and principles for the recovery and reintroduction. The spatial recovery strategy for the leopard in the Caucasus consists of (1) strict protection of remnant populations in the Lesser Caucasus (Iran, Azerbaijan, Armenia); (2) maintenance and restoration of the connectivity with the source populations in the Alborz Mts and the Zagros Mts; (3) recovery of habitat and prey base for the leopard were needed, (4) a good captive population for reintroductions (EAZA EEP, SBC, others); (5) passive recolonisation of the Lesser Caucasus through natural expansion from the southern rim, and (6) active recolonisation of the Greater Caucasus through reintroductions.

José Dias Ferreira presented the situation in the Persian leopard EEP. During the past three years the number of Persian leopards in the EEP has increased from 79 (40M:39F) to 96 (50M:49F), the participating institutions from 37 to 46, and the countries involved from 18 to 26. Marianne Hartmann showed the importance of enclosure enrichment for a healthy development of the leopards, physically and mentally. She has developed guidelines for better enclosures, where leopards receive all stimulations needed. Alex Sliwa gave an overview on the possible "harvest scenarios" of the EEP for providing animals for reintroduction. Igor Chestin presented the first results from the monitoring of the three released leopards. We then reviewed the existing MoU and the problems with its implementation. Irina Fominykh presented the view of the Ministry and possible ways forward.

In 28-29 June 2017, we met with Irina Fominykh and Rustam Rabadanov from the MNRE in Muri b. Bern to work on the renewal of the MoU. They presented a draft that we discussed in detail and finalised the text to the point where they were able to take it back to the MNRE for approval.



Christine attended the AZA Annual Conference 2016 in San Diego, and specifically in the session on “Working as a Global Conservation Network: AZA Members Linking with IUCN” moderated by Kira Mileham, Director IUCN SSC Strategic Partnerships. The other participants were Jennifer Luedtke, Global Amphibian Red List Authority Coordinator, Stacey Johnson, Director of Collections, San Diego Zoo, and Natasha Lloyd, Calgary Zoo’s Centre for Conservation Research. Kira Mileham underlined in her introduction talk that creating links with IUCN can help AZA members achieve their conservation mission, no matter the size of the institution; whether the zoos are striving to prioritize and improve the impact of their efforts, overcome legislative challenges, participate in global decision making and conservation conventions, connect their staff to global expertise, or build the visibility and credibility of their work. Building stronger links with ex-situ expertise is equally important for the IUCN community. The staff, collections, facilities and programmes of AZA members hold the key for the survival of many species; the most effective way to ensure success is by working together.

Jennifer Luedtke presented the shocking results of the 2004 IUCN Global Amphibian Assessment (GAA) with 30% of the world’s amphibians at risk of extinction and over 100 already Extinct. While updates to the amphibian database have been incremental, there has not been a major comprehensive amphibian assessment since 2004. However, the global overview provided by the 2004 assessment remains relevant. Collaborating to update the GAA on the IUCN Red List is critical to forming a diverse community of experts and prioritising amphibian conservation action.

Christine presented the planning cycle of the Cat Specialist Group, which is working with key stakeholders including zoos and governments internationally to assess, plan and facilitate priority conserva-

tion action across cat species globally, including partnering on reintroduction efforts. The Cat Specialist Group is also cooperation with the AZA SAFE Cheetah team on prioritising AZA efforts.

Stacy Johnson from San Diego Zoo Global is leading an ambitious initiative to use assisted reproductive and genetic technologies to bring the Northern White Rhino back from the brink of extinction. The team are linking with the IUCN Rhino Specialist Group to help overcome challenges in animal movements and government engagement.

Natasha Loyd presented the Calgary Zoo’s Centre for Conservation Research (CCR) specializing in reintroduction science.



EAZA Felid TAG mid-year meeting

RZSS Highland Wildlife Park, Kincraig, Kingussie, Scotland, UK, 24-26 March 2017



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In March 2017, we attended the mid-year Felid TAG meeting together with a total of 36 participants in the RZSS Highland Wildlife Park, Kingussie, Scotland (photo above). It also gave us the opportunity to meet with Cat SG members from European zoos.

There were numerous presentations on the species breeding programmes and very interesting presentations from *ex situ* projects. Gustav Samelius from the Snow Leopard Trust informed about their project in Mongolia with radio-collared animals. Snow leopards crossed vast tracks of unsuitable habitat to get to the next mountain chain and are moving back and forth between

these patches. They will also collar ibex and goats to study interactions. The disease study showed that snow leopards were positive for feline parvovirus, corona virus, but not positive for canine distemper so far. They have also started to look into the impact of herding practices and climate change on grasslands, as well as into effects of cashmere trade.

Andrew Kitchener, the chair of the Cat Taxonomy Task Force of the Cat SG, presented the revised felid taxonomy (see p. 19) and the progress of the work on the sand cat taxonomy. Two subspecies have been identified. The radiation seems to have started in south-west Asia.

Gregory Breton and Alex Sliwa reported on their newest results from their study on the ecology and behaviour of the sand cat in the region of Adrar Souttouf in the Moroccan Sahara near the Atlantic coast. They have been able to radio-collar more animals during their last mission and will soon go back to the field. We gave a presentation on our activities during the past year. We informed the participants about the outcomes of CITES CoP 17, our relationship with the AZA Felid TAG, and the re-assessment of all cat species for the Global Mammal Assessment. We also presented the process of the re-appointment of Specialist Group Membership.

After the end of the Felid TAG meeting, we met with representatives from the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland and its Wild-Genes laboratory, Cairngorms National Park, Scottish Natural Heritage, the National Museum Scotland in Edinburgh, and the Felid TAG Chair (photo to the left) to discuss the situation of the Scottish wildcat and possible ways forward and opportunities for collaboration and support.





Important agenda items at CoP17 in Johannesburg, South Africa, concerned cat species.

African Lion: On Wednesday, 28 September, Niger introduced the proposal on uplisting the African lion *Panthera leo* (CoP17 Prop.4), and with Chad and Guinea, requested discussions be postponed to allow parties time to review relevant draft decisions (CoP17 Inf.68). The Committee established a working group, co-chaired by Niger and the EU, to consider the proposal. On Sunday, 2 October, the EU presented the revised draft decisions (CoP17 Com.I.29), summarising amendments to CoP17 Prop.4 to retain the lion in Appendix II with annotations: zero quota of bones, similar parts and derivatives taken from the wild and traded for commercial purposes; and annual export quotas on lion bone specimens derived from captive breeding operations and traded for commercial purposes in South Africa. The Committee adopted the decisions and annotation in CoP17 Com.I.29 in lieu of the original proposal.

Illegal trade in cheetahs: On Thursday, 29 September, in Committee II, Kuwait introduced CoP17 Doc.49 on cheetahs *Acinonyx jubatus*, including the Secretariat's revisions to its draft decisions. Kuwait opposed deletion of a decision concerning the Secretariat reporting to the SC on progress made in halting illegal trade in cheetahs. The United Arab Emirates (UAE), Kenya, South Africa, the EU and Cheetah Conservation Fund supported the amended draft decisions. The US supported the Secretariat's amendments with the exception of removing deadlines from draft decisions 17.B and 17.C. The Committee accepted all the recommendations and draft decisions, as amended by the Secretariat, Kuwait and the US.

Asian Big Cats: Sri Lanka encouraged parties to pay more attention to the conservation status of leopards. Lao People's Democratic Republic supported the draft decisions and keeping Decision 14.69 on

intensive operations breeding tigers on a commercial scale. China supported most of the draft decisions as well as a review of tiger captive facilities and their connections to illegal trade.

Leopard: We organised a side event on leopards aiming at raising awareness among delegates for the conservation needs of leopards by explaining the 2016 Red List assessment of the species, reviewing threats to its survival, and suggesting a way forward for advancing its conservation. The event was related to agenda item 39.1 of CoP17 on hunting trophies of species listed in Appendix I or II. Tanya Rosen and Gareth Whittington Jones from Panthera joined us as speakers.



CMS Meeting of the Scientific Council

Bonn, Germany, 10-13 July 2017



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We attended the Second Meeting of the Sessional Committee of the Scientific Council (ScC-SC2) that was held from 10 to 13 July 2017 at the UNEP/CMS Secretariat premises in Bonn, Germany. ScC-SC2 being the last meeting of the Scientific Council before the 12th Conference of the Parties to CMS (COP12), its main objective was to provide advice on scientific and technical matters to the COP.

There were several cat related items on the agenda: listing proposals for lion and leopard, the joint CMS-CITES African Carnivore Initiative, and a proposal for concerted actions for cheetah and African wild dogs. All were discussed in the working group for terrestrial mammals.



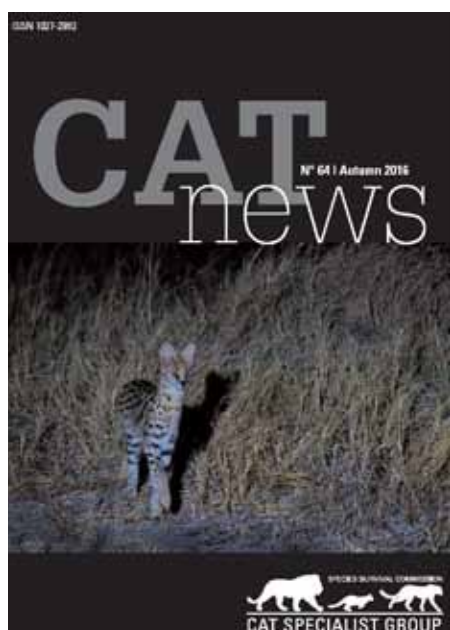
Lions: The listing proposal shows that while many efforts have been made on behalf of Africa's lions there is still much work left to be done to conserve the species. Listing African lions under Appendix II of CMS is a perfect complement to the work already being undertaken on trade in lions and lion parts and derivatives under CITES.

Leopard: The leopard needs considerably more awareness and concerted conservation efforts. It is – compared to other large cats – a species not only neglected by many range countries, but also by international conservation organisations. The core function of the Convention is to facilitate landscape-level, large-scale transboundary conservation, and leopard conservation will hence profit from the species' listing under Appendix II.

African Carnivore Initiative: The Joint CMS-CITES Programme of Work for the period 2015-2020, agreed to by both Conventions in 2014, requests the two Secretariats to cooperate in relation to shared species. Several resolutions and decisions have been adopted by the CMS and CITES Conferences of Parties relating to four iconic African carnivores, i.e. African Lion *Panthera leo*, cheetah *Acinonyx jubatus*, leopard *Panthera pardus* and African wild dog *Lycaon pictus*. Through the establishment of a joint CMS-CITES African Carnivores Initiative, the Secretariats of CMS and CITES seek to bring coherence and efficiency to the implementation of these resolutions and decisions. The Initiative also aims to work in close cooperation with IUCN.

Conservation and management of cheetah and African wild dog: Both species have been accepted for Concerted Actions by the Conference of the Parties at its 11th meeting (Quito, 2014) and are thus listed in Annex 1 of document UNEP/CMS/COP12/Doc.26.2. The proposed set of decisions can be considered complementary to the Concerted Actions nomination.

All four documents have been recommended for adoption by COP 12.



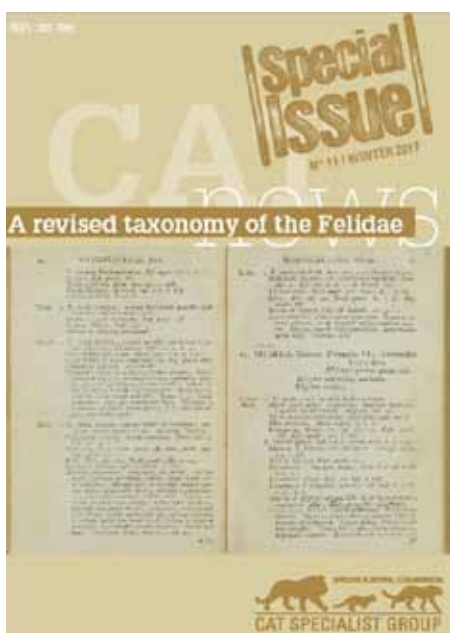
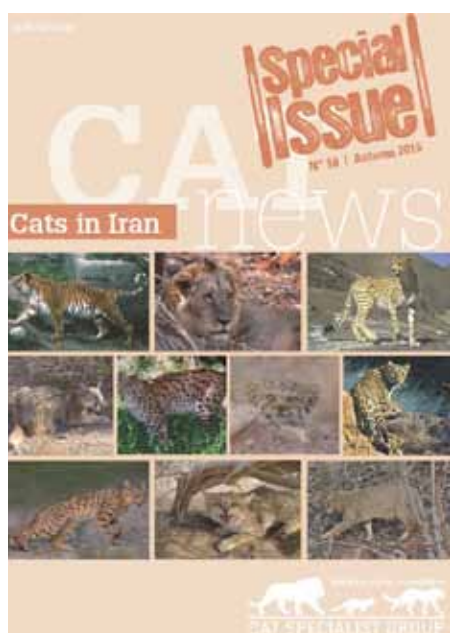
Digital Cat Library

We have newly integrated 626 publications into the Digital Cat Library DCL in 5 uploads during the past year. DCL hosts currently 11,165 reports and publications relevant to cat conservation and is constantly growing.

Cat News

In 2016 and 2017 (until mid-year) we have published the regular issues Cat News 64 (40 pages) and 65 (52 pages) with 38 peer-reviewed articles, as well as the two Special Issues 10 *Cats in Iran* (64 pages) and 11 *A revised taxonomy of the Felidae* (80 pages).

Cat News 65 contains an extended obituary of Peter Jackson, the former Chair of the IUCN/SSC Cat Specialist Group, to which family and friends have contributed.



Cat News Special Issue 10 – Cats in Iran

Iran has a remarkable diversity of cats. Until recently, ten cats from the cuddly sand cat to the mighty tiger. The two largest species, the Caspian tiger and the Asiatic lion, have disappeared half a century ago. 33 authors have reviewed the existing literature and have compiled available data on all ten cat species. The Persian Wildlife Heritage Foundation is aiming to translate *Cats in Iran* into Farsi to make it available to a broader audience

Cat News Special Issue 11 – A revised taxonomy of the Felidae

The revised classification of the Felidae was reviewed by a panel of 22 experts under the guidance of Andrew Kitchener divided into core, expert and review groups, which make up the Cat Classification Task Force CCTF of the IUCN/SSC Cat Specialist Group. The principal aim of the CCTF was to produce a consensus on a revised classification of the Felidae for use by the IUCN, and hopefully also by the UN conventions. Based on current published research, the CCTF has fully revised the classification of the Felidae at the level of genus, species and subspecies. A novel traffic-light system was developed to indicate certainty of each taxon based on morphological, molecular, biogeographical and other evidence. A concordance of good evidence in the three principal categories was required to

strongly support the acceptance of a taxon. Where disagreements exist among members of the CCTF, these have been highlighted in the accounts for each species. Only further research will be able to answer the potential conflicts in existing data. A total of 14 genera, 41 species and 80 subspecies are recognised by most members of the CCTF, which is a considerable change from the classification proposed by Wozencraft (2005), the last major revision of the Felidae. Future areas of taxonomic research have been highlighted in order to answer current areas of uncertainty. This classification of the Felidae will be reviewed every five years unless a major new piece of research requires a more rapid revision for the conservation benefit of felid species at risk of extinction.

Staff and ...

We wish to thank all the dedicated colleagues and members of the Cat Specialist Group for their hard work during the reporting period 2012/2013. Working very closely with the Cat Specialist Group Co-chairs were Manuela von Arx (Digital Cat Library, Balkan Lynx Recovery Programme), Anna Huber (book keeping), Kristin Nowell (Red List Authority coordinator), Tabea Lanz (a.o. Digital Cat Library, Cat News, reconstitution of the Cat SG, Red List), Roland Bürki (leopard in the Caucasus): a great thank you to all of them. We would like to thank the many dedicated people who helped develop and run the various projects in 2016/2017: Alex Sliwa, Marianne Hartmann and José Ferreira (Sochi leopard reintroduction, Cats in Iran), Andrew Kitchener (Chair of the Cat Taxonomy Task Force), Keith Richmond, Sultana Bashir, Brian Bertram and Juan Repucci (associate editors Cat News). We would also like to thank the many colleagues who have contributed to the website, Cat News and the Digital Cat Library. Alex Sliwa and Patrick Meier have generously made available a lot of their superb cat pictures for Cat SG purposes, also for this report. Many thanks!

... Sponsors

Although much of our work as an IUCN/SSC Specialist Group is done on a voluntary basis, our projects would not be possible without financial support from many committed institutions and private persons. We would like to thank the following individuals and organisations for their partnership and support: Friends of the Cat Group, MAVA Foundation, Zoo Leipzig, Forestry Bureau of the Taiwan Council of Agriculture, Fondation Segré, Temperatio, AZA Felid TAG Innflow AG, Stämpfli AG, and especially Patrick Meier and Peter Stämpfli.