

# activity

2011/2012

# report



## The IUCN/SSC Cat Specialist Group

The Cat Specialist Group is responsible for the global assessment of the conservation status of all 37 wild living cat species. We coordinate and support the activities of currently 203 leading scientists, nature conservation officers and wild lifemanagers in currently 57 countries. The main tasks include:

- to maintain the network of cat experts and partners;
- to continuously assess the status and conservation needs of the 37 cat species;
- to support governments with 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.

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Cover photo: Sand cat in Iran (Photo Naein/DoE)

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# The Network

## Amazing Species

To increase awareness of biodiversity, and raise the profile of threatened species, IUCN/SSC launched in 2010 – the year of biodiversity - the IUCN Red List 'Species of the Day'. Each day of 2010 a different species was featured on the IUCN Red List website, with information on the threats it faces. The 365 species selected represented the entire range of taxonomic groups and covered all regions. They started by featuring some better known species, including the Polar Bear and then moved on to cover plants, fungi, invertebrates and more. Both charismatic and obscure species were featured, providing an insight into the astonishing level of biodiversity that exists. The Cat SG contributed 6 portraits, including tiger and cheetah and the less known pampas cat, marbled cat, fishing cat and African golden cat.

In 2011, the book *Species at the Edge of Survival* was published, inspired by IUCN's Species of the Day initiative, featuring a selection of 365 plants, animals and fungi listed on The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species™.

Based on the success of the Species of the Day, IUCN/SSC launched the IUCN Red List 'Amazing Species' in 2011 (<http://www.iucnredlist.org/amazing-species>). Since then, a different 'amazing' species has been regularly featured on the IUCN Red List website. The project is still running. The Cat SG has submitted four species so far (Andean cat, Borneo bay cat, flat-headed cat, Pallas's cat). The first two have already been featured.

This project is a joint project of the IUCN Global Species Programme and the Species Survival Commission (SSC), with the support of ARKive.



**Amazing Species: Andean Cat**

The **Andean Cat**, *Leopardus jacobus*, is listed as 'Endangered' on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species™. It is a highly specialized carnivore only found in the cold and wet regions of the Andes, from the highest peaks of Peru to the Patagonian steppes of central Argentina, throughout the High Andes of Chile and Bolivia.

Andean Cats are elusive and patchily distributed across their range. They exist in low numbers below the density levels of their potential competitor, the Pampas Cat. Of the few wilds, Andean Cats show the most specialized diet selecting the Southern Mountain Viscacha as their preferred prey. Due to this habitat and dietary specificity, Andean Cats are particularly vulnerable to changes in prey populations, habitat loss and climate change. The intensification of mining activities and increasing threatens key areas of their distribution.

International trade of this species is prohibited by CITES and national legislation protects the Andean Cat throughout its range. In 2010, members of the Andean Cat Alliance-AGA evaluated the population status of this species and identified priority actions for research and conservation.

Logos for IUCN, SSC, ARKive, and the IUCN Red List are displayed at the bottom.

### Rabinowitz-Kaplan Prize for Excellence in Cat Conservation

Panthera is making a biennial award of \$50,000 to a senior scientist and conservationist who has dedicated their life to making a profound difference in protecting wild cats. This award is the largest prize honoring wild cat specialists and was created by Panthera to acknowledge a lifetime of critical work.

We have been awarded the 2011 Prize for our decades-long work on Eurasian lynx and our joint-leadership of the IUCN/SSC Cat Specialist Group.



## Second IUCN/SSC Specialist Group Chairs' Meeting

Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, 23-27 February 2012



The leadership of the Species Survival Commission SSC and Global Species Programme GSP came together to advance the species conservation agenda for the next IUCN quadrennium and beyond. Thanks to the generous sponsorship of the Environment Agency - Abu Dhabi (EAD), and the support of the Mohamed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund, the second IUCN SSC Chairs' Meeting took place on 23–27 February 2012, at the Yas Island Rotana, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.

The Chairs' meeting was immediately preceded by meetings of the GSP staff (18-19 February), SSC sub-committees (20-21 February), and the SSC Steering Committee (22 February). These meetings provided extensive inputs to the draft 2013-2016 IUCN Species Strategic Plan, and completed the preparations for the Chairs' meeting itself. We attended the meeting of the Species Conservation Planning Sub-Committee (see p. 14).

The meeting was on an even more ambitious scale than the one held four years earlier in Al Ain. In addition to the Steering Committee and Specialist Group SG Chairs, the meeting included members of all of the SSC Sub-Committees, many Red List Authority Focal Points, all the Red List Partner organizations and other close SSC collaborators, representatives from the other IUCN Commissions, over 20 staff from the Global Species Programme (GSP) in the IUCN Secretariat, all of the IUCN regional offices (including every SSC focal point in these offices), senior managers from IUCN headquarters, the President of IUCN, and many friends and colleagues from Abu Dhabi. In total there were over 300 participants, and none of this would have been possible without the extraordinary generosity of the EAD, and especially of its Secretary General, HE Razan Khalifa Al Mubarak.

One of the main topics of the meeting was to develop a work plan for the SSC for the next IUCN quadrennium (2013 – 2016), with the objective of advancing global species conservation efforts to create a positive impact and achieve our vision: "A world that values and conserves present levels of biodiversity."

The meeting provided a well used open platform for all SG, stand-alone Red List Authority (RLA) and Task Force Chairs in the SSC and the IUCN Global Species Programme to meet, share their experiences, and discuss ways forward on key conservation issues. In addition, dis-

cussions were held relating to existing and future collaborations with other IUCN Commissions, Programmes and international conventions. The primary focus of the meeting was actually to forge new partnerships and relationships within and around the SSC.

The agenda of the meeting was divided between plenary, parallel and market sessions. The plenary sessions included a diversity of talks from fundraising and communication, to international policy and Red Listing. The parallel sessions, however, were more specific with some having a practical application (e.g. tools available on the Red List, conservation planning tools and how to write fundraising proposals), while others prompted active participation and consultation (e.g. IUCN guidelines on trophy hunting and consolidating the global standards for the identification of sites of biodiversity conservation significance). The marketplace sessions provided a forum for networking, making connections across the IUCN SSC network, establishing collaborations and building relationships.

Source: IUCN Species Survival Commission Chairs' Meeting, Meeting report, 156 pp.



# Cats in Iran: workshop for a status assessment

Karaj, I.R. Iran, 27 – 29 November 2012



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Iran is a country of cats. Ten species are part of the indigenous fauna, including the now extinct Caspian tiger and Persian lion. For the other eight species, namely the Asiatic cheetah, the Persian leopard, the lynx, the caracal, the jungle cat, the Pallas's cat, the wildcat and the sand cat, Iran is an important stronghold. The only remnant population of Asiatic cheetah today exists in central Iran, and for the leopard in the Caucasus, the only source population remains in north-western Iran. For other cat species, we have very little information from the entire Middle East, but Iran must host important populations.

Iran has a well-developed network of protected areas, with the DoE a well-structured organisation present in all provinces, a good education system and a lot of good young researchers and conservationists organised in several NGOs. But the difficult political and economic situati-

on impairs converting this enormous potential into good conservation. Nevertheless, all participants at the workshop were eager to contribute their knowledge and information. The first day was dedicated to education and information. We gave several lectures on cat conservation, assessment and monitoring, and the species coordinators presented the information so far compiled. Some presentations prompted many questions and lively discussions, which took a lot of time because all statements had to be translated between Farsi and English. On Day 2 and 3, we performed the species assessment according to our Cat Assessment Data Sheet (CADS). To do this, we split first into six regional working groups and subsequently into four species working groups, each compiling and reviewing the information gathered in the regional groups for two of the eight remnant cat species.

For all species, the exercise brought new insights. Manul and sand cat, for instance, were found to be wider distributed than so far assumed, whereas for the wildcat, so far believed to exist "everywhere", we now have a more differentiated picture. The leopard distribution area seems now to be split into two large populations, one in the Zagros Mountains and one in the Alborz Mountains. A great number of new geo-referenced and dated information were compiled and will provide very valuable input data for more sophisticated analyses. One important goal of such workshops is to overcome species by species and country by county the "believe-it-or-not assessments" based only on generic information.

On the last day we met with Dr Fazel and senior staff from the DoE and Karaj University. Dr Fazel is the director of this university, but he was recently appointed Director of Biodiversity of the DoE and has in this function replaced Dr. Sadough, also as CACP director. We presented the findings from the workshop and discussed our future collaboration.



# Reintroduction of the Persian leopard in the Northern Caucasus

Sochi, Russia, 12 – 14 October 2012



A partnership of Russian institutions, namely the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MNRE), WWF Russia, the Russian Academy of Science, Sochi National Park, and the Caucasian Biosphere Reserve, plan to reintroduce the Persian leopard in the north-western part of the Greater Caucasus. The leopard reintroduction is a high priority project in Russia, as it is a part of the “green record” of the Sochi Olympic Games 2014. The project was developed by WWF Russia and the Russian Academy of Science in 2005 and approved by the MNRE in 2006. In a meeting at IUCN headquarter in Gland, Switzerland, on 23 May 2011, a delegation of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation has asked IUCN to express its views on the planned reintroduction and to advice on the selection of animals for a founder population and the release protocols. One conclusion of the meeting was that an expert delegation of the IUCN and the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA) would visit the designated release areas and the breeding centre near Sochi to make recommendations and explore the possibilities for future cooperation. On 12-14 October, Urs together with Alex Sliwa and Martina Raffel from EAZA and Hérve Lethier from IUCN visited, on invitation of the MNRE and organised by WWF Russia, the breeding centre and designated release areas near Sochi (photo above) and met with the project partners in Sochi and in Moscow.

The visit to Sochi on 12 October 2011 consisted of a brief inspection of the release area by helicopter, a meeting with the responsible of the Biosphere Reserve and the National Park and the presentation of the breeding and rehabilitation centre (picture to the right). The reintroduction area includes the Caucasian State Biosphere Reserve (IUCN Category Ia), adjacent Sochi National Park (Category II) and the Teberda Biosphere Reserve (Category Ia) further east,

consisting together of a protected area of 6536 km<sup>2</sup>. The foreseen connection of the biosphere reserves would increase the protected areas to 6816 km<sup>2</sup>. Integrating more land into the “polygon” is presently considered and would bring the protected area up to almost 10,000 km<sup>2</sup>. The potential leopard habitats include montane, sub-alpine and alpine zones from sea level to >3000 m. The habitat quality and biodiversity of the Caucasian State Biosphere Reserve is excellent, bare of all anthropogenic infrastructures except some warden’s cabins. The park has a high ungulate diversity (red deer, roe deer, chamois, Caucasian tur, wisent, wild boar) in sufficient densities as potential leopard prey.

Since the visit, IUCN, EAZA and the MNRE have signed a memorandum of understanding about cooperation. EAZA will provide animals from European zoos to start a breeding program in Sochi.



# Terminal Evaluation of the WWF Iberian Lynx Conservation Project 2008–2011

July 2011



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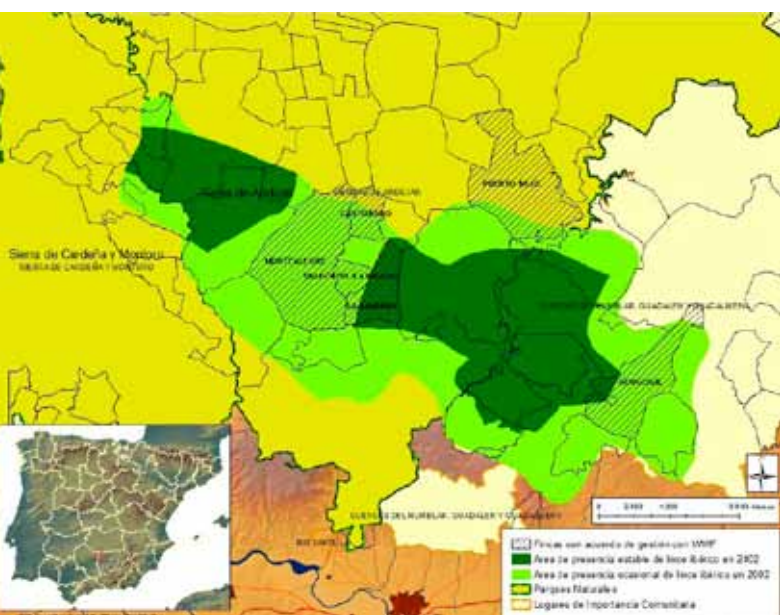
Since the Iberian lynx *Lynx pardinus* has been listed as Critically Endangered in the IUCN Red List in 2002, it is in the focus not only of the Spanish, but of the global conservation community. The WWF network has supported the conservation of this most endangered cat species through international awareness campaigns and in situ activities implemented by WWF Spain for many years. WWF has started in situ conservation in 2000 in the Montes de Toledo and in the Sierra Morena near Andújar. WWF was the first organisation working with private landowners on their properties, a new approach for Spain at the time. The Montes de Toledo population

went extinct, but in the Andújar region, WWF started to work on rabbit reintroduction and recovery in 2003, signing contracts with private landowners. WWF NL and UK have financially supported the project since FY 2006 (L. Suárez, pers. comm.). The work in the estates in the Sierra Morena has continued to present and was also the most important part of the 2008–2011 project phase.

In spring 2011, we have been asked to make a terminal evaluation of the project. WWF Spain wanted to have an external assessment of WWF's involvement, including a compilation of lessons learnt (what did work, what didn't?) and recommendations for further WWF engagement. The co-chairs of the Cat SG have been involved in the conservation of the Iberian lynx for many years and have co-operated with most of the major governmental and non-governmental key players.

The topics of the four objectives of the projects were all relevant to Iberian lynx conservation. During the implementation phase, priority was clearly given to the in situ work in the Sierra Morena. Paradoxically, the least "classical" and most challenged WWF activities received most attention and resources, because this work was started in 2002 already and needed to be continued. The other project parts, "Natura 2000", "Threats", and "Strategy" were given less emphasis and failed partly because original assumptions did not come true, or national and provincial agencies did not advance the Natura 2000 site management) or because of lack of means (time, capacity, funding).

The conservation of the Iberian lynx is now entering a new stage, expanding to Castilla-La Mancha, Extremadura and Portugal. This offers new challenges and opportunities, and WWF is also part of the new Life+ Iberlynce Project 2011-16.



Five estates in the Sierra Morena where WWF Spain had agreements.



# Inauguration Conference for the Life + Iberlynce Project

Sevilla, Spain, 6 – 7 October 2011



The Life+ Iberlynce project for the *Recovery of the Historical Distribution of the Iberian Lynx in Portugal and Spain*, approved in 2011 by the European Union, has started with an inaugural conference for the unification of methods and tools for all working areas and professional teams. All project partners from Portugal and Spain have participated in this important meeting to streamline methods, tools and protocols across the entire project area. In addition to the project partners some advisors have been invited. Manuela von Arx represented the Cat SG with a presentation on criteria for reintroductions.

There are currently two reproductive populations of Iberian lynx, both in Andalucía (Doñana-Aljarafe and Eastern Sierra Morena). For a successful outcome of the previously shown objectives, the conservation strategy is based on the collaborative agreements with land owners and hunting societies. It is, therefore, essential to achieve a strong social concern about the conservation of the species.

The Iberlynce project aims to expand the area of stable lynx presence beyond Andalucía during the five year project period. It has a budget of 34 Mio Euros of which 61% are paid by the European Community. It is the largest budget ever funded by a Life project. The project has the following goals:

**Increase** the number of individuals from existing populations of Iberian lynx, reaching at least 70 territorial females in the eastern Sierra Morena (50 in Andújar – Cardena, 10 in Guarrizas and 10 in Guadalmellato) and 25 in Doñana – Aljarafe.

**Establish** four new populations of Iberian lynx in Portugal, Castilla – La Mancha, Extremadura and Andalucía.

**Identify and prepare** four new areas to accommodate future population of Iberian lynx in Portugal, Castilla-La Mancha, Extremadura and Andalucía. The project is coordinated by the Junta de Andalucía, and involves a total of 17 members, including 9 regional administrations of Portugal and Spain, various hunting associations, a group of NGOs and a media producing company.

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# Iberian lynx conservation project update

Visit to Andalucía, Spain, 20-24 April 2012



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The Iberian lynx has been listed as Critically Endangered in the IUCN Red List since 2002. The assessment was CR C2a(i), based on the justification that the total population was below 250 mature individuals, with a continuous decline, and with no population containing more than 50 mature individuals. Only two remnant populations were detected in the range-wide survey, both in Andalucía: the Doñana population with 18 and the Andújar population with 25 mature individuals. In the 2008 Red List assessment, the Iberian lynx was again listed CR. At that time, the two populations had actually already stabilised and started to increase, but the criteria for down-listing to Endangered were not yet met. With the continuous increase of the two autochthonous populations and the

creation of two new nuclei through reintroduction, a new Red List assessment would now be justified. From 20 to 24 April 2012, Urs visited all four sites in Andalucía and met with colleagues from the EU Life+ Project "Iberlynce", who are responsible for most of the conservation activities and the monitoring, in order to gain first-hand information on the progress of the conservation of the Iberian lynx and the present status of the species.

The recovery plan for the Iberian lynx bases on three pillars: (1) stabilisation and increase of the Andújar and Doñana population, (2) a conservation breeding programme, and (3) creation of further populations through reintroduction. All parts of the programme are developing well and have seen encouraging progress in recent years.

The increase of the Andújar-Cardena population was prominent and has added most to the increase of the total population of the Iberian lynx. A total of 214 lynx were counted in 2011, of which 90 were considered mature animals. All numbers refer to lynx individually identified by means of camera trapping, hence to minimum estimates. Until recently, the Andújar-Cardena population was split into two areas, but in the past two years, the gap between the two sub-populations was closed, and the area settled by resident reproducing females is now continuous.

The Doñana population has recently increased as well, from 18 mature lynx in 2002 to 32 in 2011, though much later than and not as strong as the Andújar-Cardena population. The reason for the slow increase was the low rabbit density and possibly an inbreeding problem. Three males and one female from Andújar were released in Doñana, and this seems to have boosted the populations, but further data are needed for a definite assessment.



# Captive breeding and reintroduction of Iberian lynx

Visit to Andalucía, Spain, 20-24 April 2012



The captive breeding programme started in 2003/04 with 1 male and 4 female Iberian lynx in the Acebuche Centre. Now, the programme includes a total of 77 mature lynx (40 males, 37 females) in 4 centres. 2012 was so far the most successful breeding year, with a total of 59 cubs born from 20 females. 45 were still alive end of April: 10 in Acebuche, 15 in Olivilla (both Andalucía), 3 in Granadilla (Extremadura), and 17 in Silves (Portugal). The increase of the captive population was so swift that the programme urgently needs to increase the capacity, both for holding animals in captivity and for reintroduction sites to release the yearlings. The (genetic) goals set for the conservation breeding programme will soon be reached.

Fighting between cubs at an age of about 6 weeks (an observation that horrified the captive breeding team in Acebuche some years ago) is still observed, but the keepers now only intervene if the mother is not handling the fight properly, as any human interference might hamper the socialisation of the cubs. The socialisation phase and the entire ontogenesis is handled with no or a minimum of interactions with humans, in order to prepare the cubs for living in the wild. They are regularly fed with live rabbits and infrequently with birds to learn hunting. Before cubs are brought for soft or hard release to the reintroduction sites, they are taken out of the mother's pen and trained in special larger enclosures. However, the observations so far confirm that the key to successful re-wilding is the correct socialisation with conspecifics.

To create new sub-populations of the Iberian lynx, two reintroduction sites in the Sierra Morena with a sufficient density of rabbits and within dispersal distance of the Andújar-Cardena population were selected: Guadalmellato to the south-west and Guarrizas to the east. In both areas, reintroduction started in 2009/10. 18 lynx have been released to the two sites from 2009 to 2011 (12 in Guadal-

mellato and 6 in Guarrizas). 15 lynx were wild-caught animals from the Andújar-Cardena population, 1 female came from the Doñana population and in 2011, and the first 2 lynx from the captive breeding programme were released. Early 2012, an additional 14 captive-born lynx were released in the two reintroduction areas. In the beginning, the lynx were soft-released, that is they were put into an acclimatisation enclosure (see photo above). Now, with an increasing number of animals released and with resident animals already present in the area, hard release is used, too. Hard-release protocols would considerably reduce the costs for reintroductions. 11 wild-born cubs were already recorded in Guadalmellato. In spring 2012, the first female born in captivity and released in Guarrizas gave birth to four cubs.



# Regional Conservation Strategy for cheetah and African wild dog in North, Central and West Africa

Parc National du W, Niger, 29 January to 3 February 2012



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In late January/early February 2012 the third and last conservation planning workshop for cheetahs and wild dogs in Africa was held in Niger. This workshop is part of a series aimed at developing accurate maps of populations of both species and establishing regional conservation strategies to encompass their entire range. The last workshop in this series covered North, Central and West Africa and representatives from Algeria, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Egypt, Gabon, Libya, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, and Togo participated. The workshop was funded by the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) and the Howard G. Buffett Foundation. Delegates included representatives from the wildlife authorities of each country; species biologists from within the region; and international experts, including chairs of the IUCN/SSC Cat and Canid Specialist Groups.

Cheetahs are classified as vulnerable by IUCN and are thought to be declining across their range. They occur at much lower densities than most of the other large cats, ranging between 10-30% of the densities of lions, leopards, tigers and jaguars in prime habitat. This means that the areas they need for their conservation are 300-1,000% the size of the areas of these other large cats. Most existing protected areas are not large enough to ensure the long term survival of cheetah, and instead their conservation will require a landscape approach of protected and unprotected habitat networks. This requires land use planning on a scale that has rarely been seen before in conservation. Wild dogs, occur at similar densities to cheetah, face similar threats and hence have similar conservation requirements, and so the species were paired in this process to increase leverage and hence the likelihood of implementation of conservation measures to protect both species.

The workshop started with a presentation of the two species and the process of strategic conservation planning. The participants then updated the distribution maps and identified threats for the different populations. The output was a map with resident, possible, connecting and unknown population status. The maps demonstrated what we suspected was the case, cheetah and wild dog populations are extremely low in numbers.

The mapping exercise was feeding into a problem analysis. The problems were then addressed with 8 objectives, a series of results to address the objectives and a number of activities to meet each result.



# National Action Plan for cheetah and wild dog in Niger

Parc National du W, Niger, 29 January to 3 February 2012



Since wildlife conservation policy is formulated, authorized and enforced at the national level, it is critical that conservation planning be enacted at this level. The development of national plans, through national workshops, is thus a vital component of the regional conservation planning process. Each regional workshop must therefore be followed by national workshops in each of the range countries to develop their own national action plans based upon the regional strategy. We use the opportunity of the regional workshop in Niger to organise a national workshop right afterwards for the host country. Representatives from the most important stakeholder groups from across the country participated. Regional participants were invited as observers to motivate them to organise a national workshop in their own country. First the outcome of the regional workshop was presented, including the maps. The participants then had the task to refine these maps and contribute their observations. Cheetah and wild dog have been protected since 1998. Cheetah is today only confirmed in protected areas such as Réserve de l'Air et du Ténéré, Parc Régional du W, et Tadress. Cheetah have been more closely observed in the Parc Régional du W since 2004. In the peak year of 2009, a total of 23 individuals have been observed. During the other years, the numbers varied between 0 and 11. More recently cheetahs have been observed in Massif de Termit. A male was caught in a camera trap and two females have been observed with cubs.

The wild dog, although also protected, has been victim of an elimination campaign after the independence of the country. There are only very few observations. In 2008 five animals have observed in the Parc Régional du W.

As important threats for the two species the participants named armed conflicts, restricted access to certain areas of the country, conflicts with livestock owners, prey loss and the very small size of the remain-

ing populations. The lack of capacity and knowledge were identified as obstacles on the way to conservation of the species.

The participants retained the 8 objectives from the regional strategy on the topics capacity development, knowledge, information and sensitisation, policy and legislation, coexistence, utilisation, habitat management and coordination and implementation. They adjusted results and activities to the needs of Niger. For each activity responsible organisations/individuals for the implementation as well as a time frame was added. The process includes regional coordinators to help with the implementation of the regional strategy and the development of National Action Plans. In southern Africa and in East Africa two coordinators have been working since the initial workshops and a lot of progress has been made. It can be followed on [www.cheetahand-wilddog.org](http://www.cheetahand-wilddog.org).



# 2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the IUCN/SSC Species Conservation Planning Sub-Committee

Abu Dhabi, U.A.E., 20 – 23 February 2012



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Prior to the Chairs' meeting all SSC Sub-committees met for two days. We attended the second meeting of the Species Conservation Planning Sub-committee. During the first morning the group reviewed planning events that have taken place since the last meeting. There was a quite a variety of planning events presented, including trees, reptiles, birds and mammals. A new version of the guidelines for planning is needed to include now all the experience. It was stressed that the identification and prioritisation of threats is really crucial to the whole process, there has to be more emphasize on this in the 2nd edition. The new guidelines also need to address the different standards IUCN is supporting. A need for better cooperation with the Regional

Offices of IUCN was expressed as they often also engage in planning events without informing the Specialist Groups.

In a next agenda item we discussed the endorsement process of species plans and how the group could facilitate this process. The group took the task to each review a plan and come up with evaluation criteria. On the third day we produced a short questionnaire to guide the process that needs now be tested and further developed. It was suggested that species planning should be included in the ToR of the Chairs and in the future maybe also appoint a planning focal point in each Specialist Group as with the Red List.

We spent a fair amount of the second day on virtual tools. Caroline Lees from CBSG gave a report on their evaluation of tools allowing to work in an interactive space where everyone sees documents, can edit them, that have a whiteboard, etc. CBSG started out with using free software (Google Sites and Viev), but then started to look at professional packages, they wanted something where they could plan, facilitate and post planning information. They didn't find something that did all these things but the best solution was Adobe Connect (costs \$600 / year – high end package would be \$23,000 USD). Microsoft Roundtable was also investigated but not very good and required fast internet connection. The members of the Sub-Committee would like to see SSC /Global Species Programme invest in this type of technology. There was discussion of whether this type of technology could be sought through project funding but it was thought that it would be better centralized through the SSC. During the Chairs' meeting we made a demonstration of Adobe Connect in a workshop. We then also prepared the presentation of the sub-committees work during the Chairs' meeting and concluded with a review of activities in prospect and the representation at the World Conservation Congress in South Korea in fall 2012.



# Road map for the conservation of cats in Iran

Participatory workshop from 12–14 May 2012, Sari, I. R. Iran



Following the “Cats in Iran” workshop in November 2011 (see p. 6) we have been asked by the Department of Environment DoE to review all cat activities and to develop an integrated plan for cat conservation before continuing implementing e.g. the Cheetah Action Plan or to develop species-specific action plans as intended for the Persian leopard. We suggested to the DoE to first develop a guiding Road Map for cat conservation and management with the participation of DoE biodiversity and wildlife experts and staff, scientists from universities interested in wildlife research, and representatives from national and international NGOs working in cat conservation in Iran. Such a Road Map should, for all Iranian cat species including the two extinct ones, define standards, priorities, and ways of collaboration between Iranian institutions and with international partners for monitoring, research, and conservation actions (including reintroduction projects).

The workshop to develop such a Road Map took place in May in Sari at the shore of the Caspian Sea. More or less the same participants as in the Cats in Iran workshop were present. After an introduction to the workshop and the idea of the Road Map during the first morning participants identified gaps in knowledge for each species. For each step in the process we had prepared a form to facilitate the compilation of a report at the end. In the afternoon the participants had to prioritise species, topics and regions. Especially for the leopard the discussions in the working group were very lively and continued in the evening. At the end of the first day the progress on the first two topics were reviewed.

We started each half day with a presentation. We heard about the latest results of the cheetah monitoring that took place during the winter on a large scale for the first time, recommendations for captive breeding, distribution modelling in leopards and some results of a leopard study in Mazandaran province.

On the second day participants worked in six working groups on survey and monitoring principles, guidelines and standards for conservation, data management and sharing, principles for cooperation between GOs, NGOs and scientists, communication and awareness building, and capacity development and training. On the third day the results from the working groups were presented and discussed. The Road Map will be reviewed by the DoE and also two external reviewers. After the workshop we had the opportunity to visit Golestan National Park and were invited to stay overnight in the Turkmen Ecolodge at the border of the park. We ended our trip to Iran with a visit at Karaj University and a final discussion with Dr. Fazel and his team from DoE and Karaj University.



# Cat Conservation Course 2012

Switzerland, March 2012



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The IUCN/SSC Cat Specialist Group, in collaboration with KORA (Coordinated Carnivore Research and Conservation Projects), and thanks to financial support from the Wild Cat Club, offers a training for the conservation and monitoring of wild cats. The course in Switzerland is open to a small number of hand-selected post-graduate candidates who are already integrated in felid research and conservation. Thanks to additional support from USITAWINetwork, the Balkan Lynx Recovery Programme with funding from the MAVA foundation and family and friends hosting three of the candidates this time six candidates from Nepal, Tadjikistan, Russia, Iran, Kosovo and Montenegro joined the

Cat Specialist Group and its hosting organisation KORA in March 2012 in Switzerland for a three weeks training course. The course offered an intensive training in theoretical approaches, strategic concepts and practical field applications for the conservation and management of wild cat populations, with special reference to monitoring and conservation of Eurasian lynx, divided into five distinct but interrelated sections, which offered a tailor-made learning environment to meet the requirements and professional needs of the participants:

- (1) *Monitoring*: large, medium and small scale monitoring and respective methods, monitoring of prey and specifically of ungulates;
  - (2) *Conservation and Recovery of Cat Populations*: reintroduction, genetic and health problems in small populations, human-dimension, conservation networks;
  - (3) *Conservation Planning and Implementation of Conservation Action*: baseline surveys, status reports, steps in conservation planning, implementation and monitoring of plans;
  - (4) *Practical training and individual learning*: camera trapping, life trapping, kill identification, trapping devices, handling of cats, telemetry, compiling and storage of field data, proposals, presentations, scientific papers.
  - (5) *Excursions* to field projects in different parts of Switzerland and to conservation relevant institutions: roe-deer capturing in the Alps, camera trapping in the Jura Mountains, visits at the Federal Office of Environment, Wildlife Conservation Section, and the Centre of Fish and Wildlife Health, Vetsuisse Faculty, University of Bern.
- At the end of the course the participants presented their countries and their work during a social event with sponsors and the course teachers.







**Second lynx radio-tagged in Macedonia.** In early 2012 the Macedonian lynx team started the winter field activities for the third capture season. From two box-traps pre-viously set in PA Jasen only one worked while the other was inaccessible and deactivated due to heavy snowfall. Close communication with the Balkan lynx monitoring members from Kicevo area resulted in regular reports of lynx being observed in the area. The setting of two box-traps there was easily implemented gladly to the joint efforts of our team, monitoring members and volunteers. The first box-trap was set and activated on 4 March. Nearly 12 hours after the activation of the box-trap, our hopes and wishes became real when at 03:00h in the morning of 5 March the alarms went on and we were informed by the network members that a “young” lynx individual was trapped. Following the protocol, the lynx was first tranquilized and taken out of the box-trap for further examination. Then the male lynx was fitted with a GPS/GSM collar which allows following the tagged individual after release. Since then, Riste ranged over an area of so far 402 km<sup>2</sup>. This project is possible thanks to financial support from the Swiss National Science Foundation and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation in the frame of SCOPES.

**More photographs of Balkan lynx in Albania.** PPNEA, in the frame of the SCOPES project, is conducting a wildlife monitoring session using camera trapping methodology from October 2011 until June 2012. During October-December 2011 the Eastern Albanian Alps (Valbona valley) were monitored with a total of 23 cameras working for more than 2 months. In the period January-June 2012 four additional geographical regions were monitored, namely Puka-Mirdita, Deja-Balgjaj, Martanesh-Bardhet and Germenj-Shelegure with a total of 34 cameras set in the field. The greatest achievement of the current

monitoring session was that two more photos of Balkan lynx, living in the northern mountainous region of Albania were taken: the first picture on 28 March 2012 at 08:33h and the second picture on 12 May at 01:11h. Since a first picture of a Balkan lynx in Albania was taken on 26 March 2011 (see activity report 2010/2011) in the same area, there are hopes now that a small lynx population still survives. In addition to Balkan lynx, the monitoring session continues to provide valuable information on the presence of other species in Albania. The team took photos of brown bear, wolf, wildcat, badger, marten, red fox, hedgehog, red squirrel, wild boar, brown hare and roe deer.





### Cat News

In 2011 and 2012 (until mid-year) we have published the regular issues Cat News 55 and 56 and Special Issue No 7 on the outcomes of a National Action Plan workshop for the jaguar in Brazil (see activity report 2008/09).

### Digital Cat Library

We have newly integrated again over 1,000 publications into the Digital Cat Library DCL in 7 uploads. These frequent updates are possible thanks to the support by Panthera. DCL hosts currently 8,516 reports and publications relevant to cat conservation is constantly growing also thanks to contributions from our members and friends.

### Wild Cat Club



### Small Cat Action Fund (SCAF)

SCAF is a grants programme established by Panthera with the advice of the IUCN Cat Specialist Group. The fund is supporting in situ conservation and research activities on the smaller cat species. During 2011 and 2012 (mid-year), we have reviewed 18 proposals.

### Cat Advisory Council of Panthera

The Panthera Cat Advisory Council harnesses the thinking, experience, and charisma of some of the best minds in the field of cat research and conservation in order to help steer Panthera's scientific initiatives. In September 2011, we have participated in the second meeting in Brazil.

The Wild Cat Club has been created in spring 2009 to support the Cat Specialist Group financially and by doing so provide a valuable contribution to help the organisation in its engagement for cat conservation. The Wild Cat Club has supported the Cat Conservation Course, the production of Special Issues of Cat News, and our engagement in Iran.

In August 2011, we made a trip with the Wild Cat Club members to Nordens Ark in southern Sweden, a zoo with several endangered cat species. We were guided by Leif Blomqvist and zoo staff and were able to see behind the bars and learn a lot about their work with endangered species way beyond cats.

In October 2011 we held the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual assembly where we reported on the activities during the past 12 months and proposed on how to best invest WCC support during the next year.

## Staff and ...

We wish to thank all the dedicated colleagues and members of the Cat Specialist Group for their hard work during the reporting periode 2011/2012. Working very closely with the Cat Specialist Group Co-chairs were Manuela von Arx (Assistant to the Chair), Anna Huber (book keeping), Kristin Nowell (Focal Point of the Cat SG Red List Authority), Tabea Lanz (intern): 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 2011/2012: Fridolin Zimmermann and Andreas Ryser (Balkan lynx project), Alex Sliwa (Sochi leopard reintroduction, Cats in Iran), Yves Tschumper and Ursula Kurt (Digital Cat Library), Keith Richmond, Sultana Bashir, Brian Bertam and Javier Pereira (associate editors Cat News), the entire KORA Team (Cat Conservation Course). We would also like to thank the many colleagues who have contributed to the website, Cat News and the Digital Cat Library. Alex Sliwa has generously donated a lot of his 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, Wild Cat Club, Panthera, Howard Buffet Foundation, MAVA Foundation, Karl Mayer Foundation, Mohamed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund, Environment Agency - Abu Dhabi, Departement of Environment I.R. Iran, Swiss National Science Foundation together with the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, Zoo Leipzig, Junta de Andalucía, Forestry Bureau of the Taiwan Council of Agriculture, USITAWI Network Club Bern Zytglogge, Innflow AG, Stämpfli Publikationen AG, and especially Patrick Meier, Peter Stämpfli, Jean-Claude and Annemarie Tschumper and Karen and Jürg Tschofen.

