# activity report

2015/2016

IUCN SSC

SPECIES SURVIVAL COMMISSION

CAT SPECIALIST GROUP

# 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 wildlife managers 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 and implementation of conservation action;
- to develop capacity in felid conservation;
- to provide services to members and partners and outreach;
- to assure the financial resources for the Cat Specialist Group.

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

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

Cover photo: Fishing cat (Photo A. Sliwa)

# activity report 2015/16: contents

# IUCN Species Survival Commission Leaders' Meeting

**Abu Dhabi, UAE, 15-18 September 2015**

04

We attended the Third Leaders' Meeting of the IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC) that was held in Abu Dhabi, 15–18 September 2015. The meeting was supported by the overwhelming generosity of Environment Agency - Abu Dhabi (EAD), and was a unique and invaluable opportunity for the leadership of the SSC to meet and to network, to forge new collaborations and build on existing ones, to learn new things and to pass experience and knowledge on. This is the third time that EAD has supported a meeting of the leadership of the SSC in Abu Dhabi, in the United Arab Emirates. The first such meeting took place in February 2008; the second was held in February 2012. Each of these meetings was deemed to have been a great success, and that was also the overwhelming view of the participants in the 3rd meeting. All those present were united in expressing their sincere thanks to EAD Secretary General HE Razan Khalifa Al Mubarak, whose vision and commitment to the SSC has made these meetings possible.

As well as building a new sense of teamwork and vision for the SSC leadership, the objectives were:

- To allow the SSC leaders to get to know each other better and to develop new collaborations;
- To develop partnerships with IUCN Commissions, Programmes, Regional Offices, Members and Partners;
- To assess the effectiveness of SSC's actions on biodiversity conservation and consider how this might be increased;
- To develop major new initiatives to address critical conservation issues;
- To learn about new products and tools;
- To have an opportunity to consult on developing policies, guidelines and standards;
- To complete plans for SSC's work in 2017-2020;
- To celebrate the volunteerism of the Chairs, to acknowledge their enormous continued contribution to global species conservation and to inspire and encourage them in their continued contribution to the vital work of species conservation;
- To use the opportunity to network!

Source: IUCN Species Survival Commission Leaders' Meeting, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, 15–18 September 2015 Meeting report, 70 pp.

# Multi-species database workshop

**1-2 December 2015, Nairobi, Kenya**


© P. Meier



Members of the IUCN/SSC African Elephant SG, the Antelope SG and the Cat SG met in Nairobi in December 2015 to discuss a multi-species database MSD with the following Vision and Objectives:

**Vision**

A Multi-Species Database featuring current range maps and the latest data on the distribution and abundance of the African elephant, lion, leopard, cheetah, and African buffalo, embedded within a user-friendly interface that facilitates use for conservation, research, and education purposes.

**Objectives**

1. Enhance the African Elephant Database to provide a platform for inputting, storing, analyzing, and presenting lion, leopard, cheetah and African buffalo data;
2. Facilitate collaboration among experts of the different species to design accurate, meaningful, innovative, and applicable ways of gathering, capturing, analyzing, and presenting relevant data;
3. Modify the African Elephant Database to present a detailed map with range for all species;
4. Explore the potential to incorporate additional layers for integrated, comprehensive, and/or long-term conservation planning purposes and, in due course, to expand the platform with global coverage.
5. Consult and collaborate with range State governments and wildlife authorities on the need to secure data and information on a regular basis for consolidation in the MSD.

The African Lion Database ALD originated in response to the CITES Periodic Review of the African lion, catalysing existing interest in a comprehensive monitoring effort for the species. The ALD is currently hosted by IGF and would be transitioned to a Multi-Species Database and technically overseen and governed through the IUCN/SSC Cat SG. It would also include leopard and cheetah. The African Buffalo Database ABD was generated to update the last known continental abundance and distribution data, published in 1998, for a review chapter on African buffalo.

Measuring the success of implemented protection and conservation activities requires robust and independent monitoring. Such efforts are critical in improving the understanding of the status, and they should be viewed in the continental context to enhance their usefulness to policy-makers. As the repository of survey data, the MSD can contribute to understanding data across spatial and temporal scales.

# Global Mammal Assessment – update
**2014-16**


© A. Sliwa

06

With the second and third upload in November 2015 and June 2016, respectively, another 18 cat species have been reassessed and updated on the IUCN Red List. With these three updates, we have reassessed 30 cat species:
24 species stayed in the same category, 4 have been down-listed (Geoffroy's cat, Iberian lynx, marbled cat, rusty-spotted cat), and 2 have been up-listed (leopard and African golden cat).
Of the 30 species reassessed:
- 5 species are classified as *Endangered* (Iberian lynx, tiger, flat-headed cat, Andean cat, Borneo bay cat);

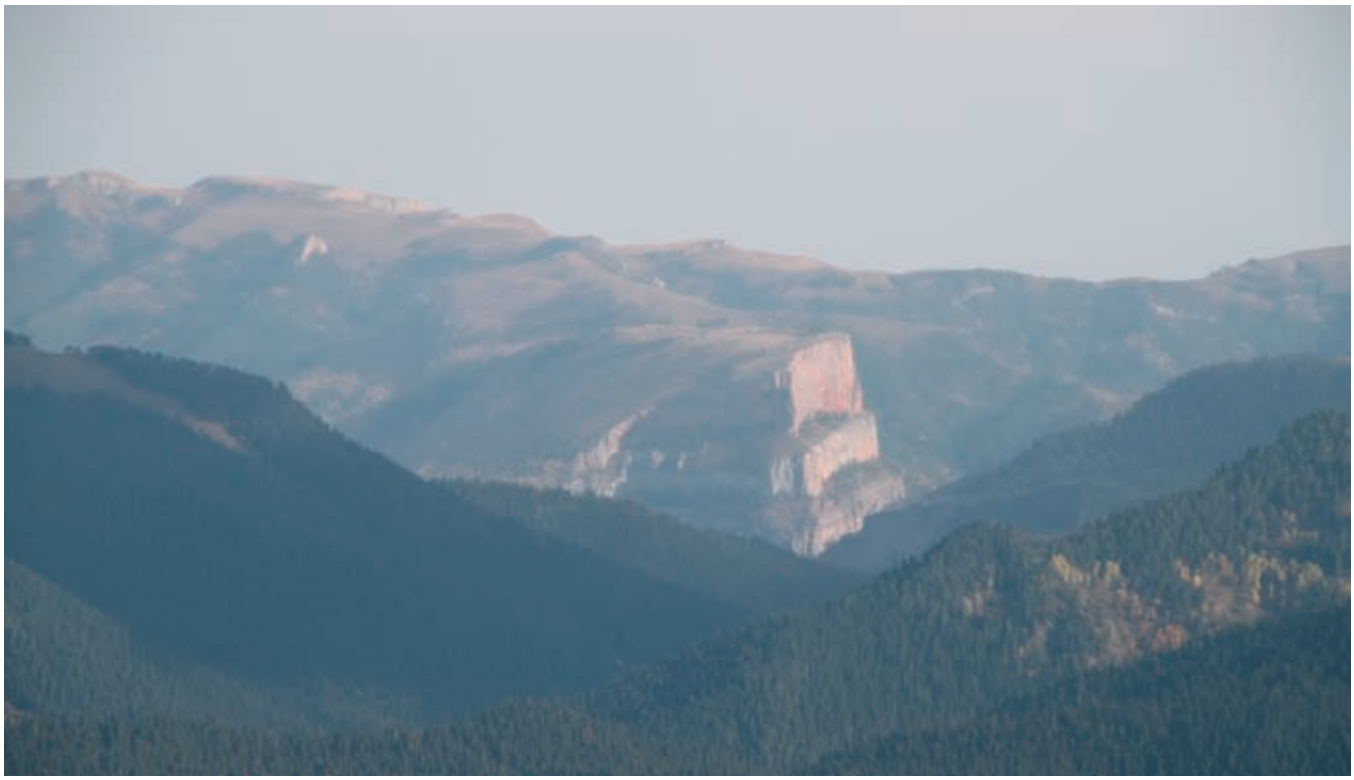

© P. Meier

- 9 as *Vulnerable* (African golden cat, guigña, lion, cheetah, Chinese mountain cat, Sunda clouded leopard, mainland clouded leopard, black-footed cat, and leopard);
- 6 as *Near Threatened* (Pallas's cat, pampas cat, margay, Asiatic golden cat, marbled cat, rusty-spotted cat);
- 10 as *Least Concern* (wildcat, Geoffroy's cat, serval, Eurasian lynx, Canada lynx, bobcat, jaguarondi, ocelot, puma, leopard cat).

The reassessments have brought many challenges for many species, and down-listing is not always a consequence of improved conservation status, but of better information.
Wide ranging species such as the leopard are difficult to categorise as a single species. Leopards are widely distributed across Africa and Asia, but populations have become reduced and isolated, and they are now extirpated from large portions of their historic range.
The down-listing of the rusty-spotted cat is a consequence of better information and not of an improved conservation status. The rusty-spotted cat was earlier believed to be restricted to southern India and Sri Lanka, but recent photographic records show its presence across India north to the Terai Arc, and in Bardia National Park, Nepal, bordering India.
On the other hand, the down-listing of the Iberian lynx is a consequence of intensive recovery efforts of predator, prey and habitat on the Iberian Peninsula over the past decade. In 2002, only 94 Iberian lynx (52 mature individuals) had survived in the last two nuclei in Doñana National Park and in the Andújar region in the Sierra Morena. Only in 2005, the first Iberian lynx was born in captivity. In 2014, 327 lynx (189 mature individuals) roamed again in the two remnant and two reintroduced populations in Andalucía, and in newly founded populations in Castilla-La Mancha, Extremadura and Portugal.

# Reintroduction project of the Persian leopard in the Caucasus

**2015/16**



07

In 2012, IUCN/SSC and EAZA signed a MoU with the Russian Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment to cooperate in the reintroduction of the Persian leopard in the Caucasian Biosphere Reserve in the western Greater Caucasus east of Sochi. As wild-born Persian leopards are hardly available, the plan is to breed, train and release leopards in a special breeding facility. An international group of experts is advising the Russian project team and the partner institutions in the different aspects of the project. The group consists of Marianne Hartmann, an ethologist expert in cats in captivity, Alexander Sliwa, EAZA Felid TAG chair, José Dias Ferreira, EAZA Persian Leopard EEP coordinator, and Urs Breitenmoser, Cat SG co-chair. The group upheld the bimensal skype calls with the Sochi Breeding Centre SCB during which the SBC staff have the opportunity to receive professional advice on all issues related to leopard husbandry.

The goals for the Persian Leopard EEP are:

- To increase the captive population to 200 leopards;
- To increase the genetic composition of the population by introducing new founders. The EEP population has only 9 founders;
- To improve the "quality" of individual leopards through improving management and holding facilities in different participating zoos. With the view to provide subadult leopards for training and release. The EEP/ISB is working on a Husbandry Questionnaire to be sent to all institutions keeping Persian leopards in order to get a global view on this issue and then act.

We have developed a project proposal that includes a.o. the Objective "To develop specific guidelines and standards for key conservation activities and tasks, e.g. (1) for surveys and monitoring of leopards and important prey species, (2) for managing a source group of Persian leopards in zoos and specific breeding centres for the reintroductions, and (3) for the training and release of animals and post-release monitoring." The project is funded by the Fondation Segré.

A first model enclosure has been developed in Lisbon Zoo. The behaviour of the leopards is being observed and documented with video. 10 new facilities have joined the EEP since 2014. In August 2015, the EEP sent male Simbad (born in 2013) to SBC and received male Grom (born in 2013), gaining with this transfer 2 potential founders. Grom's parents are both wildborn animals from Turkmenistan and Iran, respectively.To date 13 cubs have been born in the SCB. In July 2016, the first three leopards have been released into the Caucasus region.

# Conflict in Yemen threatens Arabian leopard

**Spring 2016**




The Arabian leopard *Panthera pardus nimr* is the smallest of all leopard subspecies, and threatened with extinction. The assessment in the IUCN Red List is Critically Endangered. The leopard has disappeared from the entire Arabian Peninsula with the exception of the south. A small population persists in southern Oman, and an unknown number of leopards live in Yemen and Saudi-Arabia. The wild prey abundance is low, and leopards are forced to prey upon livestock, leading to conflicts and persecution.

The regional breeding programme with the aim to conserve the genome is in operation since 1999. The latest published version of the studbook from 2011 listed 82 individuals, 46 males, 33 females and 3 unsexed, all held on the Arabian Peninsula. The captive population hence corresponds to 30-50% of the total population! However, the leopards held in captivity in Yemen are not yet integrated into the breeding programme. The situation of the Arabian leopard in the Yemen in the wild as well as in captivity was known to be critical for a long time. But the situation worsened when in early 2015 tensions escalated into a civil war. The city of Taiz got caught between the lines and countless inhabitants have lost their homes or even their life. Just outside the city lies Taiz Zoo. With the outbreak of the conflict, the number of visitors dwindled and the local government could no longer provide sufficient funding. By early 2016, the animals received less than a quarter of their daily food requirements. Six leopards (and many more individuals of other species) have succumbed to starvation. The Taiz leopard group is highly important for the conservation of the genetic diversity of the Arabian leopard, as it seems to comprise many wild caught animals or F1 offspring.

As of 15 February 2016, 14 males and 12 female leopards still survive in Taiz zoo, some cannibalising on their dead peers. On the other hand there were also cubs born in 2016.

What happens in Yemen is a tragedy for the people, but also a catastrophe for the Arabian leopard, with possible implications going far beyond the fate of the individuals at Taiz Zoo. The IUCN/SSC Cat Specialist Group tries to help mitigating the immediate crisis, but also to remind the range countries and the international conservation community about the critical situation of the Arabian leopard. If we lose the population in Yemen, we will lose the subspecies. Our concerns and approach is compiled in the "Arabian Leopard Manifesto" (see Cat News 63). Any attempt to save the Arabian leopard from extinction will require stern cooperation among the conservation organisations in Yemen, but also a clear commitment of all range countries and the support from the international conservation community.




The critical status of the Balkan lynx *Lynx lynx balcanicus* syn. martinoi has been known since the 1990s but taking action was difficult due to the political situation in its range countries at that time. In order to launch a recovery programme, preparatory workshops were hold in 2005 in Albania and Macedonia. Subsequently, the "Balkan Lynx Recovery Programme BLRP" was founded in 2006 and has since then been jointly implemented by EuroNatur Foundation, KORA (Carnivore Ecology and Wildlife Management), IUCN/SSC Cat Specialist Group, MES (Macedonian Ecological Society), and PPNEA (Society for the Protection and Preservation of Natural Environment in Albania). In 2013, the BLRP expanded its activities to Kosovo in co-operation with NGOs Finch and ERA (Environmentally Responsible Action group) and to Montenegro in co-operation with CZIP (Center for Protection and Research of Birds of Montenegro). Since its beginning, the Balkan Lynx Recovery Programme has been financially supported by the MAVA Foundation, Switzerland.

In the light of the 10th year anniversary of the Balkan Lynx Recovery Programme, an International Symposium was organised on 21-22 October 2015 in Dajti National Park, Albania. The purpose of the Symposium was to bring together experts from Albania, Montenegro, Macedonia, Kosovo and Greece in order to inform on the current status of the Balkan lynx and the BLRP, to assess the implementation of the strategy for the conservation and recovery of the critically endangered Balkan lynx (published by the Bern Convention and endorsed by the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention) and to agree on future conservation actions.

The Symposium was attended by 74 participants. The programme was divided into four sessions: (1) Where are we - Status of the Balkan lynx and the Balkan Recovery Programme; (2) International framework; (3) Managing the recovery of the Balkan lynx, and (4) What are we aiming for – a spatially explicit conservation strategy for the Balkan lynx.

The Balkan lynx with an estimated 19-36 mature individuals is Critically Endangered according to IUCN Red List standards and its status is therefore most alarming. The efforts of the BLRP over the past years have helped to stabilise the core population. But each additional threat could push the Balkan lynx over the edge to extinction, and on the other hand, the longer the population remains in the present bottleneck situation, the higher the risk of loss of genetic diversity through genetic drift.

# Workshop on rehabilitation and reintroduction of carnivores

**25-27 November 2015, Moscow, Russia**

© M. Dupuis



The A.N. Severtsov Institute of Ecology and Evolution together with the Russian Theriological Society RAS and the Permanent Expedition of RAS for the study of Russian Red Data Book animals and other key animals of the Russian fauna have organised an international workshop in Moscow on rehabilitation and reintroduction of large carnivore in November 2015.

We gave a presentation on demographic and genetic considerations in cat reintroduction projects. The purpose of a reintroduction is to create a free-living, self-sustaining population. The goal is to achieve demographic and genetic viability, but "population viability" is a theoretical concept that cannot directly be measured in the field, but obviously depend on (1) the number and relatedness of animals released, and (2) on the population growth. Experience with the reintroduction of Eurasian lynx demonstrated that a too small funder group and slow population growth may lead to a high degree of inbreeding after several generations. However, cat reintroduction project most often have to get along with small numbers of founder animals, especially for large cats or if captive stock is used, which hampers the swift establishment of a population and increases the risk of inbreeding. Hence it is important to (1) project the desired population goals, (2) assure the capture/translocation or breeding capacity to provide the animals needed, (3) optimise the composition of the pairs/groups of cats released, (4) to monitor the demographic/genetic status of the growing population, and (5) to organise the reintroduction project as a long-term adaptive process in order to reach the population goals. As there are still a very limited number of well-documented long-term cat reintroduction projects, we base our recommendations on observations mainly form Eurasian lynx. During the *initial phase* of a cat reintroduction, it is important that a number of unrelated animals become resident and start breeding immediately. The land tenure system and social system of the species needs to be considered when the first animals are released. During the population *increase phase*, a sufficient number of animals must be available to be released to prevent inbreeding at this early stage. New releases should be adaptive, hence based on the findings from the demographic and genetic monitoring. During the consolidation and population expansion phase, the genetic monitoring must be continued and further animals have to be released to prevent inbreeding and/or to reach the genetic goals. The population may now expand into multi-use areas, making management of conflicts with humans necessary.


© M. Dupuis

# Workshop of the African Lion Working Group

**21-23 March 2016, Kasane, Botswana**


© P. Meier



The African Lion Working Group ALWG organised a 3-day workshop in Kasane, Botswana, in March 2016, to discuss urgent lion conservation issues. The ALWG is an advisory group and it is largely a communication forum which is its strength. Lions are on the global conscience more than ever before. Ahead of the workshop members agreed on seven main questions to discuss:

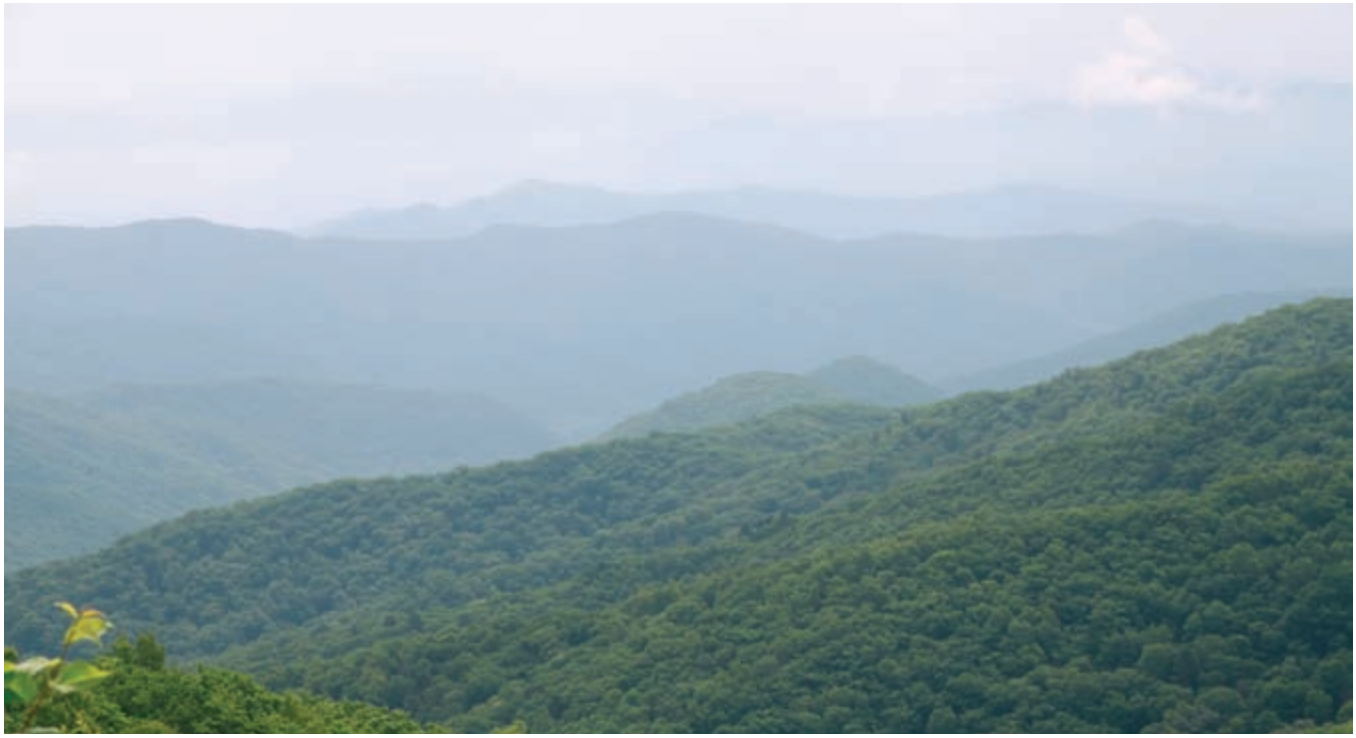
1) What are the priority landscapes for lions?
2) How many lions do we need?
3) How do we address encroachment of lion habitat, especially Protected Areas?
4) How do we best achieve human-lion coexistence in the face of growing human populations?
5) How do we address the bushmeat trade?
6) How do we find realistic alternatives to income from trophy hunting (as opposed to discussing whether hunting is good or bad)
7) How do we improve the funding and management of lion conservation efforts?

PA management, prey restoration and conflict management are still seen as crucial, both for core range, connecting range and the matrix. Tolerance can be increased, and in some cases livestock make a substantial contribution to lion diet and increase carrying capacity, in such cases mitigation must be accompanied by prey recovery. In all cases, ecological and social carrying capacity must be studied at system level, and should include other resources than food. Caution should be taken to safeguard lions against rogue individuals who can easily impact populations adversely even where communities are overall positive – indiscriminate killing is not a democratic activity. In regard to encroachment the scale is important. To date, human encroachment in east Africa at less than 2% per annum has had little impact on national parks. However this is changing with illegal and even legal encroachment taking over. Tanzania has the fourth fastest human population growth in the world, but still has the largest lion population. Lion habitat is exposed to encroachment; the official figure is 200,000 hectares per annum (FAO).

The consequence of underfunding protected areas is that parks are under-stocked with wildlife. Parks in West Africa receive no more than 10,000 tourists annually due to factors like civil war and Ebola virus. Côte d'Ivoire lost 90% of their wildlife after the banning of trophy hunting as hunting areas act as buffers around national parks, which prevent human encroachment. Finally the poisoning of lions was discussed, which is a growing concern even in Botswana.

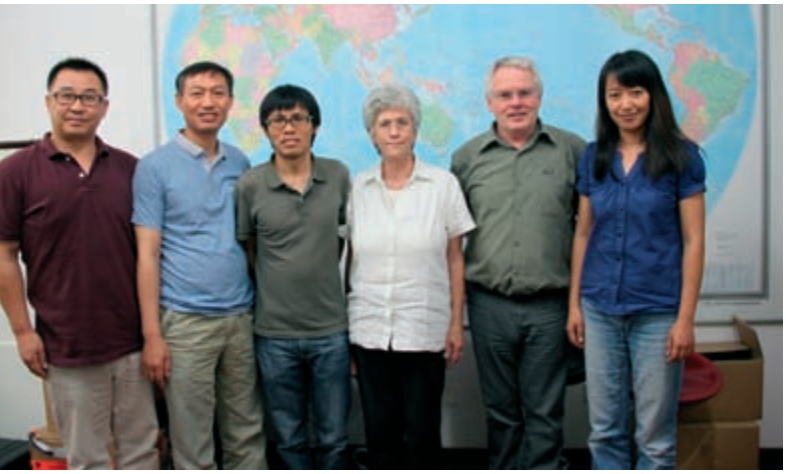
# Status of Amur leopard and Siberian tiger in China

**28 June to 4 July 2016, China**





We have, from 28 June to 4 July 2016, visited the Eco Group of Prof Janpin Ge at Beijing Normal University. The visit and the field trip were organised by Cat SG member Limin Feng, associate professor at the Eco Group. On 29 June, we had a full-day meeting with Prof Ge and his senior staff. On 30 June morning, we gave presentations to the students of the Eco Group, and in the afternoon, we met with the Cat SG members from Beijing. The meeting with our Cat SG colleagues revealed that there are quite some activities on cats ongoing in China. Since we have organised the cat workshop at the SCB meeting in Beijing in 2009 and published "Cats in China" in fall 2010, cat work has stretched out beyond tiger and snow leopard. Camera trapping, although mostly done for the large cats and other charismatic mammals, has produced by-catch records for many of the smaller cat species and so triggered interest. There are now, in addition to the tiger and snow leopard work, specific projects on leopard, Chinese mountain cat, Pallas's cat, Asiatic golden cat, and Eurasian lynx, and opportunistic sampling of records on the other cats in China (clouded leopard, marbled cat, wildcat, leopard cat, and jungle cat). All this is mainly thanks to camera trapping. The Eco Group of BNU alone maintains 2500 camera traps for cat projects year-round, and they are just about to purchase another 3000! Together with all other institutions and survey projects, e.g. on giant panda, there must be an incredible number of camera traps out in the field that can capture valuable data on cat distribution, abundance, and eventually trends.



One immediate aim is to create a new national park of some 1,500 km² around the Senlin Shan NE of Yanji in north-east of China (Jilin and Heilongjiang provinces). This park would be immediately adjacent to the newly propagated "Land of the Leopard" on the Primorje region SW of Vladivostok in the Russian Far East, where the last Amur leopards live. Although the new Chinese NP is propagated for both, the tiger and the leopard, it would be of outstanding importance for the Amur leopard as it would almost double the protected core area. We visited the area from 1–3 July 2016. It is a now densely forested area (after a reforestation programme over the past 30 years) with only two larger agricultural communities. The habitat is excellent, mainly rather young mixed, but mainly deciduous forests with a tens understory. Timber harvesting has been stopped recently (a management policy that may have to be reviewed with regard to creating more open habitat for wild herbivores). The wild ungulate density seems to be low, assumingly mainly from poaching. After an incidence of tiger snaring last year, the forest administration has been ordered to go out and remove snares. They collected over 80,000 snares within three months. Another problem seems to be grazing livestock, which however will be banned from the forest when the NP is declared.

# National Action Plan for cheetah and African wild dog in Algeria

**12 -13 October 2015, Parc National de Tlemcen, Algeria**



The conservation of cheetah and African wild dog represents a huge challenge. The distribution areas of these species were previously extensive in Africa; however, in recent decades, the number and range have strongly decreased. Cheetahs and wild dogs roam over huge areas and need more living space than other terrestrial carnivores. Gradually, as people encroach the last habitat of the two species, cheetah and wild dog - particularly sensitive to destruction and fragmentation of their habitats - are often the first species to disappear. Recognising this dire situation, the Cat Specialist Group and the Canid Specialist Group of IUCN/SSC in collaboration with the Wildlife Conservation Society WCS and the Zoological Society of London ZSL, have launched in 2006 a conservation planning program at the range wide level for cheetah and wild dogs (see: http://www.cheetahandwilddog.org), for two species very similar in regard to their ecology and facing the same threats. The first two regional workshops dedicated to East Africa and southern Africa were organised in 2007. The third workshop for North, West and Central Africa was held in 2012 in Niger. The Regional Conservation Strategy developed in Niger now needs to be translated into National Action Plans developed in national workshops.

In North, West and Central Africa, cheetah has lost the vast majority of its range. The two largest areas of resident range Adrar des Ifhogas/Ahaggar/Aijar/Mali region in North Africa, and the Chad/CAR area in Central Africa. The two countries Algeria and Chad include 88% off the distribution range of cheetah in the region. The total population of cheetah is estimated at less than 250 mature individuals.

In October 2016, the Rangewide Conservation Program for Cheetah and African Wild Dog with support of the Cat SG organised a two day workshop in Tlemcen National Park, Algeria, to develop a National Action Plan for the two species for Algeria using the Regional Conservation Strategy as a blueprint. Algeria is crucial for saving the cheetah of the Sahara. Unfortunately, it was not possible to hold the workshop in the cheetah range in the south. Participants represented la Direction Générale des Forets, des Directions des Parcs Culturels de l'Ahaggar et Tassili N'Ajjer, du Projet de Conservation de la biodiversité d'intérêt mondial et d'utilisation durable des services écosystémiques dans les Parcs Culturels en Algérie, de l'Université de Bejaia, de l'Agence Nationale pour la Conservation de la Nature, WCS/ZSL, and IUCN/SSC Cat Specialist Group. The NAP is currently reviewed by the participants.

# Revision of the National Action Plan for lions in Mozambique

**4-5 November 2015, Maputo, Mozambique**



In the spirit of following the recommendations from the Regional Conservation Strategy for lions in southern Africa, range countries, together with IUCN and support from the Safari Club International Foundation SCIF, have developed or are still developing National Action Plans for the African lion. These plans should motivate and co-ordinate lion conservation activity both regionally and nationally.

Mozambique was now the first country that revised its lion action plan that was first developed in 2009. The revision workshop took place in Maputo in November 2015 and was supported with funding from the World Bank. The legislative progress since 2009 was the establishment of the Administração Nacional das Áreas de Conservação ANAC as an autonomous public agency tasked with the management of all conservation areas, and the establishment of the Foundation for the Conservation of Biodiversity BioFund under TFCA II now provides the institutional framework for long-term management and sustainability of the conservation areas.

The workshop started with an overview on the conservation status of lions in Mozambique. Presentations from Niassa, Gorongoza and Limpopo NP, Quirimbas NP and Magoe NP followed. In Niassa National Reserve sport or trophy hunting is allowed inside the protected area across nine hunting concessions covering 27,989 km$^2$ (66.6%) of the protected area estate (42,500 km$^2$). Sport hunting is increasingly controversial particularly for species that are facing widespread declines across their range like lions, leopards and elephants and particularly in a protected area. Sport hunting was identified as a potential threat to lion and leopard populations in 2003 by the Niassa Carnivore Project NCP due to the large number of young lions and leopards being taken as trophies. The Lion regulations were developed by NCP and implemented in 2006 by the Reserve Management Authority. In 2015 six lions were killed for trophies representing 1 lion per 4,000 km$^2$ of the area hunted. Offtake was only 27.3% of the total quota (n = 22 quota). The percentage of lions taken as trophies that are over 6 years of age has increased from only 25% in 2004 to 100% in 2014 and 2015. In 2012 The Gorongosa Lion Project started, and first steps required the documentation of the conservation status and ecology of Gorongosa's lion population and to identify and remedy threats to their recovery and persistence across the Greater Gorongosa Ecosystem. The revised LogFrame has been finalised and the report is under review.

# Species Conservation Planning Subcommittee Meeting

**12-13 September 2015, Abu Dhabi, UAE**



Ahead of the IUCN Species Survival Commission Leaders' Meeting (see p. 4), all SSC Subcommittees, also the Species Conservation Planning Subcommittee SCPSC, met for two days. During the SCPSC meeting, plans for activities for the Leaders' meeting were finalised and duties assigned: Market Place and the workshop *Successful species conservation: taking the mystery out of planning* that the SCPSC organised and facilitated. The Conservation Planning market-place session allowed SG representatives to engage one-on-one with a member of the SCPSC to ask specific questions related to their planning situation. The goal of the session was to improve the quantity and quality of species conservation plans by empowering SG leaders and representatives to create or improve plans related to species conservation and/or recovery. The topics of SPSC engaging with SGs ranged from resolving specific questions related to editing/publishing plans, to discussing opportunities for future planning exercises. The challenges that the SG portrayed were lack of resources (funding) for bringing specialists and stakeholders together to create plans; difficulty engaging stakeholders across large (i.e. multi-national) ranges; how to implement plans and evaluate progress; and difficulty coordinating efforts for species conservation.

Some 40 participants showed up at the workshop, including a number of SGs. The key steps to species planning were discussed and the participants divided into two groups to discuss these elements in more detail. The practicalities of planning across taxonomic units and geographic scales were addressed and it was recognised that the principle of good conservation planning can apply in every situation.

The SCPSC then spent quite some time on Version 2 of the document *Strategic Planning for Species Conservation: A Handbook* that was published in 2008 and now needs to be revised. Content, shape, process, schedule and assignments were discussed. There are new topics that need to be included: structured decision-making, risk analysis, and adaptive management. We will also need to include a way to address climate change. In regard to this, the future membership was discussed and gaps in capacity identified.

A part of the meeting was dedicated to the future of planning in SSC. The Chair informed about the upcoming meeting focusing on this, taking place in Bath in November, and being chaired by the SSC Chair Simon Stuart (see p.16).

# The Future of Species Conservation Planning in IUCN

**18 - 20 November 2015, Bath, UK**



The SSC Chair Simon Stuart, and key leaders in species conservation planning in the IUCN Species Survival Commission SSC, met in Bath, UK, to discuss the future of conservation planning in IUCN, and more specially in the SSC and agreed to a new vision:

The status of species is improved through conservation planning to support governments and wider society in achieving United Nations Sustainable Development Goal-Target 15.5 "to take urgent and significant action to reduce degradation of natural habitat, halt the loss of biodiversity, and by 2020 protect and prevent the extinction of threatened species". This aims to respond to the scale of the extinction crisis rather than to limit our actions to those that reflect our current capacity. We have started work on the models of governance, management and implementation required to achieve this, and this process will be ongoing. Everyone involved has committed to this work in order to achieve the vision. The goal is that IUCN/SSC will significantly expand and ensure sufficient resourcing for species conservation planning, and that every species that needs a conservation plan will get one.

The following Key Species Results will form a subset of all Result areas elaborated upon in the Species Strategic Plan: 2017-2020, and collectively will comprise the IUCN Species Conservation Planning Strategy: 2017-2020. The precise wording of these Key Species Results needs and will need to be worked on:

1) IUCN/SSC species conservation planning efforts are significantly expanded, especially for priority species.
2) IUCN/SSC species conservation planning efforts are monitored for impact and effectiveness.
3) Species conservation planning capacity is built through expanded training programmes.
4) IUCN/SSC provides scientifically rigorous guidance for species conservation planning.
5) IUCN/SSC species conservation planning is based on cutting-edge science and tools.
6) IUCN/SSC species conservation planning is sufficiently and sustainably resourced.
7) Governance and management mechanisms are in place to drive IUCN/SSC's species conservation planning efforts forward.
8) IUCN/SSC is recognised as a leader in species conservation action planning.

# Roadmap for better protection of Borneo's cats and small carnivores

**May 2016**



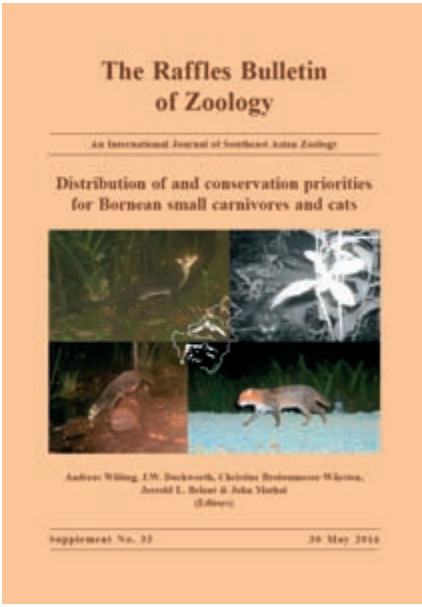

Habitat conversion and fragmentation, logging, illegal hunting, fires: The rainforests and wildlife on Borneo, the third largest island in the world, are highly threatened. Now, an international research team under the leadership of the German Leibniz Institute for Zoo and Wildlife Research IZW and the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources IUCN Species Survival Commission has published a roadmap for more targeted conservation efforts for Bornean cats and small carnivores in a special supplement of the Raffles Bulletin of Zoology.

Borneo harbours more endemic carnivores than any other island except Madagascar and about half of these carnivores are globally threatened with extinction. In response to these threats and the paucity of knowledge about Bornean carnivores, three IUCN/SSC specialist groups (the Cat Specialist Group, the Otter Specialist Group and the Small Carnivore Specialist Group), in collaboration with the Sabah Wildlife Department and the Leibniz Institute for Zoo and Wildlife Research, organised the Borneo Carnivore Symposium BCS in 2011.

The goal of the BCS was to better understand the distribution and conservation needs of Bornean cats and small carnivores and subsequently, to enable targeted conservation efforts to those carnivores which are most threatened. We achieved this goal through a collaborative effort of the Borneo Carnivore Consortium, a network of more than 60 national and international scientists, conservationists and naturalists working on Borneo.

The results are 15 small carnivore and 5 wild cat papers which discuss the distribution, conservation and research priorities for each of the 20 Bornean small carnivores and cats. The intent of comparable coverage of the four Bornean otter species could not be realised because too few records could be traced. The conservation status of the carnivores which occur nowhere but Borneo and those of upper highland, extreme lowland and wetland habitats is particularly worrying. The BCS and this supplement were able to provide important new information which was recently used to update the Red List accounts, thereby enabling governmental agencies and other conservationists to focus efforts and resources on these threatened species. The flat-headed cat and the otter civet are such lowland and wetland specialists. They require natural wetlands - habitats which are rapidly shrinking. Last year, peatlands and lowlands in Indonesia were burning for months, an environmental and ecological disaster, increasing the threats towards these species.

The Borneo Carnivore Consortium hopes this supplement will serve as a catalyst for future collaborative conservation initiatives between scientists and practitioners. Borneo needs more joint conservation efforts with the oil palm and forestry sector and better collaboration of scientists and conservationists with local authorities to protect the diversity of carnivores in the remaining rainforests of Borneo. The published roadmap will provide guidance about needed activities in key carnivore landscapes.



# V International Seminar on Iberian lynx conservation

**4 - 6 April 2016, Sevilla, Spain**




Several Iberian Lynx conservation programmes have been implemented in Andalusia since 2002, when the species was classified by to be Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List due to its precarious situation. It was, indeed, the most endangered feline species in the world. Population figures were subsequently revised in 2012, after 10 years of conservation efforts, and thanks to the positive results achieved, we have been able to upgrad its status to Endangered in 2015.

The Conservation Strategy implemented to date is based on scientific and technical consensus supported by three international seminars. The 1st Seminar was held in 2002 in Andújar, Jaén, and it established the basis for the strategy needed to prevent the species' extinction. This strategy was further analysed in the 2nd Seminar held in Cordoba in 2004. The 3rd Seminar, held in Huelva in 2008, discussed the main principles for the species' reintroduction and the 4th Seminar held in 2010 laid out the main guidelines to start recovering its historical distribution in the Peninsula. These efforts gave rise to the Iberlince LIFE Project, which has resulted in the selection of the areas for reintroduction in the Peninsula and the subsequent reintroduction campaigns in Portugal, Andalusia, Extremadura and Castilla-La Mancha.


© A. Sliwa

The objectives involved the design of a future conservation strategy to provide continuity to the projects currently ongoing and to include other suitable reintroduction sites in the Peninsula (Castilla-León, Aragón, La Rioja, Valencia, etc.). Therefore, the central focus of the seminar was to identify the lines of work needed to upgrade the Iberian lynx status from Endangered to Vulnerable as well as to define the financing solutions needed to support these lines of work.

The seminar followed the mode of the previous ones. The first day was open to the public. Keynote presentations were given on current status and the future strategy, connectivity between different population nuclei, habitat and prey, captive breeding, and communication and financing. We gave a talk on the technical and scientifique requirements for the uplisting of the Iberian lynx to Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List.

The second day was only for the responsible authorities, associated NGOs, Life project members and researchers. Five working groups discussed specific questions. The results of these discussions were then presented on day 3. The groups came up with ten final recommendations to secure the survival of the current populations and to further the restoration of the species across the Iberian Peninsula.

# CITES Steering Committee meeting SC66

**11-15 January, Geneva, Switzerland**



We participated in the 66th Standing Committee meeting in Geneva in January 2016. There were quite a few cat related issues on the agenda.

**Lion –** The Chair of the Animals Committee informed that the implementation of Decision 13.93 (Rev. CoP16) on Periodic review of the Felidae had been completed but for one species, lion. Kenya and Namibia, who had agreed to undertake the review of the lion, expressed their interest in completing this review in collaboration with the Animals Committee. We made an intervention to this agenda item:

Last year the Cat Specialist Group has re-assessed the lion for the IUCN Red List. The lion remains listed as Vulnerable under A2abcd, however with regionally different trends. All credible repeated lion surveys and present time series data for 47 lion populations across Africa showed that African lion populations are declining everywhere, except in four southern countries (Botswana, Namibia, South Africa, and Zimbabwe). Thus the status of the lion is not the same across Africa and separate regional assessments of the lion in the future will be more appropriate to accommodate these differences. The West Africa subpopulation is already listed as Critically Endangered, and recent data support to list the lion as regionally Endangered in Central and East Africa, but Least Concern in southern Africa.

In 2006, IUCN has, mandated by CITES, facilitated the development of lion conservation strategies for Africa. A recent review has revealed that all threats identified in these Strategies are still effective, that however lion trafficking has emerged as a new threat. The objectives formulated in the Lion Conservation Strategies are likewise still valid, but the implementation of the Strategies through National Action Plans has so far been insufficient. IUCN would welcome the revival of the range-wide and national conservation efforts based on the Lion Conservation Strategies, and the IUCN/SSC Cat Specialist Group would be ready to facilitate this process in collaboration with both the CITES Secretariat and the Parties.

**Leopard** - we organised a side event where we presented the dire situation of the leopard in many areas of its vast range and a possible way forward.

**Asian Big Cats** - we participated in the working group meetings. There are still some outstanding issues of concern that remain unsolved.

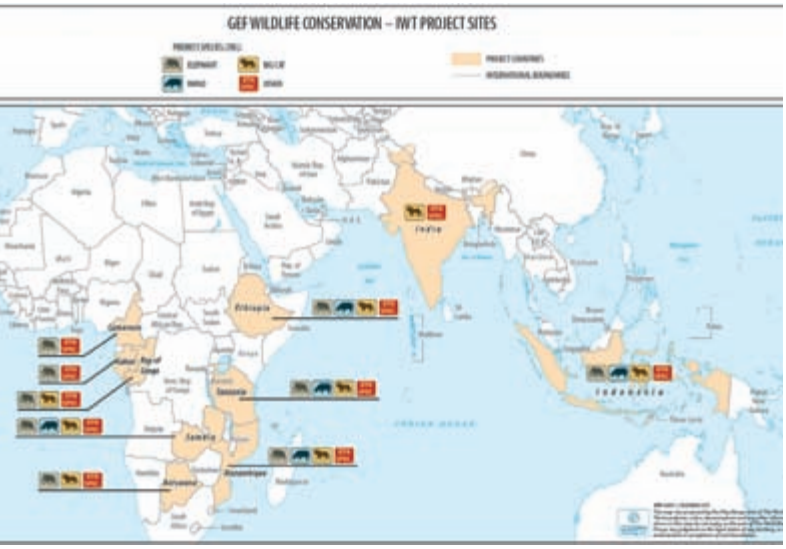
© T. Rosen

# Meeting of the GEF Global Wildlife Program

**18 - 19 Januar 2016, Gland, Switzerland**



A new GEF Biodiversity Strategy (2014-2018) was approved by the GEF Council through the GEF 6th Replenishment to address urgent issues that negatively impact wildlife conservation and sustainable development. In June 2015, the GEF approved a 7 year Global Wildlife Program GWP which includes over US $128.2 million in investments on IWT in 18 countries across Asia and Africa. The World Bank Group (lead implementing agency), UNDP, UNEP and ADB are the GEF Implementing Agencies IAs for these projects. GWP follows a programmatic approach intended to bring together interconnected projects to achieve the common objective of preventing the extinction of known threatened species. In June 2015, 10 of the 18 countries received formal GEF approval, while the remaining eight are waiting for GEF approval, which is expected later in 2016. These countries are using part of their GEF-6 Star allocation to design and implement projects to address priority wildlife crime issues.




The Gland event was the first opportunity for the national project partners to meet in person to learn more about the GWP, share knowledge, and begin to collaborate with other national project partners and technical specialists. This event was intended to serve as an introductory session, for technical experts and leading practitioners to provide an overview of key wildlife conservation tools, resources, and lessons learned related to anti-poaching and anti-trafficking, and demand reduction efforts. It will be followed by more in-depth knowledge management KM virtual and in-person sessions throughout 2016.

A total of 47 participants attended the Gland meeting, 43 joined in person and four remotely over WebEx. The participants represented governments, GEF implementing agencies, non-governmental organizations NGOs and the private sector. The two-day KM session was divided into presentations and working group discussions. Presentations were delivered by experts, Program leads, and National government partners on the overview of GWP, challenges and opportunities in combating wildlife crime regionally and nationally and the M&E framework. The presentations were grouped into categories based on the theory of change model that the GWP aims to address; these include (i) anti-poaching; (ii) anti-trafficking; and (iii) demand reduction.

Together with Holly Dublin, Chair African Elephant Specialist Group, we gave a presentation in KM Session 3 – M&E framework on using species as program impact indicators.

# EAZA Felid TAG mid-year meeting

**4-6 March 2016, Wuppertal, Germany**


© A. Sliwa



In March 2016 we attended the EAZA Felid TAG mid-year meeting hosted by the zoo in Wuppertal, Germany. Besides the usual presentations and discussions on the various EEP Programmes, there were a number of very interesting topics discussed. Antonio Rivas from the conservation breeding programme of the Iberian lynx gave an overview on the evolution of the programme and where they are today. After 10 years of breeding in Doñana Centre for in-situ releases, there are now above 300 Iberian lynxes in the wild in Spain. The other breeding centres recently established in Castilla de la Mancha, Extremadura (both in Spain) and in Portugal also successfully bred the species since 2013. The captive population includes 103 reproductive animals bred from 30 founders and the centres in total have 80 enclosures. But today a space issue arises and with a growing population of animals unsuitable for breeding and release, the Spanish authorities are now thinking about sending some surplus Iberian lynx to European zoos. A decision becomes more urgent now because the species is considered saved from extinction from a demographic point of view but not genetically, and a high rate of captive breeding is still needed now and for several coming years. Future plans are to do translocations and create a backup population among the EAZA institutions. The first two animals have been moved to Madrid zoo in August 2016.

Alex Sliwa gave a presentation on the recent history and future developments of the Persian leopard EEP, including the on-going reintroduction project in Russia after the signed agreement between The Russian Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, the EAZA/EEP/Felid TAG and the IUCN Cat SG. In November 2015, there were 91 (45.46) Persian leopards in 47 institutions from 26 countries. Because of the reintroduction project in Russia, the EEP is planning to breed more pairs than ever in the coming years, and more and more holders in Europe are interested in this subspecies of cats. In 2014/2015, 10 new institutions joined the program and the EEP gave positive recommendation to breed to 29 pairs. 4 additional founders joined the EEP with 3 animals kept at Teheran Zoo and one male brought back from Russia to Nesles, France, in exchange of a captive-born male that should be reintroduced in 2017.

We gave a presentation on the global conservation status of the leopard, the new Red List assessment and a way forward to raise awareness among Felid TAG members.


© A. Sliwa

# CITES-CMS African Lion Range State Meeting

**30 May- 1 June 2016, Entebbe, Uganda**




CITES, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora and CMS, the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, jointly organised a lion meeting for the African range states in Entebbe, Uganda, on 30–31 May 2016. The meeting was led by Clara Nobbe from CMS Secretariat and Tom De Meulenaer from CITES Secretariat. 28 African lion range states were present, making this meeting the best attended lion conference ever. The only countries absent with extant populations were Rwanda, South Sudan, Tanzania, and Mozambique. The main topic was to discuss the possible listing of the lion under CMS, based on Res. 11.32/2014, asking the CMS Secretariat to (1) commission a review of the status of lion with regard to the implementation of the 2006 Regional Strategies, (2) consult the lion range states about the possible listing of the lion under CMS Appendix II, and (3) prepare the respective topic for CMS CoP 12 in 2017. Appendix II covers migratory species that have an unfavourable conservation status and that require international agreements for their conservation and management. Most range states seem to be in favour of listing the lion under CMS A-II, though some questioned the added value CMS could bring and the southern range states expressed their preventive opposition against a listing in Appendix I (which would restrict harvesting).

An important working document for the meeting was a report prepared by Hans Bauer and co-authors on behalf of CMS, reviewing the Lion Conservation Strategies developed in 2006. The report concluded that the threats then identified are all still effective, and that lion bone trade may add a new one. The controversial discussion about lion trophy hunting is dominating much of the lion debate and was also present at the meeting, though trophy hunting is by far not the most important threat to lions. The expectation was that the Strategies would be implemented through National Action Plans. Indeed, several countries have developed NAPs, but many have not, and transboundary agreements are rare with exception of some conservation plans for transboundary protected areas. But especially in Central and West Africa, where international cooperation in lion conservation would be crucial, NAPs and transboundary agreements are scarce. In so far, a revitalisation of the implementation of the Strategies also with the help of international treaties would be most welcome.



**Cat News**
In 2015 and 2016 (until mid-year) we have published the regular issue Cat News 63 (44 pages) and Cat News Special Issue 9 "How to save the Cat - Cat conservation compendium - a practical guideline for strategic and project planning in cat conservation" (36 pages).

**Digital Cat Library**
We have newly integrated 672 publications into the Digital Cat Library DCL in 5 uploads during the past year. DCL hosts currently 10,653 reports and publications relevant to cat conservation and is constantly growing.

**Cat SG website**
We have updated all species distribution maps with the new information from the IUCN Red List reassessments.

## Work in progress

**Cat News**
The Special Issue on the status of all cat species in I.R. Iran is finally ready to soon being printed. The issue includes articles on all ten species of the country, two being extinct, tiger and lion. The eight extant species include cheetah, leopard, Eurasian lynx, caracal, Pallas's cat, jungle cat, wildcat and sand cat. The Special Issue follows a workshop that we organised in Karaj near Tehran in 2012, where we assessed with Iranian colleagues the status of all cat species.

**Cat Classification Task Force**
The revision of the felid taxonomy has been finalised. We have been able to settle most disagreements, but the tiger taxonomy remains a challenge. We have included the two opposing opinions in the document. We will now work on the publication of the new taxonomy.

**Global Mammal Assessment update**
Six species reassessments went online in June 2016 (see also p. 6): bobcat, rusty-spotted cat, Andean cat, black-footed cat, Borneo bay cat and leopard. Six more species have been reassessed for the next upload before the World Conservation Congress: sand cat, fishing cat, caracal, jungle cat, southern tiger cat and northern tiger cat. There are now two species left: jaguar and snow leopard. For the latter we have two competing reassessments that are currently being reviewed by external referees. After the revision of the felid taxonomy we will soon start with the subspecies (re)assessments.

**Global Framework for leopard conservation**
Following last year's workshop in the Swiss Alps, where we together with colleagues of Panthera reviewed current knowledge and threats, and developed a global framework for leopard conservation a vision and a goal, 11 objectives to address the identified threats and 32 conservation actions to fulfil the objectives, we are preparing now the publication of this framework for wider distribution and for raising awareness for the conservation status of this neglected large cat.

**Improving the protection of two protected areas in West Africa, Pendjari and W National Park, for the conservation of large cats**
Whilst large fauna across West Africa have suffered massive declines in recent decades, the W-Arly-Pendjari complex WAP, a trans-boundary landscape spanning Benin, Burkina Faso and Niger, represents a last redoubt for many threatened species. In a new collaboration with Panthera and ZSL we are going to be launching two activities: research on large carnivore trade in Benin and big cat population assessment in the WAP conservation complex.

**Revision of the Regional Conservation Strategy for the leopard in the Caucasus eco-region**
With a bit of a delay because of funding restrictions, we will review and revise the Regional Conservation Strategy of the leopard in the Caucasus eco-region in a workshop in early 2017 in Tbilisi, Georgia, with representative of all six countries.

## 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 2015/2016. Working very closely with the Cat Specialist Group Co-chairs were Manuela von Arx (Assistant to the Chair, Balkan Lynx Recovery Programme, Digital Cat Library), Tabea Lanz (Assistant to the Chair, Cat SG website, Red List Assessments, Digital Cat Library), Roland Bürki (support to the Chair, Yemen crisis), Anna Huber (book keeping), Kristin Nowell (Cat SG Red List Authority Coordinator): 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 2015/2016: Andrew Kitchener (revision of the felid taxonomy), Alex Sliwa (Sochi leopard reintroduction, Cats in Iran), Marianne Hartmann (Sochi leopard reintroduction), Keith Richmond, and Javier Pereira (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, Patrick Meier and Sebastian Kennerknecht have generously made available 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, Wild Cat Club, MAVA Foundation, Rangewide Conservation Program for Cheetah and Wild Dog, Zoo Leipzig, Forestry Bureau of the Taiwan Council of Agriculture, Fondation Segré, WAZA, Temperatio, Zürcher Tierschutz, Beijing Normal University, the World Bank, Governments of Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Innflow AG, Stämpfli Publikationen AG, and especially Patrick Meier, Peter Stämpfli, and Jean-Claude and Annemarie Tschumper.