



IUCN/SSC Cat Specialist Group Annual Report 2004



The **IUCN/SSC Cat Specialist Group** brings together 206 of the world's leading cat experts, including scientists, wildlife managers and conservationists from 50 countries who are dedicated to advancing the understanding and conservation of the world's 36 wild cat species. It is one of over 120 similar international specialist groups that together form the Species Survival Commission (SSC) of the World Conservation Union (IUCN). IUCN/SSC Specialist Groups produce species assessments for the IUCN Red List of Threatened SpeciesTM, as well as species Action Plans and policy guidelines. These groups also provide data for the World Conservation Monitoring Centre, which is hosted by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and advise governments that are Party to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

The Cat Specialist Group is very active in many of its own initiatives as well, focusing on the development of communication tools to enhance the work of its members and promote dialogue among scientists and practitioners throughout the world. The Cat Specialist Group believes that cooperation and knowledge sharing are critical for the conservation of wild cat species. Such collaboration prevents the duplication of efforts and therefore avoids any waste of resources or time, both of which are extremely valuable and scarce.

The Co-chairs of the Cat Specialist Group work closely with 15 other Core Group members to develop the strategies, priorities and tasks of the larger Cat Specialist Group. The following outlines the structure of the Cat Specialist Group and its many partners and Friends.

- Urs Breitenmoser and Christine Breitenmoser-Würsten, Co-chairs.
- Peter Jackson, Advisor to the Chair and Editor of Cat News.
- Manuela von Arx, Assistant to the Chair.
- Kristin Nowell, Red List Authority.
- Cat Specialist Core Group - Strategic body of the Cat Specialist Group. Members in 2004 were Sarah Christie, Peter Crawshaw, Peter Jackson, A.J.T. Johnsingh, Ullas Karanth, Tom McCarthy, Laurie Marker, Gus Mills, Dale Miquelle, Kristin Nowell, Stephen O'Brien, James Sanderson, Melvin Sunquist and Alan Rabinowitz
- Cat Specialist Group Members - 206 international cat experts that form the Cat Specialist Group.
- Working groups - Subunits made of Cat Specialist Group members
- Partner groups - Group of people working in a specific area in cat conservation, but not all people qualify for Cat SG membership.
- *Friends of the Cat Group* - Individual and institutional supporters and subscribers to Cat News.



The core group at work with Mariano Gimenez-Dixon from IUCN/SSC headquarter in Gland during its last meeting in Spain.

Highlights and base-work of 2004...

As Co-chairs of the IUCN/SSC Cat Specialist Group, we have covered a lot of ground in 2004! Starting in January at a conference in Iran for the conservation of the Asiatic cheetah, and ending in December at a seminar in Spain for the critically endangered Iberian lynx, both situations brought together both frustration and excitement.

Although the Asiatic cheetah is known to be nearing extinction, with only a small population surviving around the central Kavir desert of Iran, all efforts by the local and international community to launch an effective conservation programme encountered a lot of obstacles. Continuing into 2005, the Cat Specialist Group and its partners still strive to implement conservation measures, before it's too late.

Such challenges must and can be managed. For the critically endangered Iberian lynx in Spain and Portugal, it took hard work by all involved partners before an extensive conservation program was developed and implemented. In December 2004 at the Second International Seminar on the Conservation of the Iberian Lynx held in Cordoba, Spain, it was demonstrated that significant progress has been made in solving many of the initial political, strategic and conceptual problems and that the ground conservation work started to show results.

Although such exciting events highlight the projects, challenges and accomplishments of the Cat Specialist Group, it is the behind-the-scene work that carries us to such focal occasions. In this annual report for 2004, we will draw attention to the many tools and services that the Cat Specialist Group provides to its members and partners. Our in-house activities such as administration, communication, assessments and endorsements are the less-flashy components of international cat conservation, but you will quickly realize their significance as you read on about the 2004 activities of the IUCN/SSC Cat Specialist Group.

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



Iberian lynx . © A.Sliwa

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Cover photo: Iberian lynx. © A. Sliwa

In-house activities and Fundraising

Fundraising. The IUCN/SSC Cat Specialist Group is a non-governmental organization and must secure its own operational and project funding. Over the years, it has received financial and in-kind support from many organizations and individuals who share its mission to conserve wild cats, including the *Friends of the Cat Group* who subscribe to the group's official newsletter, *Cat News*. The Cat Specialist Group Co-chairs are always working to expand this group of friends, while raising funds to support the group's core operations and outreach initiatives. Many thanks to Kristin Nowell of Cat Action Treasury for her continued help with fundraising.

Networking, administration and communication have taken a con-

siderable part of our time in 2004. Such tasks included the management of a database of Cat Specialist Group members and Friends of the Cat Group. This past year, our Core Group has reviewed numerous membership applications and 6 new members have been invited to join the Cat Specialist Group.

In addition to our communication with friends and members, we have responded to many questions concerning wild cats and cat conservation from other scientists, conservationists, non-governmental organizations, government agencies and members of the public. These inquiries are wide ranging from, "Hi, I'm in grade four and I'm writing a report on tigers" to "Could you give me a brief overview on the

phylogenetics of the Felidae and explain how the sabre-tooth cats are related to the modern cats?" Responding to such inquiries is important part of the Co-chairs' daily activities. We have also been busy reviewing project proposals for group members, giving advice on potential funding sources and writing letters of recommendation.

Upcoming renewal of Cat Specialist Group. November 2004 marked the end of the IUCN quadrennial, meaning that the membership of the IUCN/SSC Cat Specialist Group must be newly constituted in 2005. Co-chairs will begin this process in 2005.

Outreach



Cat News. Issues No 40 and 41 were released in 2004. With Peter Jackson moving from Switzerland to England, the Cat Specialist Group lost the possibility to have the newsletter copied and mailed from the IUCN headquarters in Gland, Switzerland. When recalculating the production costs, we realized that our budget for *Cat News* must increase. To put these funds to best use in 2004, with great excitement we developed with Madlen Tschopp a new design for *Cat News* and produced Issue No 41 in full colour. These changes have received much positive feedback from members and from *Friends of the Cat Group* and we hope this fresh design will attract additional subscribers to *Cat*

News. Minimum subscription fees for *Friends of the Cat Group* have increased from \$40 to \$50 USD in 2004 – an amount that provides our friends with two regular issues of *Cat News*, plus free access to the other services of the Cat Specialist Group.

Cat News is printed in 600 copies, which are distributed to members of the Cat Specialist Group and to individuals and institutions belonging to the *Friends of the Cat Group*.

We are preparing an archive of all 41 issues of *Cat News* that will become available on a CD together with an index developed by Guillaume Chapron from www.carnivoreconservation.org



Digital Cat Library. The provisional solution to host the Digital Cat Library on a commercial server was replaced in 2004. Thanks to the talented support of the very dedicated intern Urs Kägi, the library went online again in June in an even more user-friendly version! The Digital Cat Library is now hosted with the same server as the Cat Specialist Group website. The Digital Cat Library currently includes over 5000 documents and we have added a highlights section to inform frequent users

of new additions and publications on specific topics. The Digital Cat Library is a service to the members of the Cat Specialist Group and to the *Friends of the Cat Group*.



Website. In 2004, we have started to improve the Cat Specialist Group website. The new design will better organize existing content, and will integrate several new features, such as the Digital Cat Library, the Members and Project Database, an information site for members and Friends and compendia on specific species. We are current-

ly looking for sponsors and funding to support the development of this more useful Cat Specialist Group website.



Fact Sheet on FIV in Lions. The Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV) in wild cat species is a controversial topic that occasionally makes headlines. Together with the African Lion Working Group, the IUCN/SSC Veterinary Specialist Group and the Wildlife Conservation Society's Global Carnivore Program, the Cat Specialist Group has produced a Fact Sheet summarising relevant information on FIV in lions. Fact sheets are very effective in disseminating information on such hot-to-

pics. We will continue this practice in the future to provide access to concise and correct information on current topics in cat conservation to professionals and the wider public.



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Statements. This year, we have been asked to express our opinion on a UN Type II Partnership Proposal concerning an integrated programme for a conservation-led sustainable development process aimed toward the protection of the Manchurian tiger and its habitat in Heilong Jiang Province, northeast China. This proposal was submitted as a motion to the World Conservation Congress in Bangkok in November 2004. Together with our core group members, Sarah Christie and Dale Miquelle, we welcomed the

initiative, but pointed out the weaknesses of the proposal and the inappropriate focus on a breeding centre.

Assessments and Endorsements

Global Mammal Assessment (GMA)

For over four decades, the IUCN/SSC has assessed the conservation status of species on a global scale, in order to identify threatened taxa, and consequently promote their conservation. The Biodiversity Assessment Initiative was recently established as a collaborative effort between IUCN/SSC and the Center for Applied Biodiversity Science (CABS) at Conservation International. The initiative aims to provide an effective method for gathering and

disseminating the most accurate scientific data available relating to biodiversity conservation.

As sub-components of this initiative, the Global Amphibian Assessment was completed in 2004, and the Global Mammal Assessment (GMA) has been started. IUCN/SSC Mammal Specialist Groups were asked to update the existing distribution maps and enter other species data into a database. As there were no digitised distribution maps yet produced for the world's 36 cat species, the GMA for cats required a larger effort. Thanks to two very dedicated interns, Patrik Olsson

and Pietro Persico, the Cat Specialist Group has established a GIS project in 2004, which compiled available recent information on the distribution of cat species (Fig.1). For baseline maps, we digitised the distribution maps published in Wild Cats – Status Survey and Conservation Action Plan in 1996 (Nowell and Jackson 1996). This GIS project allows us to update distribution maps for the GMA, while also creating the foundations of a database (Fig. 2, 3) where newly available distribution information will be added in the future.

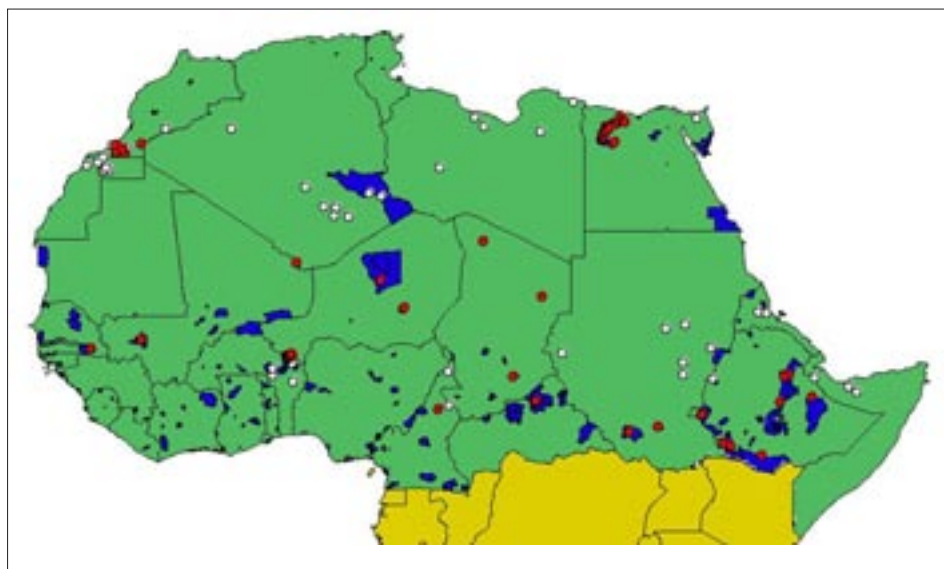


Fig. 1. Distribution information on the cheetah in the North African region (countries in green). White dots: information up to 1989, red dots: information 1990-to date. Blue surface: protected areas.

Year	Reference	Locality	Observation
1992	Cuzin 2003	Morocco	animal killed by military
1995	van Syckle 1995	NP W, Niger	interviews
1995	Marker et al. 1999	near Dolo, Ethiopia	observation by oil company employee
2002	Claro 2002	Termit, Niger	tracks, observation, foto

Fig. 2. Extract of the table forming part of the GIS project where for each point detailed information is entered. The references are listed in a list per species (Fig. 3.) and entered in the Digital Cat Library.

Acinonyx jubatus

- Anonymous (1993). Ethiopian Mammals: Occurrence in Wildlife Conservation Areas. 1993. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Organisation. Report, 3 pp.
- Claro, F. (2004). Inventaire du guépard dans le parc national du W-Niger. Rapport.
- Cuzin, F. (2003). Les grands Mammifères du Maroc méridional (Haut Atlas, Anti Atlas, Sahara). Distribution, écologie et conservation. Chap.4.5.5. le guépard, *Acinonyx jubatus*. p. 213-217. Thesis University of Montpellier.
- Saleh, M. A., Helmy, I., and Giegengack, R. (2001). The cheetah, *Acinonyx jubatus* in Egypt. *Mammalia* 65(2): 177-194.
- Meftah, T., Sahki, A. and Hamdine, O. 2001. Conservation du guépard (*Acononyx jubatus*) dans les régions de l'Ahaggar et du Tassili N'Adjer (en Algérie). UICN d'Afrique du Nord et A.N.N., Algérie. Rapport, 55 pp.

Fig. 3. Selection of references that provide georeferenced information for the cheetah in the North African region, used in the GIS project.

IUCN/SSC Red List of Threatened Species

As a species, the lion (*Panthera leo*) is classified as Vulnerable in the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. Recent surveys however, have shown that the lions of West Africa are in serious decline, and so the regional population of West Africa has been classified as Endangered in the Red List. Leading in this assessment was the Cat Specialist Group Red List authority, Kristin Nowell, with Cat SG member and lion specialist of West Africa, Dr. Hans Bauer. As Co-chairs of the Cat Specialist Group, we evaluated this assessment with former Chair, Peter Jackson. Details of this assessment are available in Cat News No 41.



CITES - Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora

The Conference of the Parties (CoP 13) was held in Bangkok, Thailand in October 2004. At this meeting, the Cat Specialist Group provided assessors who reviewed proposals submitted by Parties to the Convention, and commented on the draft reviews produced by the IUCN/SSC

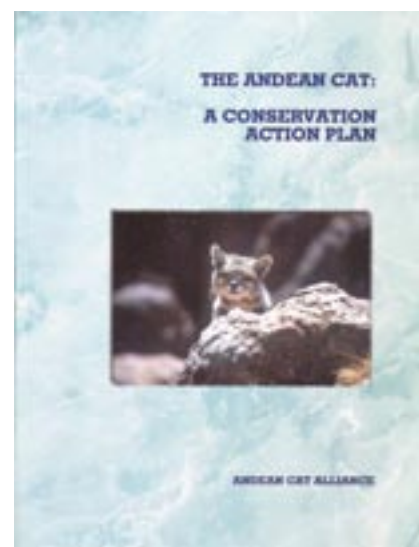
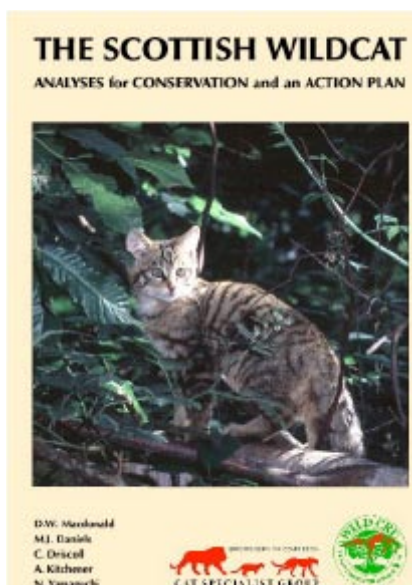
TRAFFIC Analyses Team. Proposals submitted at the conference suggested amendments to species listings in the CITES Appendices.

Kristin Nowell attended the conference as a member of the IUCN delegation and represented the Cat Specialist Group. There were five cat-related issues addressed at the conference: (1) a Kenya proposal to transfer the African lion from Appendix II to Appendix I, (2) an USA proposal to remove the bobcat from Appendix II, (3) conservation of and

trade in Asian big cats, (3) leopard export quota increase for Namibia, and (5) leopard export quota increase for South Africa. Following the conference, Kristin Nowell submitted a detailed report to the Cat Specialist Group. This report was published in Cat News No 41.

Action Plan Endorsements

This year, Co-chairs of the Cat Specialist Group had the pleasure to review and endorse two excellent action plans. Prof. David Macdonald and his team produced an action plan for the Scottish wildcat (*Felis silvestris silvestris*). Also, the Andean Cat Alliance, an expert team with members from all range countries, coordinated by Cat SG member Lillian Villalba from Chile, developed an action plan for the endangered Andean cat (*Oreailurus jacobita*).



International Projects and Partners

Asiatic Cheetah in Iran

The last half-century has seen the rapid decline of the world's last Asiatic cheetahs (*Acinonyx jubatus venaticus*). They are now extinct throughout the majority of their historic range, including Central Asia, India and the Middle East. The only remaining population of the Critically Endangered Asiatic cheetah lives today near Iran's Kavir Desert. In January 2004, Cat Specialist Group Co-chairs and several Members attended the International Workshop on the Conservation of Asiatic Cheetah in Iran, hosted by the Centre for Sustainable Development (CENESTA).

This workshop served as an opportunity to examine past efforts, assess the current status of the species, and plan long-term conservation strategies with stakeholders throughout the cheetah's range in Iran.

The cheetah population of Iran is currently estimated at 50 to 60 individuals - a number that boldly reaffirms the dire need for immediate conservation actions. In addition to the conference hosts, other partners in the conservation of Asiatic cheetahs include the Department of the Environment, Office of the President, Islamic Republic of Iran (DOE); United Nations Development

Programme–Global Environment Facility (UNDP-GEF); IUCN/SSC Cat Specialist Group; IUCN Commission on Environmental, Economic and Social Policy (IUCN/CEESP); Cheetah Conservation Fund (CCF); Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS); and local communities from the Kavir region. The meeting demonstrated the enormous variety and magnitude of challenges that face conservation of the Asiatic cheetah in its last refuge. As a first step, the workshop revealed the considerable shortcomings in cooperation and planning, a problem that must first be addressed.



Kartouran National Park, one of the strongholds for the last Asiatic cheetahs in Iran.



Workshop participants Dr. Laurie Marker, Dr. Michael Coughenour, Dr. Gus Mills and Dr. George Schaller during a field trip in Kartouran National Park.



Sangsar, Semnan, the village where the workshop took place.



Final statements of interest group representatives at the end of the workshop.



Arabian leopard

Over the past four years, the Cat Specialist Group has been involved in the conservation planning for the Arabian leopard (*Panthera pardus nimr*). During this time, the Breeding Centre for Endangered Arabian Wildlife in Sharjah has organised workshops to assess the status and conservation need of Arabian fauna in co-operation with the IUCN/SSC Conservation Breeding Specialist Group (CBSG). The Arabian leopard, listed as *Critically Endangered* in the IUCN Red List for Threatened Species, received again special attention at the workshop in February

2004. Workshop participants originated from all countries of the Arabian Peninsula, as well as other conservation institutions around the world. In 2004, the Cat Specialist Group was represented by its long-time member, Dr. David Mallon. The Cat Specialist Group provided a checklist that was completed by representatives from range countries of the Arabian leopard. Using information gathered from these checklists, they produced standardized status reports. We are currently seeking funds to support the publication of all country reports in a special issue of Cat News.

Balkan lynx

The lynx in the Balkan Mountains is predicted to be the most threatened subspecies (*Lynx lynx martinoi*) of the larger ranging Eurasian lynx. Only small populations remain in Albania and in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, with possibly some animals roaming into Kosovo, Montenegro and southern Serbia. The Cat

Specialist Group, together with the conservation NGO *Euronatur*, has started an initiative to develop a lynx conservation strategy for this area. Two initial workshops have been planned to take place in Albania and FYR of Macedonia in spring 2005. In preparation for these workshops, we have developed a conservation compendium similar to the one developed for the Iberian lynx (see p. 10). The Balkan lynx compen-

dium compiled all available data on the species and much other relevant information on the range countries of the south-western Balkans. The lynx, which depends on the availability of specific prey and forested habitat, is a perfect flagship species. United efforts to save the Balkan lynx will promote local values of nature conservation in a broader context in this area.

Cheetah in the North African region

During a workshop for a Global Cheetah Action Plan in South Africa in 2002, the North African region was identified to have significant gaps in knowledge on the species' status and distribution. As many of the North African countries are francophone and have many cultural, scientific and economic relations with France, we looked for a French partner to start a conservation initiative in this region. Fortunately, we found this partner in Dr. Françoise Claro from the *Société Zoologique de Paris*, which is based at the Museum of Natural History in Paris. Françoise has undertaken two expeditions to Niger to survey cheetah presence in the Termit area and the National Park W

du Niger. In September 2004, she visited the Cat Specialist Group to discuss the formation of a working group that would increase knowledge of cheetah (and other cats) in the North African

region. The Cat SG and the *Société Zoologique de Paris* prepared a first meeting of interested people that will take place in February 2005.



Cheetah in the Termit area in Niger. Photo taken by J. Tubiana, Société Zoologique de Paris, in October 2002.

Iberian lynx

The Iberian lynx (*Lynx pardinus*) is the only felid currently listed, on a species level, as *Critically Endangered* in the IUCN Red List for Threatened Species, with less than 200 individuals remaining in the wild. The Cat Specialist Group initiated the first international seminar on the conservation of the Iberian lynx in 2002 and the Co-chairs have remained very involved in conservation efforts to save this species from extinction. Together with the Council of Europe/Berne Convention and the Large Carnivore Initiative for Europe, the Cat Specialist Group made repeated visits to Spain to assess the progress of conservation efforts. Since 2002, significant progress has been made to restore Iberian lynx habitat and rebuild rabbit populations, the main prey of Iberian lynx.

International Seminar. Early in 2004, we proposed to organise the second international seminar in order to develop common strategies and priorities among partners. To prepare for this significant event, we invited key representatives to meet with us in Switzerland, including the Andalusian government and the European Union Life project from the Sierra Morena, as well as the director of the captive breeding program. In December 2004, the second seminar on the conser-



vation of the Iberian lynx was held in Córdoba, Spain. The conference was co-organized by the Junta de Andalucía/Life Project, World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and the Cat Specialist Group.

Vision map. To develop a common strategy among all partners involved in Iberian lynx conservation, we helped to produce a vision map that highlighted potential restoration areas for the spe-

cies, and proposed a recovery strategy outline. The seminar in Córdoba started with overview presentations on various aspects of Iberian lynx conservation. With this information, participants went into working groups where they identified the most important next steps in their field of expertise. The workshop was professionally facilitated, which proved to be very effective.

Iberian Lynx Conservation Compendium. As a workshop tool that should later serve to facilitate the sharing of knowledge, the Cat Specialist Group developed the Iberian Lynx Conservation Compendium. The compendium is a library and forum that assembles information that is important to the conservation of the Iberian lynx. The compendium is a Knowledge and Information Management System (KIMS), which centralizes this wealth of information in one accessible place under a common HTML structure. The Iberian lynx compendium includes relevant scientific baseline information, public political documents, as well as popular material such as news and magazine articles and educational and outreach material. At the Iberian lynx seminar in Córdoba, the compendium was distributed in a CD-Rom version. Since then, a continuously updated version has been available for the increasing number of partners involved.



Support for the Captive Breeding Program.

The Cat Specialist Group has provided help to the captive breeding program by making available the expert knowledge of its members, Dr. Alex Sliwa for breeding cats in captivity, and Prof. Hans Lutz for cat diseases. Dr. A. Sliwa has repeatedly visited the captive breeding centre in Acebuche to advise Dr. Astrid Vargas and her team. Prof. Lutz has been involved in the screening of blood samples for various diseases in newly captured animals entering the captive breeding program.

Photo: Dr. A. Sliwa (second from right) visiting the captive breeding center of Acebuche in February 2004, with program director Dr. A. Vargas (far right) and her team (L-R) Luis Díez Klink and Juana Bergara (Fernando Martínez is missing).
© A. Sliwa.



Staff and ...

We wish to thank all the dedicated colleagues and members of the Cat Specialist Group, who have helped steer the group through the year 2004. Working very closely with the Cat Specialist Group Co-chairs were Manuela von Arx (Assistant to the Chair), Adrian Siegenthaler (Bookkeeping), Kristin Nowell (Red List Authority for the cat species), Peter Jackson (Advisor to the Chair and Editor of Cat News), and Madlen Tschopp (layout of Cat News).

As is evident in this annual report, the Cat Specialist Group has been very busy in various projects throughout 2004! We would like to thank the many dedicated people who helped develop and run these projects: Karin Sonderegger (Digital Cat Library, March to November 2004), Fridolin Zimmermann (vision map for the Iberian lynx workshop), Urs Kägi (supervision of web projects, intern January to September 2004, staff member October to December), José Juan Klee (web version of the Iberian lynx compendium, intern July to December 2004), Patrik Olsson (intern for the GMA, January to April 2004), Pietro Persico (intern for the GMA, October to December 2004) and Dagmar Trachsel (intern working on the Balkan Lynx Compendium, October to December 2004).

We are also grateful to Kristin Nowell and David Mallon, who provided us with much advice and represented the Cat Specialist Group at international meetings.

....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 organisations for their partnership and support: WWF Netherlands, WWF Switzerland, the Mava Foundation, the Manfred-Hermsen-Stiftung, Fauna and Flora International (FFI), the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), Charles Knowles from the Wildlife Conservation Network, the Swiss Federal Veterinary Office (SFVO), and of course our sponsor group, the *Friends of the Cat Group*.