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NEW REPORT SHOWS SHARP DECLINES IN POPULATIONS OF WILD CATS AND DOGS

*Data from the Field Signals More Species Facing Extinction; Congressional Action
Could Ensure Animals Are Not Lost Forever*

WASHINGTON, D.C. – *The Fading Call of the Wild*, a report released today by the world's leading wildlife conservation organizations, details the increasing threats and plunging populations of big cats and rare canids living in the wild. Faced with a striking loss of habitat and prey due to over-development of land and direct killing by poachers and others who see them as a threat, wild cats such as lions, cheetahs and snow leopards, and wild dogs like the Ethiopian wolf and bush dog face an uncertain future.

Eighty percent of all wild cat species are experiencing population declines, as are 25 percent of wild canids - the family of foxes, wolves and wild dogs. The report looks beyond the raw numbers and delves into the plight of these 15 species that are considered ecologically vital, detailing their current numbers in the wild, changes to the population in the last ten years, and conservation solutions for improving their status. The 15 species were chosen because they are considered umbrella species that, if conserved appropriately, protect their corresponding landscapes and other species dependent on those ecosystems.

A snapshot of the report's findings include:

- A century ago there were as many as 200,000 lions living in Africa, today there are fewer than 30,000. Lions are now extinct from 26 countries that they formerly occupied. The single greatest threat to lions is killing by people who own livestock. Herders and ranchers shoot, trap and poison lions across their range.
- There are fewer than 500 Darwin's Fox living today. The animals are found only in Chile and their restricted distribution makes them highly vulnerable to extinction. The gentle and curious canids are not fearful of people which contributes to their endangerment, however timber exploration and land development are the two biggest factors that have pushed the animals to the brink.
- There are fewer than 7,000 snow leopards in the wild today. Snow leopard poaching is rampant with their bones and hides frequently confiscated in illegal shipments of wildlife parts bound for markets in China and throughout Asia.
- Fewer than 500 Ethiopian wolves remain with more than half found in the Bale Mountains. These highly social animals live in packs which makes them especially vulnerable to rabies outbreaks. Small, isolated populations face rapid loss of habitat to subsistence agriculture.

- Formerly ranging across Africa south of the Sahara African wild dogs exist in less than seven percent of their historic range, and are extinct in 22 countries that they formerly inhabited. Persecution, accidental snaring and rabies have decimated populations throughout Africa, and fewer than 8,000 of these animals remain.

The report calls for increasing conservation resources and swift policy changes, specifically passage of the *Great Cats and Rare Canids Conservation Act* that would provide conservation assistance to the 15 species highlighted in the Fading Call of the Wild report.

First introduced in July 2004, and set to expire this year unless the Senate takes action, the measure would provide wild cats and canids the same type of conservation assistance presently supporting tigers, great apes, elephants, sea turtles and other iconic species through the Multinational Species Conservation Funds, administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The funds were designed to conserve species deemed by Americans to be of special global value, but simultaneously endangered with extinction.

Senators Joe Lieberman (I-CT), Tom Udall (D-NM), Sam Brownback (R-KS) and Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI) are leading the charge to usher the bill through their chamber this Congress. The House passed the measure in April 2009 with a two-thirds majority and bi-partisan support led by Reps. Jay Inslee (WA-01), Madeleine Bordallo (D-Guam) and the International Conservation Caucus. The Act is supported by more than 80 scientific, animal welfare, conservation, outdoor recreation organizations, zoos and aquariums.

Luke Hunter, Vice President of the big cat conservation group and report author Panthera, said “This is a call to action for legislators and anyone who believes that we have a responsibility to conserving these important species. The approach is really quite simple. We must protect the land in which these animals live, and their prey. And we must prevent human- animal conflicts that often result in the cat or canid’s demise. Most importantly, saving wild cats and dogs is an intelligent way to save the habitats and ecosystems that are most at risk today. Our fight to save big cats is a means to preserve forever these iconic species, but to also preserve a meaningful portion of our natural spaces.”

Actress Glenn Close, who is the founding member of [Panthera’s](#) Conservation Council, contributed the foreword for the report and noted, “Whether it is the iconic African lion or the shy Darwin’s fox, these animals hold an important place in the landscapes they occupy. They are all ecosystem guardians. As predators, they maintain healthy functioning places, and their absence negatively affects wildlife and people. Not only would losing these species have drastic ecological and economic impacts, I believe their loss will impact us in ways we aren’t even able to yet articulate.”

The report was authored by [Panthera](#), the [International Fund for Animal Welfare](#), and the [Wildlife Conservation Society](#), in cooperation with the Canid and Cat Specialist Groups of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN). A copy of the report can be found [here](#).

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