



Issue 1, April 2009

PANTHERA NEWSLETTER

In This Issue

[Breaking News: Big Media Helps Save Lions](#)

[Breaking News: Panthera gets Huffington Post Blog Spot](#)

[Underground Railroad for Tigers](#)

[Learning More about Mountain Ghosts](#)

[Across Africa](#)

[Securing Landscapes, and a Species, State-wide](#)

[A Meeting of the Minds](#)

[Join Our Mailing List!](#)

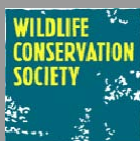
Quick Links

[Contact us!](#)

[About Us](#)

[Panthera in the News](#)

[Partners](#)



Welcome to Panthera's First Newsletter!

Who Are We?



Panthera is an international conservation organization that was founded in 2006 with the sole mission of conserving the world's 36 species of wild cats. Utilizing the knowledge and expertise of the world's top cat biologists, and working in partnership with local and international NGOs, scientific institutions, and government agencies, Panthera develops, implements, and oversees range-wide species conservation strategies. Panthera's large scale initiatives with tigers, lions, jaguars and snow leopards currently involve more than 50 countries and span three continents. We are in the planning stages for similar range-wide conservation of cheetahs, leopards and cougars. Collectively, these seven species represent the world's largest and most endangered cats.

Cat species are threatened due to 1) direct killing: from poaching for the sale of their body parts for the illegal wildlife trade market; or as a retaliatory measure as a way to alleviate the conflict of living with large predators; 2) loss of prey: cats need wild prey to survive - such as deer and boar - but in many cases, people hunt these species for sale or subsistence; and 3) habitat loss and fragmentation due to large scale development and conversion of land for agribusiness.



But, Panthera is leading wild cat conservation initiatives by collecting the most rigorous scientific data on cat species, their prey and the threats to their persistence - and using these data to shape and implement conservation actions.

Why Cats?

Panthera focuses on saving wild cat species across the globe because this is a winning strategy for conserving vast landscapes, ecosystem functions, and the preservation of human health and livelihoods. While Panthera's focus is streamlined, the impacts go far beyond just 'saving cats'.

The current ranges of wild cat species occupy more than a third of the terrestrial surface of the entire planet. By conserving cats, we are conserving the large, functioning ecosystems on which they depend, containing thousands of species of plants and animals. Cats act as landscape guardians, and their presence indicates healthy, intact ecosystems that are crucial for all life - including people.

The global community stands at a crossroad where one path leads to a world with tigers, lions, snow leopards and jaguars, and the other leads to a world without. This newsletter will keep you up to date on Panthera's current work around the globe, the successes made, and the challenges we, and the cats face in ensuring a future for these magnificent creatures.

While Panthera and its Council are made up of some of the most successful people in the field, the most committed, creative - who are steadfast in our mission - to ensure a future for all 36 species of wild cats, we are not exclusive; anyone who shares in this commitment, and wishes to be part of the solution, is encouraged to be part of the team. We hope the news we present will encourage you to join us. Please visit www.panthera.org to learn more about how you can help.

Breaking News

Big Media Helps Save Lions



CBS 60 Minutes aired a story on March 29th that featured Dr. Laurence Frank (one of Panthera's Cat Council members and a partner in our lion conservation program) about a cheap American poison, called Furadan, which is marketed as a pesticide to protect

valuable crops. <http://www.cbsnews.com/video/watch/?id=4901291n> Sadly, it is also being used to poison one of the most iconic species on the planet - the lion. Furadan is being used in Kenya, and other African countries where lions are found, often killing entire prides. Furadan has

had devastating effects on lions - as it is cheap, readily available, tasteless and odorless, so lions do not even know they are consuming their death. However, because of CBS's story, the company that manufactures Furadan made a public statement about immediately halting the sale of Furadan in Kenya, and initiating a buy-back program so that hopefully no more lions will succumb to a needless death.

<http://www.furadanfacts.com/60MinutesResponse.aspx>

Panthera is helping to reduce conflict issues between local communities and lions in the region; the support and tolerance of local communities is critical to the long term survival of lions and all cats around the globe. For details on Panthera's Lion Program please visit:

http://www.panthera.org/lion_programs_projects.html

Breaking News

Panthera is going Prime Time!

Panthera has joined the blog world and will be given a weekly spot on the **Huffington Post** (thanks Arianna!). The first posting will be by Alan Rabinowitz (Panthera's CEO) on linkages between conserving cats and human health. Please visit www.huffingtonpost.com next week.

Healthy Humans means Healthy Ecosystems

Panthera has recently signed an agreement with the New York-based Mount Sinai School of Medicine's Global Health and Emerging Pathogens Institute to bring basic health care to the communities living in the remote, and often inhospitable Brazilian wetland called the Pantanal. The program with Mount Sinai is a unique initiative with dual objectives: creating one of the world's largest, intact protected jaguar corridors; and establishing within the corridor a replicable model where cattle ranching is both financially profitable and compatible with jaguar conservation. The Brazilian Pantanal region, where Panthera now manages over 700 square kilometers of critical habitat dedicated to ensuring the survival of the jaguar, is also the largest cattle ranching landscape on the planet. To read more, please visit:

<http://www.prweb.com/releases/Panthera/MountSinai/prweb2286604.htm>

Underground Railroad for Tigers

We are forging the way with a new concept of 'genetic corridors'. It is critical that gene-flow is allowed to occur to ensure the long-term survival of wild cats. By mapping out where we know populations exist, and where cats are moving through, Panthera is working to get genetic corridors recognized by countries' land-use and development plans - to ensure that cats can still move through critical areas.



The largest, most expansive corridor Panthera is currently focusing on is the multi-national Himalayan-Indo-Malayan corridor, potentially connecting tiger populations from Nepal into Bhutan and Northern India

through Myanmar, Thailand, Lao P.D.R. and Cambodia. Panthera's Tiger Corridor Initiative was featured in a recent issue of Newsweek Magazine: <http://www.newsweek.com/id/165776>

Learning More about 'Mountain Ghosts'



In May of 2008, Panthera launched a long-term ecological study of snow leopards based out of the South Gobi province of Mongolia. Very little is known about these mysterious creatures - which have often been referred to as mountain ghosts. The study is being conducted in collaboration with the Snow Leopard Trust (SLT), and employs digital trap cameras and GPS-satellite collars to collect critical data toward informing conservation decisions in the region. Since the project's inception,

two leopards have been collared and at least six cats have been observed in camera trap images at the site. However, sadly after just six months into the survey, we received news that one of the collared cats was killed by a herder who believed the male leopard had been preying on his goats. The incident remains under investigation by local authorities, but is all too common a scenario where people and large cats occupy the same areas.

The communities that share their 'homes' with wild cats are often some of the most marginalized people on the planet, living in remote, inhospitable and impoverished areas. However, cats can bring added value to these people's lives through ecotourism opportunities and other added services (such as a cattle vaccination program in return for not killing cats like the SLT is doing). Panthera is working to collect critical data on snow leopards, to better help inform conservation decisions - which includes how people can live with these cats.

Panthera's Lion Conservation Program Coordinator, Guy Balme, recently travelled to Mongolia to join the Panthera-SLT team to provide expertise on how to catch the elusive snow leopard. They were successful in collaring one cat - which bring us a step closer in conserving this species:



"I spent most of January and February in the field in Nigeria [see below regarding news from Nigeria] and Mongolia - quite a contrast from +40 to -40 degrees Celsius! I made my way to the Tost region in Mongolia to help Orjan Johansson capture snow leopards to collar. Orjan, a Swedish PhD student, is employed by SLT to oversee the long-term field project that began in Mongolia last year. The landscape around Tost is breathtaking and this is one trip I won't forget, especially with temperatures ranging from -10 to -30 degrees Celsius (and a wind chill factor that lowered it at least another 10 degrees)! There is no doubt that northern hemisphere biologists are better suited to these conditions, and

I'm afraid I did not do much to promote the masculinity of the South African male! However, I managed to survive with my fingers and toes all intact, and hopefully taught Orjan a number of new tricks that may improve both the success and safety of the foot-snaring. We caught one snow leopard while I was there, but unfortunately it was an animal that had been collared the previous summer. Still, what a spectacular cat and I feel privileged to be one of very few people to see a wild snow leopard up close.



It was also quite an experience immobilizing an animal in those temperatures; the drugs, darts and needles freeze immediately on contact with the outside air and having to take your gloves off to work is a sure way to get frostbite. In the end, we were all fine though I'm sure the snow leopard was a lot more comfortable wrapped up in his sleeping bag with a hot water bottle for company! Soon after I left, Orjan caught

another snow leopard and, with five more GPS-satellite collars to deploy, hopefully more captures will follow."

Across Africa

Using Lessons Learned to Inform Policy:

In Phinda, South Africa, Panthera's team is converting years of data collected on leopards into effective conservation actions. The project has already stimulated the formation of a regional leopard conservancy. Numerous private landowners, as well as regional conservation agencies, have endorsed our recommendations on sustainable use of leopards. In collaboration with the provincial wildlife authority, the regulations for trophy hunting and 'problem animal control' of leopards have been completely overhauled. Beyond the site, the protocols developed here have the potential to be applied across the leopard's African range.

Taking Skills Cross Country - and Beyond...



Nigeria has been identified as a lion range state of strategic importance as it represents the only potential link between the East and West African lion populations. Panthera is undertaking a survey of Nigeria's national lion population. With the assistance of Andrew Dunn of the Wildlife Conservation Society, Panthera's lion program

coordinators, Phil Henschel and Guy Balme designed the survey and trained local field personnel. Based in Kainji Lake National Park, a reserve in the northwest of Nigeria close to the Benin border, the team spent the first few days hosting a workshop on carnivore survey techniques for the Nigerian National Parks Service (NPS). The workshop was very well received as there is little internal expertise on lions in Nigeria, and outside

assistance is greatly appreciated.

Where the Jaguars Roar

New Ground For Panthera: Colombia

Panthera is building a new jaguar conservation program in Colombia. On the ground, Esteban Payan, Panthera's Northern South America Jaguar Coordinator, has initiated ground-truthing surveys in the north and south in sites that could act as potential jaguar corridors in Colombia. He is also conducting a camera-trapping survey in the northwestern Colombian Llanos; a key site for the northern Colombian corridor. Preliminary pictures have revealed pumas, ocelots, white-tailed deer, armadillo, capybara, a lot of cattle, but no jaguars yet...stay tuned.



Policy Makers of Costa Rica say 'Yes' to Jaguars!

In Costa Rica, the first corridor to be successfully ground-truthed by Panthera, was recognized as an official corridor by the local Ministry of Environment (MINAET). Under Panthera leadership, the Barbilla Subcorridor working group is now having monthly meetings with stakeholders from different sectors (municipalities, teachers, indigenous leaders, NGOs, local leaders, private tourism, MINAET). Panthera has also helped to establish the Costa Rican National Conflict Committee with the director of wildlife in the Ministry of Environment, Jose Joaquin Calvo, the director of wildlife for the Animals National Health Service, Danilo Leandro, Program Jaguar Coordinator, Ronit Amit, and Panthera's representative for Costa Rica, Roberto Salom. We will initially focus on assessing jaguar - cattle conflict in the country.

Path of the Jaguar

Panthera's Jaguar Corridor is featured up front and center in National Geographic March's issue:

<http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2009/03/jaguars/white-text/1>

Securing Landscapes, and a Species, State-wide

Cougars are a flagship species for the state of California. The state covers more than 99 million acres, more than half of which is potential cougar habitat. However, cougars are competing with more than 35 million people. The state has been at the forefront of the environmental movement, and many municipalities are searching for conservation tools to both stem the loss of habitat and secure a high quality of life for residents. California offers a unique opportunity to develop solutions to cougar-human conflicts and landscape planning challenges where people and big cats share the land. Dr. Howard Quigley is leading Panthera's work to evaluate the conservation needs and opportunities for cougars for the entire state. The resulting analysis will be a roadmap to inform our future plans for the conservation of cougars and the development of similar models we hope to apply to other species and regions.



A Meeting of the Minds

Panthera held its first Annual Cat Advisory Council Meeting from February 10th - 12th, which included a major event on the night of the 11th, followed by a media panel on the morning of the 13th. The meeting was the first of its kind where some of the world's greatest cat experts came together to discuss important issues surrounding cat conservation, and the role Panthera can play.

Additionally, on the evening of February the 11th, Panthera held its first event in its New York offices, where over 120 people came to meet the Cat Council, and to hear Tom Kaplan and Alan Rabinowitz speak on the vision behind Panthera and why conservation is relevant in the world we live in today. Alan Rabinowitz and special guest, Dr. Paul Klotman, Chairman of Medicine at Mount Sinai, discussed the importance of maintaining ecosystems and the cats that inhabit them, linking human health with the health of the environment.

To learn more about Panthera, and how you can help save the world's wild cats - please go to: www.panthera.org

To see more 'Panthera in the News', please visit:

http://www.panthera.org/news_and_events.html