



SNOW LEOPARD CONSERVANCY

ANNUAL REPORT, 2002



The Snow Leopard Conservancy (SLC) was founded in June 2000, on the experience that directors Rodney Jackson and Darla Hillard gained in over twenty years in the field. SLC's innovative, grassroots approach goes to the heart of a central issue in preserving the species: retaliatory killing by shepherds when a cat enters a poorly constructed corral and decimates the livestock within. We have heard of 107 animals being killed in a single incident. These attacks are devastating to mountain families who depend upon their herds for meat, dairy products and wool. Conversely, snow leopards can be easily stoned to death, as they cower in a corner of the corral, or poisoned when villagers bait a carcass.

We believe that snow leopards are best protected through conservation efforts that grow from within communities living with the cats. These communities are the frontline in preserving the biodiversity of Central Asia's high mountains. We recognize and appreciate the unique opinions and ideas of each individual and each community, while they help us to determine the key factors threatening the cat, its prey and its habitat. Our program is partly a local empowerment scheme, partly a blueprint for cooperatively building predator-proof corrals and partly a hands-

on education program. We offer material support and planning assistance in exchange for a community's agreement to assume the primary responsibility for protecting wildlife. We also work to increase environmental and conservation awareness using local language posters and children's books that convey the basic principles of the high mountain food web, and the snow leopard's place in it.



An illustration from *My Grandmother Says...*

Working with our partners, we help local people find ways to better manage their livestock, and we help them rebuild their pens so snow leopards cannot get in. ***By predator-proofing a village's corrals we remove as many as ten snow leopards from high risk of retaliatory killing.***

"My trip was in many ways inspiring. The best experience was arriving in a desolate herders' village called Selum in Nyalam County, where I took a quick look at the local school, only to find that all children of Grade One were busy reading *My Grandmother Says...* in Tibetan! The kids obviously loved their personal copy, as they handled it with great care. Together with the school books they put their copy back into their dusty, torn bags. It was amazing to find that the Grandmother books looked like new even though the kids had them for quite a while already."

- Lucia DeVries, publisher, Ramailo Kitaab children's books in Nepal, commenting on her recent trip to Qomolangma Nature Preserve in Tibet

A glance at our financial report reveals our remarkably low administrative costs. Along with our policy of working through close local partnerships, SLC's collaborations with organizations like The Mountain Institute and the International Snow Leopard Trust are highly effective in stretching donor dollars and maximizing shared data, experience, evaluation, and results. A substantial portion of our fundraising and administration costs are underwritten by one of our Visionary donors. Despite the impact of September 11 on our national economy and psyche, our supporters have remained loyal to the cause of snow leopard conservation, enabling us to meet our fundraising goal for 2002. We invite you to join with us in protecting the endangered snow leopard, its prey and habitat by building the capacity of local people living in Central Asia's mountains to protect their valuable natural heritage.



FIELD REPORT

Ladakh



Corrals: We predator-proofed corrals in Rumbak, Hankar and Tsogsti within Hemis National Park, and initiated projects in Lingshed outside the park and Shadé/Shun in Zanskar, the region directly south of Ladakh. These latter projects will provide a first basis for comparison to villages in protected areas. This brings to seven the total number of corrals in the region either predator-proofed or in the process.

Camera trapping: During February, volunteer Jerry Roe assisted in developing camera-trapping techniques which resulted in eighteen “captures” on film—a remarkably high success rate of 28%. Winter '03 will see the first in-depth census of snow leopards using remote cameras, over a three month period.



Community-Based Tourism: A partnership project with The Mountain Institute, the Students' Ecological and Cultural Movement of Ladakh, and the Ladakh Department of Wildlife Protection, with funding provided by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Following 2001's homestay site assessment and visitor and marketing survey, workshops were held in the summer of 2002. Women from four households in Rumbak Village were given training in housekeeping, menus, communication, interpretation, cooking for tourists, and codes of conduct by visitor and host. A page-size poster was then produced for display in restaurants and trekking agency offices in Leh, the gateway to Hemis N.P. Ladakh's 2002 tourist season was the worst in years, due to the threat of war between India and



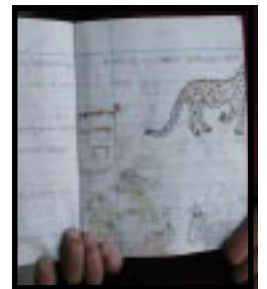
Rinchen's group in Uttaranachal

Pakistan, yet there were thirteen participants in the pilot Homestay program, all of whom gave positive feedback. We were very pleased at the good response from the four Indian visitors, as this indicates that the Homestay program can function despite fluctuations in international tourism.

In November, Rinchen led a group of ten local villagers and two local tourism professionals on a trip to Uttaranachal to learn how communities there planned for tourism activities, what challenges and shortcomings they faced, and what constitutes a positive environment and experience from the perspective of homestay providers, other service providers such as travel agents and ponymen, and the domestic or foreign visitor. The two groups shared success stories, strengths, new opportunities and ideas and came away with a better understanding of the linkage between biodiversity conservation and sustainable income generation from community-based tourism.

Education Program: Two new education staff joined the SLC this year: Tsering Padma and Karma Tashi Otsal. They are developing programs for both village grammar schools and middle-to-highschoolers in the urban area. This summer they visited four areas in and outside the National Park. Next spring, when Padma returns to her studies at Punjab University, Karma will carry the program forward.

Our sister school program between the Jane Goodall Environmental Magnet School in Salem, Oregon and the Moravian Mission School in Leh continues to thrive, with the children exchanging diary entries, letters and art work depicting the food web of their respective regions.



Tsering Angmo's diary

Although participants had a wonderful learning experience in Corbett, Sattal and Kayri they seemed relieved to leave Delhi after three days of sight-seeing ... However, due to the rush hour they were stuck in a traffic jam for over 3 hrs. On returning to their lodge they were all very tired and skipped the evening discussion for an early night's sleep. The next day was spent writing reports and getting feedback. Participants expressed shock at the amount of traffic and concrete buildings. They saw this as another form of jungle where they were surrounded by humans in the form of hungry ghosts, where one could neither breathe fresh air nor drink clean water. A place where one had to pay for everything and yet never be at peace.

- Rinchen Wangchuk, following the field trip to Uttaranachal

Interpretive materials for Hemis National Park: In collaboration with Ladakh's Department of Wildlife Protection, we produced a simple interpretive brochure for visitors to Hemis National Park, with information about the park, its wildlife, and regulations of which tourists should be mindful. We also produced a panel describing the "Parachute Cafes" operated by village women along the trekking routes and how they benefit local people.

Pakistan

The SLC sponsored Pervaiz Ahmed of the Shimshal Nature Trust to attend a training workshop on community based tourism, conducted by The Regional Community Forestry Training Centre in Bangkok, Thailand. We are now supporting Pervaiz, who is volunteering his time, to develop a Mountain Guide Training Program.

"Shimshal community believes that a long term objective will be that people will do this kind of work for each other and it is also part of our history of indigenous philanthropy."

-Pervaiz Ahmed

has a concise and targeted approach and appears to be doing well..... The scheme is an asset to the UMBCP.

Nepal

Upper Mustang Biodiversity Conservation Project (UMBCP): A partnership project with the American Himalayan Foundation.



Rodney Jackson and team on the way to Mustang an APPA training workshop for Annapurna Conservation Area Program staff and villagers. This formed the basis for a corral predator-proofing initiative, including lessons learned in Ladakh. Chhimi Rinzin Gurung joined the SLC as local Village Steward to implement all SLC activities in Upper Mustang, and during the last half of 2002 he attended a series of skills training courses in Kathmandu, including English language study. In December, we received the following e-mail from Chhimi; we've corrected the typos without altering the message's flavor:

"Yesterday I got some news from Samjung village. They are very happy from the new corral, because few days ago the snow leopard come to the new corral but he is unable to get inside the corral, so the villager are very happy from our job. So when I arrive in Mustang then I will send you detail ok!"

Heretofore, losses to snow leopard were a regular winter-time event, with families suffering serious economic loss. We were particularly pleased by the results of an independent mid-term evaluation of this project, commissioned by the United Nations Development Programme:

The Snow Leopard Conservancy, having recruited a local staff member to push its corral improvement scheme along,

Annapurna Conservation Area, Manang: Two surveys, one of visitors and one of Kathmandu trekking agents, were conducted as part of a partnership with the King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation, the Annapurna Conservation Area Program, and WWF-Nepal.

Education Program

APPA Workshop: A partnership project with The Mountain Institute and Mountain Spirit. In May, SLC offered training in Appreciative Participatory Planning and Action (APPA), to



WE-Nepal volunteers at the workshop

provide our education program colleagues with a new approach and tools for use in rural schools and community programs. Participants reported:

This training provided an opportunity for all of us to become better community motivator/trainers who will be able to apply APPA tools at the community programs.

Manang: A partnership project with Wildlife-Environment Nepal. In preparation for followup activities in the field during 2003, WE-Nepal has been refining teaching tools and developing a Snow Leopard Conservation Awareness Program Training Manual.

Dolpo: A partnership project with the Dolpo Educational Social and Environmental Reservation Team (DESERT). SLC's Education Program Officer, Nagendra Budhathoki, has been overseeing initiation of the Junior Ranger program in the local schools. We are especially pleased that this program has gone forward, thanks to the motivation and dedication of local teachers, and despite the extremely difficult conditions and highly unstable political situation in this remote, far western region of Nepal.

China

Educational Poster: *Mount Kailash and Lake Manasarovar: Precious & Fragile.*



A partnership project with The Mountain Institute/Peak Enterprise. This region in western Tibet is intensely sacred to several religions, and is visited by thousands of pilgrims each year, adversely impacting the environment. Our poster depicts the wildlife to be found in the area, including snow leopards, with the caption: *when you visit respect the environment: keep the water clean, protect local*

wildlife, dispose of rubbish properly, encourage your friends to do the same.

Following the Snow Leopard Network Steering Committee meeting in Beijing (see Other Activities below), Rodney visited the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region to meet with officials of the Forestry Bureau and lay the groundwork for a snow leopard status survey in the isolated mountains along the borders of China, Kazakhstan, Russia and Mongolia. A critical question is whether snow leopards can cross the wide Ertix He Valley, thereby allowing genetic interchange between the northern populations located in Russia and Mongolia, and the far larger populations inhabiting China and the Himalayan countries to the south. SLC is in the process of developing a three-way agreement between the Xinjiang Forest Department and the USGS Fort Collins Science Center to begin to answer this question.



The lead Chinese Biologist on this project, Chu Hongjun, was trained in SLIMS techniques in 1992 by Rodney and Don Hunter.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

In May, we attended the Snow Leopard Survival Summit, sponsored by the International Snow Leopard Trust and the Woodland Park Zoo, Seattle, Washington. Delegates came from eleven of the twelve range countries, as well as representatives of conservation and donor organizations, government, and media from Europe and the U.S. Participants provided input towards developing a “blueprint for snow leopard survival in the wild.” Rodney presented a paper on the SLC’s approach to participatory village planning. Guidelines for this process are posted on our website. In addition, a simple version has been translated into Nepali, and further translations are planned for villagers in other parts of the range.



Participants also created a *Snow Leopard Network* charged with carrying the blueprint process forward. Rodney, who serves on the Steering Committee, attended the launch meeting in Beijing in November, where the Network’s mission, objectives, operational mechanism and coordinating strategy were formulated for presentation to the membership. Most likely, the SLN will operate under the Cat Specialist Group, IUCN-World Conservation Union. This will better enable the direct exchange of information and concepts between the key players, and should also increase the efficiency of conservation activities throughout the range countries.

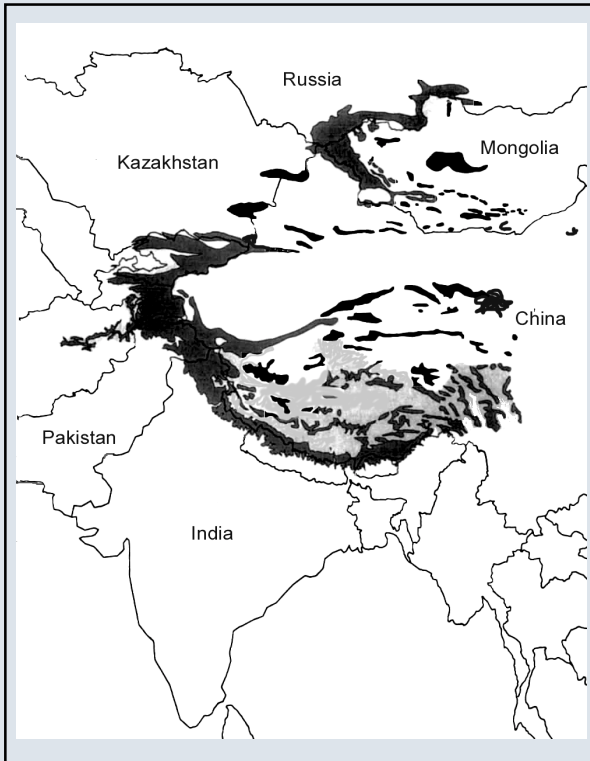
The Snow Leopard Conservancy aims to

Reduce livestock depredation by predator-proofing corrals, educating herders and improving animal husbandry practices

Closely link snow leopard and biodiversity conservation with initiatives aimed at improving household incomes in environmentally friendly, socially responsible and economically viable ways

Increase environmental awareness and understanding of the fragile mountain ecosystem, especially among rural communities and decision-makers through innovative, cost-effective outreach initiatives

Conduct non-invasive baseline research on snow leopards, their prey and habitat, blending scientific information with local knowledge



Snow leopards are found in twelve Central Asian countries:
 China,
 Russia,
 Kazakhstan,
 Kyrgystan,
 Tajikistan,
 Uzbekistan,
 India,
 Pakistan,
 Afghanistan,
 Nepal,
 Bhutan,
 Mongolia



Rinchen attended the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development conference in Lhasa, and gave the paper, *A Community-Based Approach to Mitigating Livestock-Wildlife Conflict in Ladakh*.

Rinchen also attended a two-day experts meeting in Bangalore, India, on developing strategies for addressing People-Wildlife conflict in and outside of the country's protected areas.

Rodney, Rinchen and Darla prepared a paper for the Snow Leopard Survival Summit entitled, *"Grassroots Measures To Protect the Endangered Snow Leopard from Herder Retribution: Lessons Learned from Predator-Proofing Corrals in Ladakh."*

Also at the Snow Leopard Survival Summit, Rodney and Jerry provided preliminary observations on non-invasive techniques for identifying individual snow leopards and monitoring populations.

For the Predator Conservation Alliance's 2002 Annual Conference, "From Control to Coexistence: Reframing How We Live With Predators," Rodney presented an International Case Study, *Ladakh: Livestock and the Snow Leopard*.

Rodney's article on managing people-wildlife conflict in Tibet's Qomolangma Nature Preserve appeared in the proceedings of The Wildlife Society's international meeting titled, "Wildlife, Land and People: Priorities for the 21st Century."

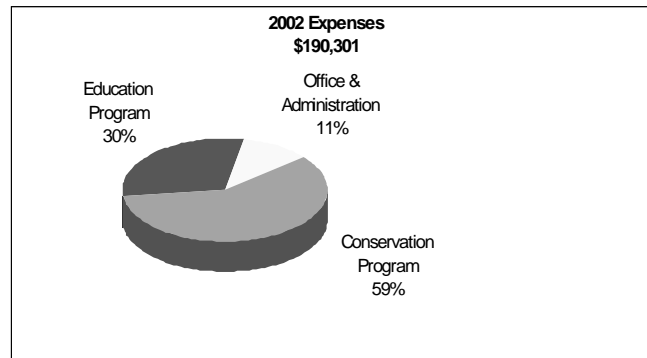
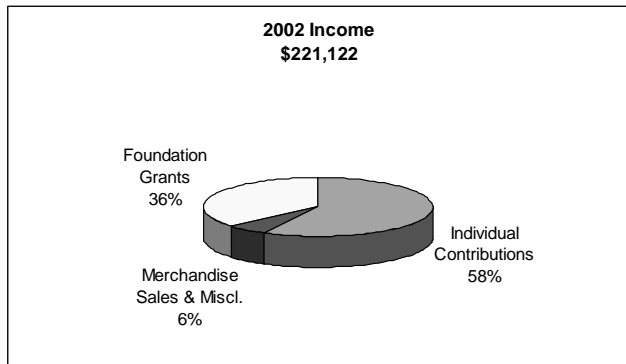
Reports and scientific papers are available as .pdf files in the Conservation section of our our website



Our volunteers are our life's blood

Eva Au, Sandy Ball, Jim & Patty Beers, Cynthia Bournellis, Anna Breytenbach, Marjorie Carmichael, Laurie Cheetham, Chhinsu & Asha the snow leopards, Namita Dalal, Toni DeMatto, Rob & Barbara Dickey, Vangie Doctolero, Alicia Falsetto & Doug Strauss, Karleen & Bob Ferguson, Steve Flaherty, Susie & Bobby Greenberg, Jeannie & Armand Gutierrez, Christine Hemrick, Linda Hibbs, Terry Hillard, Carroll Ann Hodges, Elaine Iverson, Keith & Stacey Iverson, Sabrina Johnston, Terri Jones, Chrissie Klinkowski, Charlie Knowles, Wendy & Karma Lama, Caryn & Chris Linn, Donna Louie, Gloria "Stuff" & Kent "Pee Wee" Marshall, Donna McCaig, Howard & Janee McKinney, Julie Mills, John Mock & Kim O'Neal, T.J. Morris, Mary Rose O'Connor, Susie & Greg Orelind, Barb Palmer, Cecilia Pleshakov, Pam & Ken Rau, Caroline Raudenbush, Jerry Roe, Mary Schwann, Bob Segalla, Scott Slattery, Diana Tyler, Kevin Wang, Becky Wells.

FINANCES



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PROGRAM PARTNERS

American Himalayan Foundation
Dolpo Educational, Social and
Environmental Reservation Team, Nepal
International Snow Leopard Trust
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Jane Goodall Environmental Magnet School
King Mahendra Trust For Nature Conservation
/Annapurna Conservation Area Program
Ladakh Ecological Development Group (LEDeG)
The Mountain Institute

Mountain Spirit, Nepal
Project Snow Leopard, Pakistan
Shimshal Nature Trust, Pakistan
Students' Educational and Cultural Movement
of Ladakh (SECMOL)
U.S. Geological Survey's Fort Collins Science Center
U.S. National Park Service, Lassen Volcanic
National Park
Wildlife and Environment-Nepal
Wildlife Institute of India
WWF-Nepal

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