

ICS Letter

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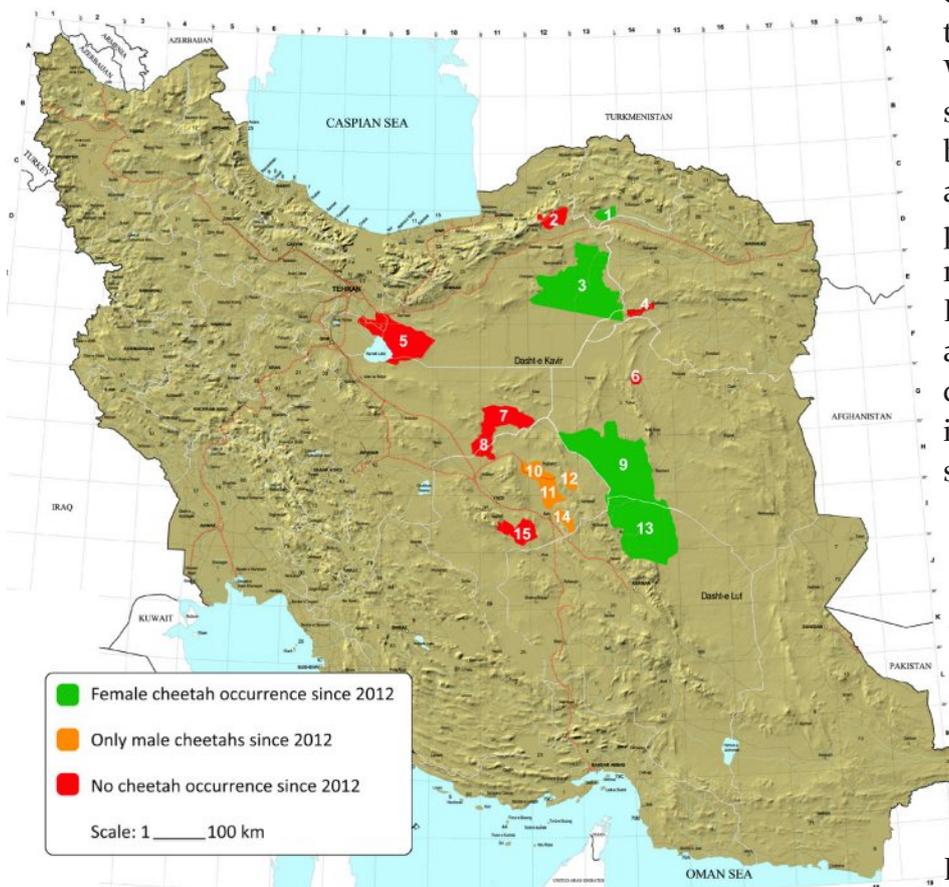
A call for maximizing conservation efforts to save Iranian cheetahs

In 2011 with the cooperation of CACP and Iran DoE, we launched a **country-scale cheetah monitoring program**. Through this large-scale initiative we aim to assess the status of cheetahs in Iran, and to provide scientifically sound estimates of the population size and trends of cheetahs in their last strongholds. The first phase of this project was carried out in 2011-2013, the second phase in 2014-2015, and the third phase is expected to run until mid-2017.

We are sad to confirm that since 2013, neither cheetah reproduction nor any female cheetahs have been photographed in south-central Iran. Given the available data, it is very likely that viable cheetah populations are now limited to only four areas: Miandasht Wildlife Refuge in North Khorasan Province, Touran Biosphere Reserve in Semnan Province, Naybandan Wildlife Refuge in South Khorasan Province, and, possibly, Darband-e Ravar Wildlife Refuge in Kerman Province. We also guesstimate that currently the size of the Iranian cheetah population may not exceed 40 individuals.

We have recently **shown** that Asiatic cheetahs disperse greatly across multiple reserves. This nomadic lifestyle is extremely important for the persistence of the Iranian cheetah population, as these migrations might reverse local extinction for small subpopulations. On the other hand, continuous cheetah movements and their unpredictable movement patterns make their conservation extremely difficult. Many human occupied areas, roads and railways exist between cheetah habitats, some of them encroaching on the cheetah reserves, which lead to the loss of more cheetahs.

We are still hopeful for the conservation of Asiatic Cheetahs, but we believe that all national and international partners must play a bigger, and more active role to safeguard cheetahs in Iran. Recently we have launched an online petition to ask President Hassan Rouhani to order immediate implementation of several protective measures, most importantly by pushing governmental bodies to cooperate with Iran DoE. So far about 10,000 Iranians have signed the petition, and we hope that this petition will provide a much-needed political will and support for conservation of the Asiatic cheetah in Iran. Read full story [here](#).



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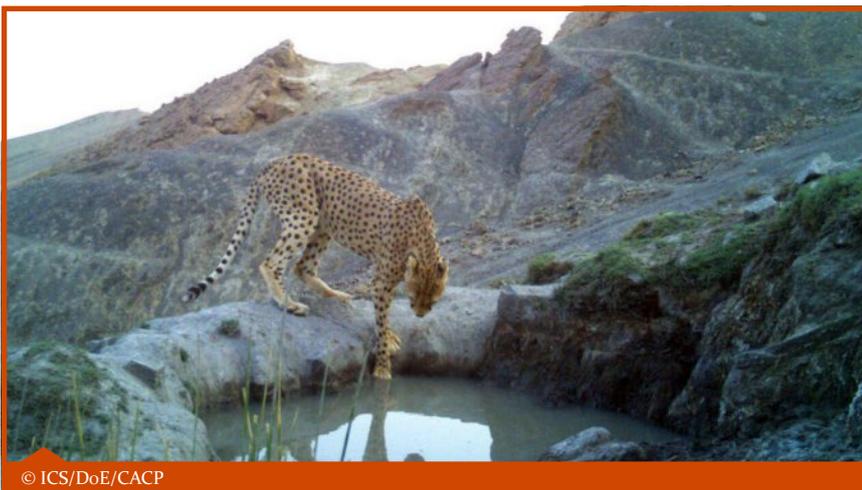


ICS collaborated in publishing 'Cats in Iran' Special Issue

Published by IUCN/SSC Cat Specialist Group in collaboration with Iran DoE, Cat News Special Issue Nr 10 discusses the status and conservation needs of 'Cats in Iran'. Covering 8 extant and 2 extinct felids of Iran, this special issue is dedicated to the remarkable, but often neglected, diversity of cat species in the country. 33 Iranian conservationists have contributed in developing the most updated and detailed review of felids of Iran, which is intended to set a baseline for the continuous assessment of the situation of Iran's cat populations. ICS researchers have contributed in the Asiatic cheetah, Eurasian lynx, caracal, Pallas's cat, and sand cat chapters. This special issue is open access and can be downloaded [here](#).



'Arash' and 'Pouyan' are still in Naybandan



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During August-September 2016, ICS surveyed the Naybandan Wildlife Refuge in South Khorasan Province. As the most intensive effort ever to monitor Naybandan cheetahs, 52 camera traps were systematically set up over the reserve to gather critical information about the presence of individual cheetahs previously identified in 2012-2013 and 2014-2015 surveys as well as the occurrence of any new cheetahs, and movement behavior of cheetahs. The two-month survey has resulted in about 50,000 photographs of Asiatic cheetahs along with the wildlife of Naybandan, a rare biodiversity still flourishing in this part of Iran.

Analyzing the cheetah photographs, the ICS researchers identified two male cheetahs we have photographed in the reserve since 2012, known to us as 'Arash' and 'Pouyan'. Although no female cheetahs or families were photographed in this survey, Naybandan rangers have reported the

presence of a cheetah family spotted during their routine patrolling in October 2016. Confirming the presence of this cheetah family would be exceptionally good news for the cheetah population in the south-central Iran. The present survey has been conducted in collaboration with Tabas Office of the South Khorasan DoE, CACP, and Part Wildlife Discovery Institute, and supported by private Iranian donors.



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The cheetah that lost his mother in a road accident is alive!



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In 2012, ICS's camera-traps in Miandasht Wildlife Refuge in northeastern Iran, photo-trapped a female cheetah with three cubs. Monitoring the cheetah family was carried out for several months, but it took more than two years to photo-capture this female cheetah again. This time, a new male cub was detected accompanying the female cheetah. Unfortunately, the female cheetah was killed in a road accident over 30 km away to the south, in the vicinity of Touran Protected Area in May 2016. Experts believed that this 14-month-old cheetah cub would not be able to survive without his mother, but attempts to capture the animal were unsuccessful. The young cheetah disappeared after a few days and was not spotted again during several



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months. Five months later, camera traps deployed by Wildlife Pictures Institute in Miandasht have surprisingly captured the young male cheetah again. The survival of this cheetah is certainly a source of hope and motivation for Iranian conservationists, as well as conservation attempts to save the Asiatic cheetah from extinction.

Community Education Project in Alborz Province Finished



© K. Hobeali/ICS

In August 2016, ICS in collaboration with the Alborz Department of Environment launched a conservation education and capacity building project for local people in Taleghan No-Hunting Area, Alborz Province. The focus of this project was increasing local tolerance towards large carnivores, in particular the Endangered Persian leopard. The ICS team used a number of education tools and awareness campaigns in selected villages inside the No-Hunting Area. Working with the younger generation in schools was central to this project. ICS hopes to continue its environmental awareness campaign in other villages in the area during the following months.



Winners of 2016 Yahya Prize unveiled at the award ceremony

The third Yahya Prize ceremony took place at Raad Charity Hall, Tehran, on the evening of December 4th 2016. Established by ICS in 2014 through a generous donation by an Iranian artist couple, Mojtaba Ramzi and Paridokht Moshkzad, the Yahya Prize recognises individual Iranian rangers who have done outstanding efforts to protect Iran's wildlife and natural environment. This year the Award honoured three rangers from Razavi Khorasan and Mazandaran Provinces, who were selected by the Award Committee through an intensive five-month effort. Additionally, the Award acknowledged families of three Iranian rangers killed during the fight with poachers in 2016. The 2016 Yahya Prize ceremony was held in col-



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laboration with Iran Zamin Bank, University of Environment, Raad Charity, Saman Golriz, Iran Environment and Wildlife Watch, and Wildlife Pictures Institute. Delegates from Iran DoE, CACP, and several Iranian NGOs and nature lovers attended the event.

Grey wolf photographed for the first time in a cheetah reserve

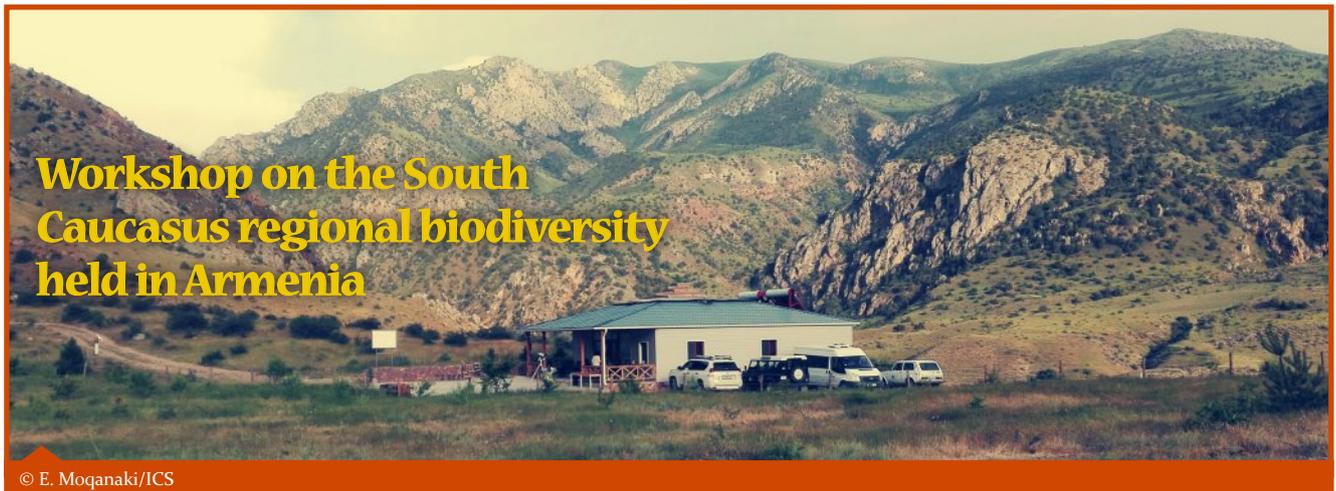
During the third year of the ICS cheetah-monitoring program, our research team was surprised by the discovery of the first confirmed evidence of the presence of wolves in Darreh Anjir Wildlife Refuge, Yazd Province. Located in south-central Iran, Darreh Anjir appears crucial for connectivity of cheetah populations in central Iran. ICS and its partners have continuously surveyed the reserve for about six years, but until now no information was available on the occurrence of grey wolves in the area. Interestingly, our camera traps have also captured footage of the striped hyena in the reserve after a six-year gap.



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Workshop on the South Caucasus regional biodiversity held in Armenia

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ICS representatives attended a regional workshop in Armenia, entitled “The advantages of privately protected areas for community development and biodiversity preservation”. Held by the Foundation for the Preservation of Wildlife and Cultural Assets (FPWC) with representatives of organizations from Georgia, Kazakhstan and The IUCN National Committee of the Netherlands. This four-day workshop was focused on biodiversity preservation in the Caucasus and Central Asia, and highlighted benefits of the direct engagement of local communities to this process. The participants exchanged their home institutions’ experiences in this field, and discussed the possibilities for future cooperation. The participants also enjoyed a trip to the Caucasus



© FPWC

Wildlife Refuge managed by FPWC, supported mainly by IUCN NL and World Land Trust.

The cheetah coalition is roaming in Yazd Province



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New data obtained during the third phase of ICS’s country-scale cheetah-monitoring program confirms the persistence of a male cheetah coalition we previously identified in 2012 in Darreh Anjir Wildlife Refuge, Yazd Province. Within this phase of our intensive field surveys, our team employed 50 remotely-triggered camera traps across key cheetah sites in this province, including Darreh Anjir, Bahabad No-Hunting Area, and two sites outside the current network of protected areas. Our goal is to assess the likelihood of female cheetah presence across the cheetah range in Yazd Province.

After more than two months of camera-trapping surveys, preliminary analysis of the cheetah photos confirms the persistence of four male cheetahs known to us since 2012, including a male coalition of three cheetahs we named as “Ardalan”, “Arsalan”, and “Ardavan”, together with “Hominu”, a lone male cheetah. Unfortunately, neither female cheetahs nor any sign of reproduction has been obtained in our camera-trapping effort. ICS work in Yazd is done in collaboration with provincial offices of the Iran DoE and CACP.



Press conferences on the status of Asiatic cheetahs in Iran held

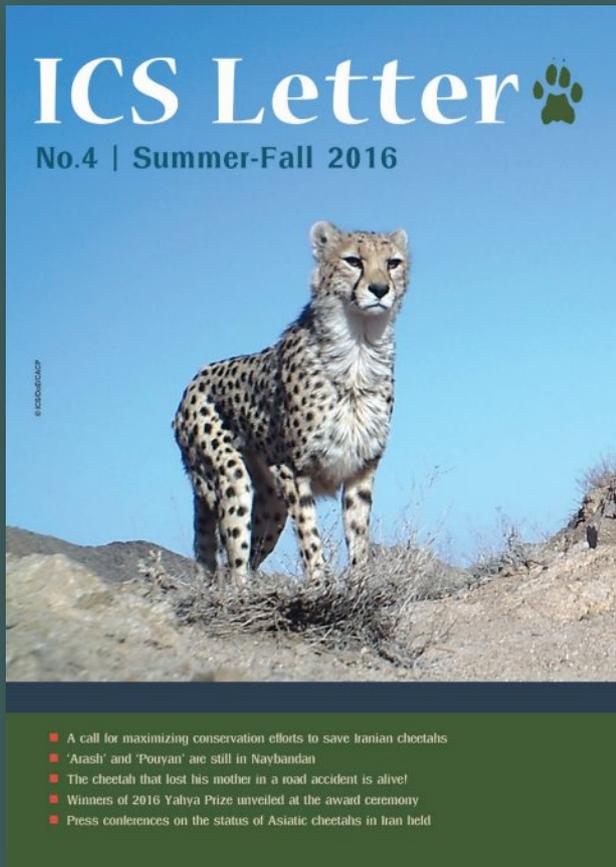
On August 29th and 31st 2016, ICS held press conferences explaining its plans for the 10th anniversary of the National Cheetah Day. During the first conference, CEO of ICS Morteza Eslami stressed that ICS intensive fieldwork since 2012 suggests that the current status of the Iranian cheetah population is a source of major concern. Eslami added that 2016 surveys have documented as few as two female cheetahs, given the fact that two out of four females ICS identified in 2013-14 surveys died in vehicle collisions in 2015-16. He noted that the

available data is insufficient to judge if the cheetah population trend is declining. However, “there is strong evidence that if we do not act now, there would be little hope to reverse the extinction of the Iranian cheetahs by 2020”, Eslami added. A second press conference was jointly held by CACP and ICS. In this conference, Houman Jowkar, CACP manager, and ICS CEO answered questions and concerns raised by the media and a large number of Iranian supporters. .

Persian Leopard Info-graphic poster published

After the successful experience of our Cheetah Infographic Poster, ICS developed and released the Persian Leopard infographic poster in collaboration with the Infogram Institute and Alborz DoE. The Persian leopard infographic poster was unveiled through a ceremo-

ny in the presence of DoE deputies and authorities of Alborz Province. These posters will be distributed in local villages and rural areas located in leopard habitat, in order to raise awareness about this endangered leopard sub-species.



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