

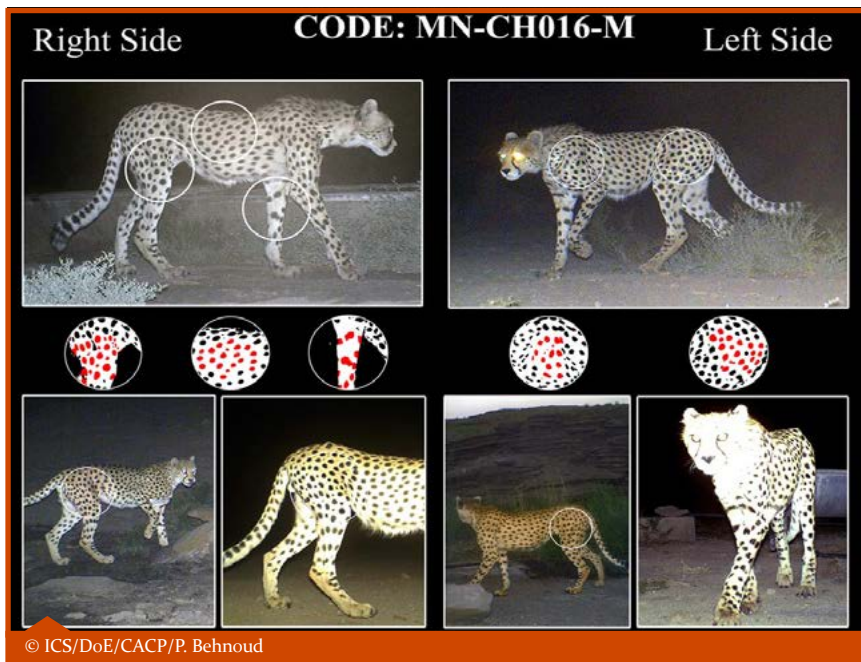
ICS Letter

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New cheetah death highlights the importance of identifying and preserving biological corridors

On February 1st, 2016, staff members of the Semnan Department of Environment discovered the carcass of an adult male cheetah in vicinity of Touran Protected Area. While further investigations are underway, ICS researchers compared the unique coat pattern of this individual with our countrywide database of documented Iranian cheetahs.

Our team identified the adult male cheetah as an individual previously camera-trapped as a cub by our team in Miandasht Wildlife Refuge in North Khorasan Province, about 52 kilometers to the north, first in the summer of 2012 and again in 2013.

There is no empirical data about dispersal and movement ecology of Asiatic cheetahs in Iran. However, Iranian cheetahs are known to move long-distances within and between the known cheetah core populations in south-central Iran. This incident confirms past speculations about cheetah movements between Miandasht and Touran, highlighting the urgent need for identifying and preserving biological corridors for this Critically Endangered population in Iran. **Read more** about ICS research on cheetah movements in central Iran.



Updates for the Persian Leopard Project in Northeastern Iran

Over the past issues of this newsletter, we have kept readers informed about this large-scale project. Studying the movement ecology of the endangered Persian leopard in this rugged human-affected landscape is one key aspect of the project. Five Persian leopards have been so far successfully fitted with cutting-edge GPS satellite collars, which are providing invaluable data about movement patterns; kill rates and the social structure of leopards. This information is also very important to increase our current knowledge about human-leopard interactions and leopard-livestock conflict. Among the four male and one female leopards captured during this study, three of the male leopards have been monitored for one year and their collars have been successfully recovered. The project team is now busy with an intensive camera-trapping survey and prey assessment in multiple reserves, in order to better understand the population dynamics of the enigmatic Persian leopard and patterns of predator-prey relationships. Carried out in collaboration with the University of Oxford's WildCRU, ICS, Iran DoE, and Panthera; this phase of the project is expected to continue through 2016.





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Pallas's cat photo-trapped during the Persian Leopard Project in Northeastern Iran

The Pallas's cat is one of the rarest of the small felids of Iran. Because of the Pallas's cat's elusiveness and small size, the species has only occasionally been documented by camera-traps across its range. In November and December 2015, the Persian Leopard Project in Northeastern Iran re-

ported photographic evidence of the Pallas's cat occurrence in different occasions in Salouk and Sarigol National Parks. In spite of not being the first confirmed record of the species' presence in these parks, the camera-trapped Pallas's cats are an exciting discovery for the project team.

Water for Cheetahs Project's first annual report submitted

Miandasht Wildlife Refuge in North Khorasan Province is one of the key cheetah reserves in Iran. Water sources in Miandasht are limited, and during the hot summers local rangers have to frequently maintain multiple artificial water holes across this arid reserve. In total, 10 artificial water holes provide the invaluable water for both Miandasht's wildlife and the ranger stations. During the dry season which usually lasts around 6 months from mid spring to early autumn, each artificial water hole must be manually filled 12-18 times. As the local wildlife authority has limited resources and the reserve's rangers need to focus on anti-poaching patrols, maintaining the artificial water sources becomes very problematic during this period. In collaboration with the local wildlife authority at Jajarm, ICS launched a campaign in spring 2015 to fundraise for the recruitment of a local assistant who is responsible for maintaining the water holes. Within 10 days, we successfully raised the necessary budget and delivered the funds to the local wildlife authority. As a result, Miandasht's water holes were fully functional in 2015 and no water shortage appeared.



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A new cheetah family photographed in Miandasht

Our camera traps have detected a new family comprised of a mother and a cheetah cub in

Miandasht Wildlife Refuge. We have known this female cheetah since 2012, when she was photographed with her three cubs in the reserve. New photographs from Miandasht show her with a new male cub. Miandasht has been intensively monitored by ICS since 2011, but this female cheetah has been absent from our photos since 2013. This finding suggests that presently at least two female cheetahs who are mother and daughter with their cubs live in Miandasht, totaling at least seven Critically Endangered Asiatic cheetahs, including two adult females, four cubs, and one adult male.

Socio-economic consequences of livestock predation by the Endangered Persian leopard



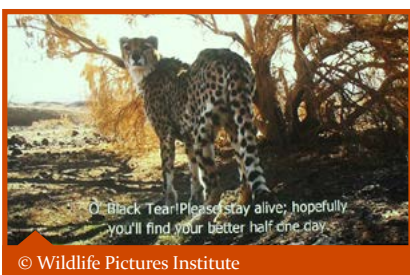
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Iran is a stronghold for leopards in Southwestern Asia, including the Caucasus Ecoregion. In the Caucasus, the Endangered Persian leopard has been persecuted to the verge of extinction, primarily as a result of conflict with people over livestock predation. In 2011, ICS launched a capacity building project for local communities in and around Dorfak No-Hunting Area, a key reserve along the Southern Caspian Sea coast. Supported by the People’s Trust for Endangered Species (PTES), during a two-year intensive investigation of the extent of cattle predation by leopards and how this influences people’s attitudes towards leopards among village residents, the ICS team revealed an alarming level of leopard-cattle conflicts and very negative local attitudes towards the predator. The ICS team has therefore focused on addressing the underlying conflicts using a human-leopard coexistence framework, considering that only a locally sustainable mitigation scheme in an institutionally and environmentally dynamic context would benefit all parties. The first phase of this study has been recently published in *Oryx*



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The Black Tear: A new documentary about the Iranian cheetahs



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A new documentary portraying the story of the Critically Endangered Asiatic cheetah in Kavir National Park has been released. In 2007, a joint research team of ICS and Plan for the Land Society surveyed this remote reserve in North-central Iran with the hope of confirming the presence of Asiatic cheetahs. After about 12 months although the team would successfully take several cheetah photographs throughout the national park, all the pictures were eventually revealed to be of a single male cheetah. The documentary explores

beyond these results, showing conservation efforts to save cheetahs in general in Iran. the documentary is produced by Wildlife Pictures Institute, in collaboration with CACP, Iran DoE, and ICS.



Another cheetah re-photographed after more than four years!

We previously wrote about our recent camera trapping survey in Naybandan Wildlife Refuge, which revealed another long-distance movement by a male Iranian cheetah. In the Naybandan survey, our camera traps have photographed three different male cheetahs in multiple occasions across the reserve. Amongst them, ICS researchers could eventually identify the third cheetah, known as “Navid” who was photographed for the first time by a team from National Geographic in 2011. Navid was missed in the following surveys in Naybandan Wildlife Refuge. Re-photographing this elusive cheetah after four years confirms the poor knowledge about the survival and population dynamics of Asiatic cheetahs in Iran.



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Leveraging trans-boundary partnerships for conservation of leopards in the Caucasus

A new study by ICS researchers shows that conservation of leopard populations in the Caucasus is tied to regional cooperation between range countries. Published in **Biological Conservation**, the study reveals that suitable leopard habitat in the Iranian Caucasus are likely to be fragmented into two main patches one in the Alborz Mountains, which hosts the larger leopard population and majority of breeding records, and the other in the boundary landscape along borders with Republic of Azerbaijan and Armenia. By modeling the connectivity between these two core patches, the study show that persistence of the leopard population in the boundary landscape and the broader Lesser Caucasus Mountains is dependent on trans-boundary movements through Southern Azerbaijan. Thus, it is a priority that international collaboration secures the leopard’s conservation in the wider landscape spanning the borders of Caucasian countries.

ICS is now launching a large-scale corridor assessment focusing on Gilan and Ardabil Provinces to assess the value of protecting the proposed corridors and to delineate priority areas for range-wide leopard conservation. ICS’ findings will also be used to support a proposal for the Iran DoE to grant legal protection to certain areas, and to explore opportunities for a regional cooperation between Iran and the Southern Caucasus countries. The ICS’ Caucasus leopard project in northwestern Iran is supported by Iran DoE and World Land Trust.



A good season for leopard photography!



Gathering reliable information about the population status of leopards is one of the key components of effective conservation planning for the endangered Persian leopard subspecies across its range. The Persian Leopard Project in Northeastern Iran is running an intensive camera-trapping survey in several key leopard reserves. To date, more than 250 photographs of Persian leopards from 40 camera-trap locations have been obtained from Salouk and Sarigol National Parks. Researchers from the University of Oxford’s Wild CRU and ICS have begun to analyze the data, and preliminary results suggest viable leopard populations in both parks. The team expects to expand this survey to new areas in the spring of 2016.

The cheetah family photographed again in Miandasht!



ICS’s camera-traps have successfully photographed the family of a female cheetah with three cubs in Miandasht Wildlife Refuge during October 2015. This cheetah family was first photographed in August 2015, and we are thrilled to find out that they are doing well. The female cheetah has been photographed on different occasions since the first time she was identified in 2013 as a cub.

I run Iran... with Iranian cheetahs!

A Persian marathon to send a message of peace and friendship from Iran will bring together participants from across the globe to “run4 fun”! The event planning is underway and aims to have as many participants as possible to achieve this goal. As a supporter, each participant will become acquainted with the Persian culture and history, as well as Iran’s spectacular biodiversity. ICS, together with the Iran Tourism

Organization and several local authorities, supports this event. The marathon will contribute to fundraising for ICS conservation activities and creating awareness for the last remaining population of the critically endangered Asiatic cheetah. More information about the event and how to help us in saving the Iranian cheetahs is available [here](#).



'In Search of the Persian Leopard' shines in New York City!

ICS's award-winning documentary "In Search of the Persian leopard" won the Best Foreign Feature Film award at Wildlife Conservation Film Festival (WCFF) in New York City. Produced by Fathollah Amiri (Wildlife Pictures Institute), this documentary features the story of a team of ICS biologists working in a rugged high-altitude reserve in Northern Iran where intensified human-

leopard conflict has resulted in heavy persecution of this enigmatic large cat. In Search of the Persian Leopard has won several national and international prestigious awards, including the Best Documentary Award at Iran's International Documentary Film Festival (Fajr), making it the most outstanding wildlife documentary produced to date in Iran.

The Asiatic cheetah info graphic poster: call for collaboration

ICS has used info graphic posters as an educational tool for the last few years. By combining "information" and "graphics", info graphic posters can act as innovative educational tools for a variety of conservation-oriented purposes to illustrate knowledge in a simple but comprehensive way for the public. Our team is now working on a new poster about the Critically Endangered

Asiatic cheetah. We would like to produce this poster in as many different languages as possible to raise global awareness about the vanishing Asiatic cheetah. To date, with the help of our supporters and friends, we have been able to translate the poster into 15 languages. We still need your help! We need volunteers to serve as translators in the selected languages highlighted [here](#)



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The Iranian Cheetah Society (ICS) is a non-governmental, non-profit organization devoted to saving the rich but fast disappearing biodiversity of Iran. Carnivores are an essential priority within the ICS activities and various research and conservation projects have been implemented for several species, such as Asiatic cheetah, brown bear, striped hyena, grey wolf, Eurasian lynx, caracal, and Persian leopard, the latter with more than two thirds of its wild population occurring in Iran. The ICS was established in 2001 (registration number 13640) and celebrated its first decade of biodiversity conservation recently.

To learn more about the Iranian Cheetah Society (ICS) visit: www.wildlife.ir



www.wildlife.ir