

# Persian Leopard



Newsletter

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## A YEAR **AFTER** 'YEAR OF LEOPARD'

**A**s an endangered subspecies, the Persian leopard was once abundant across most mountainous and forest habitats of Iran, but it is now one of the rarest species of carnivores in the country. Recent surveys have revealed that around 65% of the wild population of the Persian leopard exists in Iran. Moreover, despite of poaching and habitat loss, the range of the leopard is still known to include large areas of Iran. Annually, a minimum of 30 to 50 leopards are confirmed to be poached in Iran which conflict with local people and unawareness are the main reasons.

2010 was the "Year of Leopard" in Iran which was a great opportunity to utilize this social event for the beneficiary of leopard conservation in Iran. Accordingly, the present project was designated in late 2009 and was implemented until March 2011 in Iran with an aim to spread leopard knowledge at various levels of the Iranian as well as international community. Therefore, specific activities were planned for various target groups.

We mainly focused on capacity building and training of local experts and game wardens, because they are mainly in charge of conservation of the species who usually suffer from lack of appropriate knowledge and training. Accordingly, more than 20 training workshops were organized in different cities across the country for experts, game wardens and university students. On the other hand, an Online Center was established composing of Persian leopard literature to provide interested people easy opportunity to learn the latest findings about the

Persian leopard and scientific seminars were organized for university students across the country. Mass media were fed with leopard facts to cover the Iranian community broadly. On the other hand, a dynamic database was prepared and updated regularly based on human-caused mortalities of leopards during the past decade in Iran.

After evaluating the project's outcomes within each hotspot together with available sources of local human power (preferably in form of local NGO/CBO), political support from local stakeholders, and frequency of leopard mortalities, and achievable goals, pilot conservation education projects were planned. Additional funds were raised to launch two such projects in Lorestan (western Iran) and Kalmand (central Iran) and more areas will be covered in following years.

With respect to critical position of Iran for survival of the Persian leopard, it is essential to share the knowledge with other countries to enhance leopard conservation efforts as well as building trans-boundary joint initiatives. In order to highlight the Persian leopard at international level, Persian Leopard Newsletter was born on bi-monthly basis and sent to a huge database of international wildlife conservationists. Also, a number of reports were published in international magazines and journals.

The "Year of Leopard" was a milestone for leopard conservation in Iran with a variety of effective and conservation-based achievements for sake of this vanishing cat. The Iranian Cheetah Society (ICS) invites other national/international groups to join

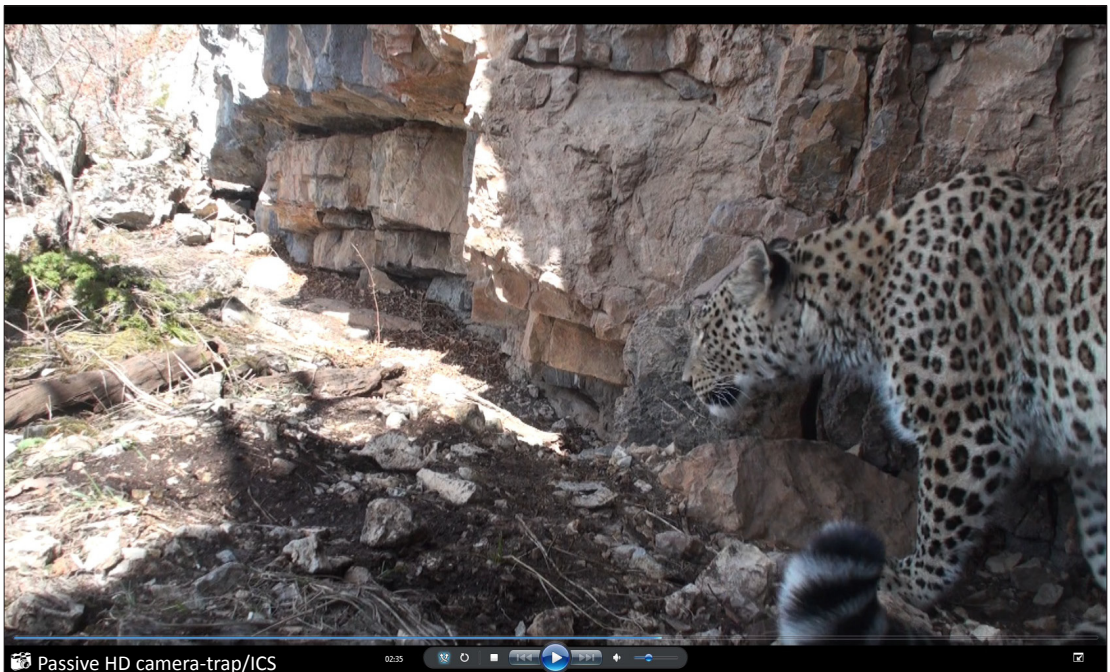




## MORE ADVANCES IN LEOPARD MOVIE

Spring was started for us with outstanding news: An adult female was again on film! The Iranian Cheetah Society (ICS) is working on the Persian leopards in northern Iran since 2006 and recently, the Iranian National TV has contracted a wildlife documentary movie about this area's rich biodiversity. The first episode of the movie is named as "In Search for the Persian Leopard" and ICS biologists and film crew passed a busy winter to find the leopards in harsh climates of Alborz Mountains. So far, movie camera traps were deployed by Bagher Nezami and Fathollah Amiri in different locations and after November 2010 when an adult male was filmed while

showing territorial marking behavior, in early April 2011 an adult female was trapped for four minutes. The animal seems to be pregnant which according to our previous surveys in the area; she should have her cub(s) within a month. But a few days before finishing this newsletter, the movie camera trap caught the same female on a kill for more than 20 minutes. It was the best event for the new Persian year (initiated on 20 March) because according to an old Persian phrase "If you have a good spring, you will have a nice year". Now, we are looking forward more success for the leopard movie which can play a significant role for promotion of the species knowledge within the Iranian community.



## A YEAR AFTER 'YEAR OF LEOPARD'



this effort to cover the leopard's vast range and is hopeful to continue the leopard conservation program to ensure the long-term survival of the Persian leopard in Iran.

In order to see a detailed report about main activities done during the "Year of Leopard", visit our website or [click here to download it in PDF format](#).



Composed of six countries of Turkey, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Russia and Iran, Caucasian Ecoregion is home to some small and isolated population nuclei of leopard. The species has attracted intensive attention by regional and international experts to save the survival of the species in the Caucasus. Over the past years, WWF has undertaken considerable efforts to assess the status of the leopard in the Caucasus and developed approaches for its conservation and significant investment into the conservation of the leopard has been justified as this charismatic large cat.

Despite of possession of source population in the ecoregion, Iran has been the least active partner in efforts. Almost 10% of the country's leopard population occurs in north west where is covered by the Caucasian ecoregion; however, the species has rarely been subject to research and conservation programs by the Iranian agencies, resulted in no management plan to safeguard the species within Iran as well as to support sink populations in neighboring countries.

Organized by WWF Caucasus Programme Office, WWF-Turkey and IUCN/SSC Cat Specialist Group, a Regional Workshop on the Leopard Conservation in the Caucasus was held in Istanbul, Turkey on 7 and 8 March 2011. This

workshop was a follow-up of the Meeting on Leopard Conservation in the Caucasus organized during 19th International Conference on Bear Research and Management on 18 May, 2010 in Tbilisi, Georgia to discuss about current status of leopard populations in the Caucasus and ways of its improvement.

Along with participants from countries' experts and international organizations, an Iranian delegation actively attended in the meeting, composed of experts from Iranian Department of Environment, Iranian Cheetah Society (ICS) and Persian Leopard Conservation Society. Accordingly, Iran will promote its role for the project and particular efforts will be focused on this part of the country to enforce leopard conservation. Moreover, a regional meeting is going to be hosted by the DoE to synchronize the project's measures, especially to establish trans-boundary reserves. Meanwhile, for more effective communication and monitoring, Leopard Conservation Network will be organized composed of international and regional experts, working under supervision of the IUCN/SSC Cat Specialist Group. Now, the Iranian authorities are quite committed to enhance their function to improve status of the leopard in the Caucasus Ecoregion.



## TRAINING FOR CONSERVING THE LEOPARDS

According to a preliminary assessment, it was concluded that local experts and game wardens suffer from lack of comprehensive perception about the leopard, its ecology and needs for survival. Territoriality, population dynamics and ranging activities are the main scientific drawbacks of the game wardens and experts which motivate them to suppose that their habitats sustain high

densities of the leopards with small home ranges even when prey has depleted drastically. During winter 2010-2011, we were busy to organize various workshops in different places. It was started in January in Gilan province in north and Kerman in south, then to the west in Lorestan, followed by Zanjan still in west and West Azarbayjan in northwestern country. Meanwhile, two workshops were organized



in the Department of Environment for national experts to spread the knowledge of the leopard. Accordingly, 9 workshops were held during winter in the big country. Fortunately, most of northwestern provinces where are laid within the Caucasian region were covered, hopefully helpful for the leopards in this part of the country.

## LEOPARD LOSS COUNTER (JANUARY-DECEMBER 2010)

During 2010, 25 leopards were confirmed to be poached in Iran which is still a high human-caused mortality rate. Most of these individuals were poached due to conflict with local people, owning the highest rank for mortalities of the largest existing cat in the country. Meanwhile, we are fully aware that this confirmed figure is a small proportion of the reality, as a majority of mortalities are never been heard. The Iranian Cheetah Society (ICS) has been establishing and updating a Persian Leopard Mortality Database composing of human-caused cases since 2001. So far, more than 130 leopards have been entered in the database for the last decade. Now, ICS and Panthera are

working together to release a joint analysis to indicate management implications for improving conservation of the species in Iran where holds more than 65% of the Persian leopards in the wild.



Source: Unknown

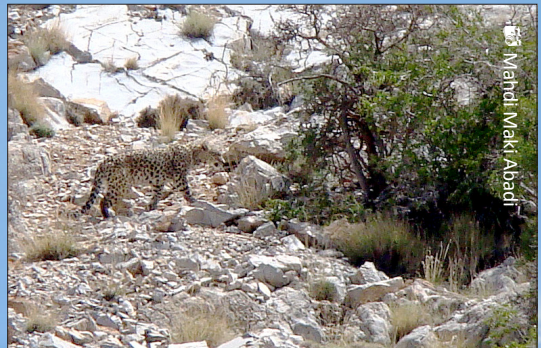


## KHABR NATIONAL PARK

Located within Khabr-o-Rouchon Complex, Khabr National Park (KhNP) encompasses ca. 150000 ha of heterogeneous landscapes, from high-altitude mountainous regions to temperate hilly grasslands and riparian environments. The area is laid south of Baft, Kerman Province - Southern Iran, surrounding by several counties, populated human settlements and serves as a traditional route for local nomads. Although KhNP is suffering from prolonged drought, increasing habitat fragmentation/degradation and other human-induced activities, it still supports a variety of endangered species, including the Persian leopard. However, there is a decreasing trend in observation reports of the animal from its known habitats inside KhNP. Moreover, the cryptic cat is apparently facing with lack of food resources as a consequence of livestock

over-grazing and wild herbivores (i.e. Persian ibex, wild sheep, chinkara) poaching, and conflicts with herders and local people.

Anecdotal reports suggest historical occurrence of Asiatic cheetah and Asiatic black bear within KhNP which are now supposed to be extirpated. Other members of family Felidae, namely caracal and wild cat occur in the area and presence of sand cat and Pallas' cat is yet need to be confirmed.



# THANKS TO ALL THE PERSIAN LEOPARD SUPPORTERS!

**T**he Iranian Cheetah Society thanks all of our supporters who helped us in any stages of creation and distribution of the Persian Leopard Newsletter. Herein, we would like to extend special thanks to the following people [in alphabetic order] for contributing their time with encouraging us and/or gave us their insightful advices during releasing the previous issues of PLN:

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## SPECIAL THANKS TO ...

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**Iranian Cheetah Society (ICS)** is a non-governmental, non-profitable organization devoted to save the biodiversity which is so rich, but disappearing in Iran. Carnivores have essential priority within the ICS activities and various research and conservation projects have been implemented on the species, such as Asiatic cheetah, brown bear, striped hyena, grey wolf, Eurasian lynx, caracal, mustelids and Persian leopard whose more than two third of its wild population occurs in Iran. It has been established in 2001 (registration number 13640) and hopes to celebrate its first decade of biodiversity conservation soon.

To learn more about Iranian Cheetah Society (ICS)

visit: [www.wildlife.ir](http://www.wildlife.ir)

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