

Strategic Planning Workshop Leopard Conservation in the Caucasus

Facilitators' Report
prepared by
Urs Breitenmoser, Christine Breitenmoser-Würsten & David Mallon



Date: 30 May - 1 June 2007

Place: Hotel Varazi, 45 Kostava Str., Tbilisi 0179, Georgia (www.hotelvarazi.ge)

Organisers: WWF Caucasus Programme Office and IUCN/SSC Cat Specialist Group

Geographic focus: Caucasus eco-region – Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Iran, Russia, and Turkey

Index

Introduction.....	2
Background of the strategic planning workshop.....	2
Range country introductory papers.....	2
Workshop report.....	3
Conclusions and next steps.....	6
Appendix I: Workshop agenda.....	7
Appendix II: List of participants.....	9
Appendix III: Template for National Action Plan for the leopard in the Caucasus.....	11

Introduction

The leopard in the Caucasus is Critically Endangered; only some small and isolated population nuclei remain in the whole ecoregion. To save the survival of the species in the Caucasus, urgent conservation actions are needed. Significant investment into the conservation of the leopard is justified as this charismatic large cat is both an umbrella species – its conservation will also include the preservation of the prey species and their habitats – and a flagship species – the leopard is the ideal carrier of the conservation idea to the local population, between the range states, and to the international conservation community. 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. Considering the high ecological, cultural, and political diversity of the region, the poor economic situation in certain countries, and the fact that the leopard as a large carnivore is a conflicting species, it is obvious that the successful conservation of the species will not only depend on the knowledge and understanding of the experts, but rather on the favourable reception and implementation of a conservation strategy and action plan. On the other hand, the Caucasus leopard project could also become a model case of cooperation and a joint conservation of the natural heritage.

Background of the strategic planning workshop

WWF contacted the IUCN/SSC Cat Specialist Group regarding the further development of a Caucasus leopard conservation programme. We proposed a three-step approach:

1. Compiling the present knowledge in a baseline information report (Status Report);
2. Develop a Conservation Strategy for the leopard in the entire Caucasus eco-region;
3. Implement the Conservation Strategy through the development of National Action Plans.

The present situation of the leopard and its conservation in the Caucasus were summarised in six original papers, compiled as *Status and Conservation of the Leopard in the Caucasus* (Cat News Special Issue No. 2, 2007). This issue was distributed at the workshop to provide background information.

Range country introductory papers

On behalf of Sophiko Akhobadze, Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources of Georgia, who was unable to attend the meeting, Ana Rukhadze, Head of the Biodiversity Protection Department of the same Ministry, opened the workshop, followed by Georgi Sanadiraze, Director of WWF Caucasus Programme, who welcomed the participants. After the opening ceremony, the following participants reviewed the situation of the leopard in the six countries sharing the Caucasus eco-region and gave an update on new findings or activities:

Armenia: Igor Khorozyan and Karen Manvelyan

Azerbaijan: Tariel Talibov, Gunduz Rahimov and Elshad Askerov

Georgia: Levan Butkhuzi

Iran: Ali Agili and Mohammadreza Masoud

Russia: Victor Lukarevsky, Vyatcheslav Rozhnov and Anatoly Kudaktin

Turkey: Halim Diker, Yildiray Lise, Sedat Kalem and Mustafa Akincioglu

Several of the speakers gave Power Point presentations. The introductory talks and especially the additional data presented compared to the Status Report will be used to compile an updated brief status chapter and revised distribution map for the Strategy.

Workshop report

DAY 1

The workshop lasted for three days (Appendix I) and contained the following elements:

1. Problem analysis and review of enabling conditions;
2. Development of a range-wide conservation strategy using a logical framework approach;
3. Assessment of Problems, Objectives, and Targets per range country to prepare the development of National Action Plans.

Professional interpreter Alexander Kochoradze translated all plenary discussions into English and Russian. Working group discussions were, as far as needed, translated by any of the participants familiar with both languages.

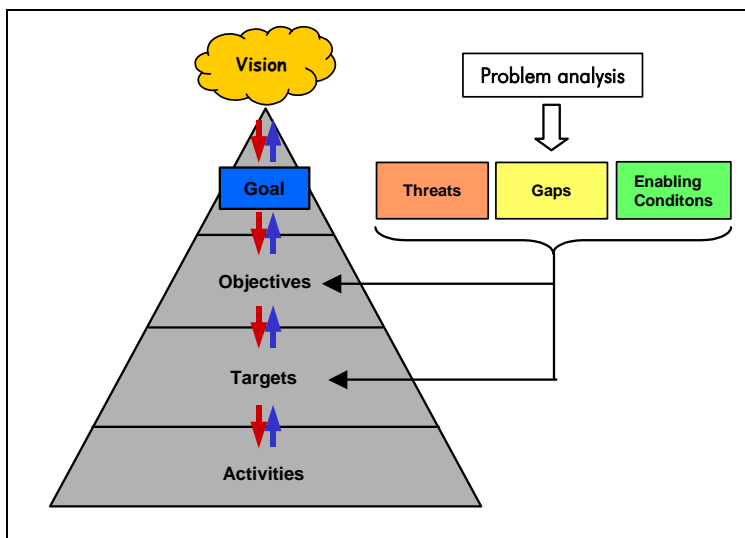


Fig. 1. LogFrame used to develop the Conservation Strategy for the leopard in the Caucasus. After defining a long-term Vision and a more concrete Goal, participants identify the Threats to the leopard, the Gaps in knowledge or capacity, and the Enabling Conditions needed for the conservation of the leopard. The Problem Analysis then supports the definition of Objectives, Targets and Activities.

To warm up, the participants were asked to write their personal motivation to conserve the leopard on a card. These cards were then categorised and presented at the pin wall. The participants stressed the ecological role of the leopard in the ecosystem (14) or its cultural importance as a symbol of the Caucasus (5), or underlined ethical reasons or personal engagement (10).

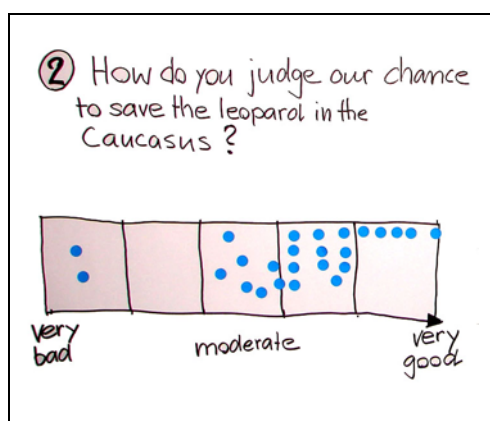


Fig. 2. Warm-up exercise 2. The participants were asked to place a sticker dot on a relative scale from very bad to very good to express their opinion about the chance of the leopard to survive in the Caucasus.

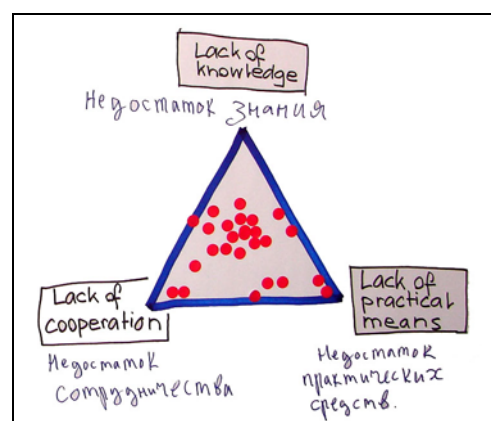


Fig. 3. Warm-up exercise 3 – obstacles to leopard conservation. A dot in the centre means that lack of knowledge, lack of cooperation and lack of practical means are likewise hindering its conservation.

In a second exercise, the participants were asked to express their personal judgement of the chances for the leopard to survive in the Caucasus. Although some were rather pessimistic, the group as a whole believes that the leopard can still be preserved (Fig. 2). In the last warm-up exercise, the group assessed the main ob-

stacles to leopard conservation: lack of knowledge, lack of will and cooperation, and lack of practical means (Fig. 3). Most of the participants believe that all three factors play a role. Some see either lack of cooperation or lack of practical means to be the main hindrances, whereas nobody thinks that lack of understanding alone is the problem.

The plenary group then split into four working groups (Fig. 4–7) according to the following themes: species and population (WG 1); important places – habitats and corridors (WG 2); human dimensions and socio-economic circumstances (WG 3); policy, legislation and international cooperation (WG 4).



Fig. 4. Working Group 1, dealing with questions regarding species and populations.



Fig. 5. Working Group 2, discussing important places, habitats and corridors.



Fig. 6. Working Group 3 in a dispute about human dimensions and socio-economic circumstances.



Fig. 7. Working Group 4, concentrating on policy, legislation, and international cooperation.

These working groups remained in their original composition until afternoon Day 3, when the participants split into country working groups. The first task for each working group was to propose one Vision and one Goal. Three of the WGs fulfilled the task within the given time frame. The rest of the first afternoon was dedicated to the problem analysis. Each WG wrote Threats, Gaps and Enabling Conditions for their specific themes on cards (red for Threats, pink for Gaps, and green for Enabling Conditions; Fig. 8) and handed their findings in at the end of the afternoon. As the range country statements had taken the whole morning (in contrast to the original agenda; Appendix I) the problem analysis was not completed at Day 1. The facilitators reviewed the cards, gathered similar statements and grouped them on the pin walls after the working groups had finished their discussions. This exercise was originally planned to be done in a plenary session, but the advanced time and the fact that the need for translation considerably slowed down the plenary discussions forced us to choose a slightly different approach.

DAY 2

The second day started with a quick review of the warm-up exercises and the discussion of the Vision and Goal. The three proposals – which were relatively close to each other – were compiled into one common Vision and one Goal:

Vision:

Leopards and all wildlife prosper in natural habitats across the Caucasus ecoregion in harmony with people.

Goal:

Ensure the conservation and sustainable management of viable meta-populations of leopard and wild prey and their habitats and build sustainable coexistence mechanisms with local communities across the Caucasus eco-region.

The English version of the Vision and Goal was relatively easy to agree, but the translation into Russian triggered some discussion, as some of the English terms do not have respective equivalents in Russian.



Fig. 8. David Mallon facilitating the discussion on the grouping of Threats, Gaps, and Enabling Conditions in the plenary session.

Threats, Gaps and Enabling Conditions identified by the working groups were reviewed and discussed in a plenary session. The working groups then finalised the problem analysis according to the comments of the other participants. While the facilitators compiled the Threats, Gaps and Enabling Conditions in tables, the working groups drafted the Objectives, which were presented and discussed after the lunch break. From 15 objectives proposed by the working groups, several were integrated into one, so that a total of 11 objectives were retained for the Conservation Strategy. The second half of the afternoon was used to work on Targets and Activities. All working groups handed in the results of their discussions so far on memory stick at the end of the afternoon session.

DAY 3

The third day started with the presentation of Targets and Activities by WG 2 and 4, which were the most advanced. The working groups then finalised or continued to work on Targets and Activities, which was completed only in early afternoon. Working group 2 already worked on questions regarding the endorsement, implementation and review of the Strategy and presented their findings to the plenary for comments. The participants then gathered in country working groups and made an assessment of Threats, Gaps and Enabling Conditions and of Objectives and Targets by range country and completed a questionnaire regarding the endorsement and implementation of the Strategy and the development of National Action Plans.

Conclusions and next steps

The time frame for the workshop was rather generous, but we overran the schedule by about half an hour. The backlog of the first morning was easily caught up with, but the country assessments on the last afternoon took a surprising amount of time, at least for some of the groups. The problem seemed to have been the assessment of the Enabling Conditions, that we did for the first time and which needs to be reconsidered. Enabling Conditions were also more difficult to identify than Threats and Gaps, it nevertheless adds an important aspect to the problem analysis. However, the formulation of Objectives and Targets – where the findings from the problem analyses need to be integrated – becomes more complex and needs better explanation. The division into four working groups according to the themes “species and population”, “space and habitat”, “human dimension and socio-economic circumstances” and “policy, legislation and international cooperation” worked quite well. The groups were more or less synchronised and the overlap of statements was moderate. The commitment of all participants was remarkable and each group had members with experience in group-work and LogFrame-approach.

The facilitators will review the results of the workshop and draft a first version of the Conservation Strategy on behalf of the leopard committee by end of June. Members of the committee are V. Lukarevsky (Russia), N. Zazanashvili (Georgia), I. Khorozyan (Armenia), E. Askerov (Azerbaijan), L. Shamimi (Iran), and S. Kalem (Turkey). This committee will review the draft strategy and assess possible changes that might be needed when compiling the workshop results. Two such proposals were already identified in the final discussion:

- To add a Task/Activity to establish and maintain a centralised database for leopard records in the Caucasus according to international standard and categories;
- To include a short summary with an update of the distribution map according to the presentations at the workshop into the Conservation Strategy.

Before the Strategy will be submitted to the range country authorities for endorsement it will also be translated into Russian.

Appendix I

Workshop Agenda*Time Topic***Day 1, 30 May – Morning**

- 09:30 Opening of the workshop:
Mrs. Sophiko Akhobadze, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Environment Protection and Natural Resources of Georgia,
Mr. Giorgi Sanadiradze, Director, WWF Caucasus Programme Office
- 09:40 Introduction to the workshop (N. Zazanashvili, WWF)
- 09:45 Range countries – presentation & expectations
 Armenia
 Azerbaijan
 Georgia
 Iran
 Russia
 Turkey
- 11:15 *Coffee break*
- 11:45 Summary of the reports from Cat News Special Issue 2
 Leopard (Dr. Christine Breitenmoser-Würsten, IUCN)
 Prey (Dr. David Mallon, IUCN) - cancelled
- 12:30 Introduction to the workshop (Dr. Urs Breitenmoser, IUCN)
- 13:00 *Lunch break*

Day 1, 30 May – Afternoon

- 14:00 Plenary: Warm-up and presentation of participants (Facilitators)
- 14:45 Group work: Definition of Visions & Goal (Working groups 1–4)
- 15:45 *Coffee break*
- 16:15 Group work: Identification of Threats & Enabling Conditions
 WG 1: Species and populations
 WG 2: Important places – habitat and corridors
 WG 3: Human dimensions and socio-economic circumstances
 WG 4: Policy, legislation and international cooperation
- 17:15 Plenary: Presentation and discussion of Vision & Goal
- 18:00 *End of working day*

Day 2, 31 May – Morning

- 09:30 Plenary: Agreement on final Vision & Goal
 Presentation and discussion of Threats & Enabling Conditions
- 10:30 Group work: Ranking of Threats & Enabling Conditions (WG 1–4)
- 11:30 *Coffee break*

Time Topic

- 12:00 Group work: Formulation of Objectives
WG 1: Species and population
WG 2: Important places – living space, habitat & corridors
WG 3: Human dimensions – conflict mitigation
WG 4: Policy, legislation & international cooperation

13:00 *Lunch break*

Day 2, 31 May - Afternoon

- 14:00 Plenary: Presentation and discussion of objectives
14:45 Group work: Final formulation of objectives (WG 1–4)
15:45 *Coffee break*
16:15 Group work: Formulation of Targets and Activities
Targets & Activities per Objectives (WG 1–4)
18:00 *End of working day*
Reception in Tbilisi Zoo, hosted by Dr. Zurab Gurielidze, Director

Day 3, 1 June – Morning

- 09:30 Plenary: Presentation of Targets & Activities, feedback
11:00 *Coffee break*
11:15 Group work: Revision of Targets & Activities
11:45 Plenary: Country groups, instructions (facilitators)
12:00 Group work: Endorsement & implementation
Assessment of Objectives (Country groups)
13:00 *Lunch break*

Day 3, 1 June – Afternoon

- 14:00 Group work: Assessment of Targets & Activities
Recommendations for development of National Action Plans (Country groups)
15:00 Plenary: Presentation and feedback recommendation for National Action Plans
16:00 *Coffee break*
16:30 Group work: Revision and finalisation of country matrices and recommendations (Country groups)
17:00 Plenary: Final discussion and next steps
18:00 *End of working day and workshop*
19:00 *Farewell dinner*

Appendix II

List of participants strategic planning workshop on leopard conservation in the Caucasus

Name	Position	E-mail
<i>Workshop facilitators:</i>		
Dr. Urs Breitenmoser	Co-chair, IUCN/SSC Cat Specialist Group	BreiteUr@KORA.CH
Dr. Christine Breitenmoser-Würsten	Co-chair, IUCN/SSC Cat Specialist Group	BreiteCh@KORA.CH
Dr. David Mallon	Co-chair, IUCN/SSC Antelope Specialist Group	d.mallon@zoo.co.uk
<i>Country Delegates:</i>		
Armenia		
Mr. Arutiun Galoyan	Deputy Head, Agency of Bioresources Management, Ministry of Nature Protection	
Dr. Mikhail Voskanov	Deputy Head, Division of Animal Resources Management, Agency of Bioresources Management, Ministry of Nature Protection	mvoskan@mail.ru
Mr. Igor Khorozyan	Independent expert	leopard_am@yahoo.com
Mr. Alexander Malkhasyan	Expert, WWF Armenia Branch Office	amalkhasyan@wwfcaucasus.am
Dr. Karen Manvelyan	Director, WWF Armenia Branch Office, Coordinator of WWF Leopard Program in Armenia	kmanvelyan@wwfcaucasus.am
Azerbaijan		
Mr. Gunduz Rahimov	Environmental Dept., Cabinet of Ministers	grahimov@yandex.ru
Prof. Dr. Tariel Talibov	Director, Institute of Bio-resources of Nakhchyvan Branch, National Academy of Science, Azerbaijan	tariyel_talibov@box.az t_talibov@mail.ru
Mr. Elshad Askerov	Conservation Officer, WWF Azerbaijan Branch Office, Coordinator of WWF Leopard Program in Azerbaijan	easkerov@wwfcaucasus.az
Georgia		
Mrs. Ana Rukhadze	Head of Biodiversity Protection Department, Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources, Georgia	biodepbio@moe.gov.ge anarukhadze@yahoo.com
Dr. Zurab Gurielidze	Director, Tbilisi Zoo, Associated Professor, I. Chavchavadze State University	zgurielidze@zoo.ge zgurielidze@hotmail.com
Mr. Levan Butkhuzi	NGO NACRES	striped.hyena@nacres.org
Mr. Bejan Lortkipanidze	NGO NACRES	
Mr. Alexander Gavashelishvili	NGO GCCW	kajiri2000@yahoo.com
Ms. Khatuna Tsiklauri	Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources, Georgia	
Ms. Irina Lomashvili	Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources, Georgia	

Name	Position	E-mail
Iran		
Mr. Mohammadreza Masoud	Wildlife Bureau of DoE	r_masoud84@yahoo.com
Dr. Mohammad Taghi Farvar	President, NGO CENESTA, Iran; Chair, IUCN Commission on Environmental, Economic and Social Policy,	taghi@cenesta.org
Prof. Dr. Hormoz Asadi	Azad University, College of Environment, Tehran	sarahbagh(a)safineh.net
Mr. Ali Agili	Director, Leopard conservation NGO	
Ms. Leili Shamimi	NGO CENESTA	leili@cenesta.org
Russia		
Prof. Dr. Vyatcheslav Rozhnov	Chairman, Commission on rare species of the Ministry of Natural Resources, Deputy Director, Institute of Problems of Ecology and Evolution, Russian Academy of Sciences	rozhnov@sevin.ru
Dr. Viktor Lukarevski	Researcher, Institute of Problems of Ecology and Evolution, Russian Academy of Sciences/WWF-Russia	vlukarevskiy@seu.ru
Prof. Dr. Anatoly Kudaktin	Kabardino-Balkarian Institute of High Mountain Ecosystems	kudaktinkavkaz@mail.ru
Dr. Yuri Iarovenko	Researcher, Dagestan Centre of Russian Academy of Sciences	yarovenko2004@mail.ru
Turkey		
Mr. Mustafa Akincioglu	Deputy Director General for Nature Conservation and National Parks, Ministry of Environment and Forestry, Turkey	makincioglu70@yahoo.com
Mr. Halim Diker	Independent expert	halimdiker@yahoo.com dikerhalim@gmail.com
Mr. Yildiray Lise	Coordinator, NGO Doga Dernegi	yildiray.lise@dogadernegi.org
Dr. Sedat Kalem	Director, Forestry Program/Coordinator for Caucasus, WWF-Turkey	skalem@wwf.org.tr
WWF and IUCN		
Mr. Frank Moerschel	WWF-Germany	Moerschel@wwf.de
Ms. Alice Eymard-Duvernay	WWF-Switzerland	Alice.Eymard@wwf.ch
Dr. Giorgi Sanadiradze	Director, WWF Caucasus PO	gsanadiradze@wwfcaucasus.ge
Mr. Tobias Garstecki	IUCN Programme Office for Southern Caucasus	Tobias.garstecki@iucn.org
Ms. Sophia Mgeladze	Project Administrator, WWF CauPO	smgeladze@wwfcaucasus.ge
Dr. Nugzar Zazanashvili	Conservation Director, WWF CauPO	nzazanashvili@wwfcaucasus.ge

Appendix III

Template for a National Action Plan for the Leopard in the Caucasus

A national or regional action plan is a tool for the implementation of a higher conservation strategy at the level of an administrative or management unit, most often a country or a province. The *Conservation Strategy for the Leopard in the Caucasus* provides guidance for the conservation of the leopard on the ecoregional or metapopulation level. It defines general goals, common procedures, international cooperation and activities at the range level. In order to concretise and implement the objectives and targets of the Strategy at the country level, *National Action Plans* must be developed. This is best done in a participative process – e.g. using a logical framework approach – involving the national authorities in charge, the experts, the stakeholders, and the local people. The following outline provides a checklist for the content of a National Action Plan, which will need to be adapted to the specific situations in each range country.

Outline contents:

Executive Summary

1. Introduction

- Scope of the Action Plan
- Conceptual and/or legal basis (e.g. national legislation, international treaties, range-wide Conservation Strategy)
- Development process and partners involved in the development of the Action Plan

2. Background Information

Summary of all information relevant for the understanding of the national Action Plan, especially review of the conservation status of the leopard in the respective country.

- 2.1. Biology and ecology (description, systematic, life history, etc.)
- 2.2. National history of the leopard (long-term development of distribution range and population size)
- 2.3. Present distribution, abundance and conservation status (e.g. protected areas)
- 2.4. Current protection: legal status, conservation and management policy
- 2.5. Conservation actions and relevant research project to date
- 2.6. Problem analysis: Identification of threats, constraints and gaps of knowledge

3. Action Plan Goal and Objectives

Goals and objectives of a National Action Plan should be formulated with reference to the goal and objectives agreed at the range level (see Strategy) and so support the conservation of the entire metapopulation and consider all needs for transboundary cooperation for the conservation of specific subpopulations.

- 3.1. Overall goal (with reference to the goals at range level from the Strategy)
- 3.2. Objectives (with reference to the objectives at range level from the Strategy)

4. Targets and Actions Required

Targets and actions proposed in the Action Plan may concern any of the following themes:

- 4.1. Measures at species/population level, such as
 - Research on ecology, such as land tenure system, social system, diet, demography, dispersal, etc.
 - Research on disease and intrinsic factors (e.g. genetic status)
 - Conservation and management of prey species and populations
 - Establishing monitoring and survey system for leopard and prey populations

4.2. Measures at landscape level, such as

- Development of habitat and metapopulation model
- Habitat protection and habitat management
- Establishment and management of protected areas
- Mitigating barriers and creating corridors

4.3. Threat mitigation, e. g.

- Law enforcement (e.g. anti-poaching measures)
- Conflict mitigation (e.g. damage compensation system)

4.4. Generating enabling conditions like

- Improve partnership, liaison and coordination (organisational aspects)
- Improving legal status of species and important sites
- Public awareness and education
- Capacity building (research, wildlife management, human dimension, etc.)

5. Implementation

- Endorsement and enactment
- Organisational aspects of implementation process
- Control and supervision (institutions, methods, rhythm)
- Validity, review and revision of Action Plan

6. References

Appendices

- List of participants of workshop/development process
- List of institutions involved in implementation, supervision and revision of Action Plan
- List of foreign partner institutions for cross-border issues

Nugzar Zazanashvili, Urs Breitenmoser and Christine Breitenmoser-Würsten, May 2007