

Persian Leopard



Newsletter

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Jannati

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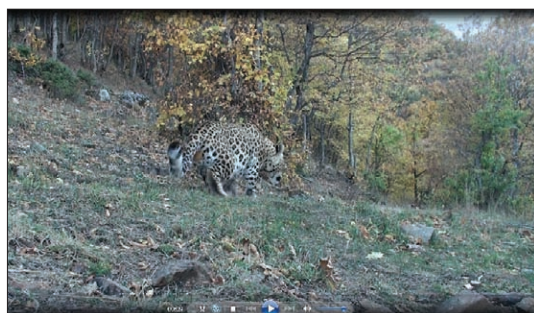
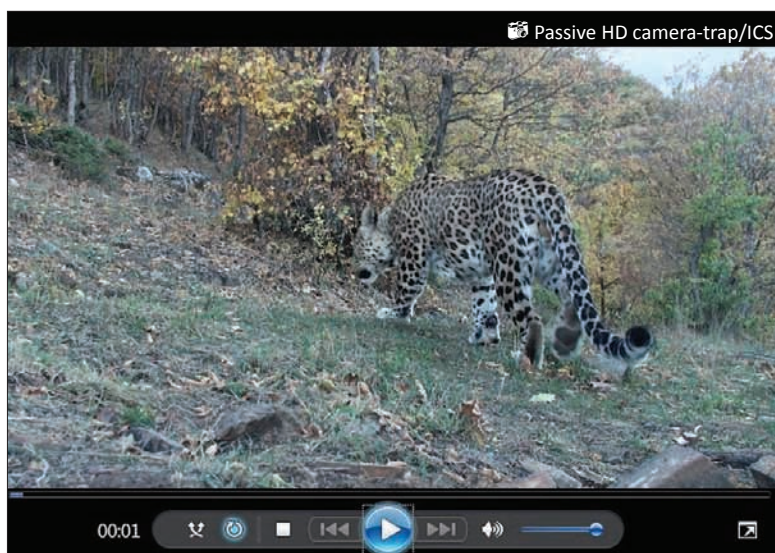
GREETINGS FROM THE PERSIAN LEOPARDS IN IRAN!

This issue of the Persian Leopard Newsletter is different in just a single page, compared to previous volumes. The year is changing to 2011 in a few days so we have committed to change our style in order to share with you, definitely, the happiest moment for us at the Iranian Cheetah Society (ICS) in the Year of Leopard!

This is the story: Since early 2010, ICS has been producing a documentary movie about the Persian leopard in Iran. Recently, the ICS film crew was successful to capture an impressive long shot of an adult male in Golestanak Reserve! The area hosts intensive research programs on brown bear as well as the leopard since 2005 (you can read about this study on the volume 3, August 2010). After continuous tracking by the biologists, a passive HD camera trap designed by an Iranian technician was quite helpful to trap the animal

while exhibiting his territorial behavior. The animal is on a scrape, urinating and defecating, and then it sniffs and licks another scrape, possibly to find a mate! It was a big success for all of us before the end of 2010 as the year of leopard in Iran and encourages our film crew to work much more to produce a prestigious movie.

We would like to thanks you all for any kind of supporting and wish you peace and prosperity this holiday. Season's greetings and merry Christmas to our in-holiday friends!



PERSIAN LEOPARD FOOD HABITS IN GOLESTAN NATIONAL PARK

The study entitled “the Persian leopard diet in different landscapes of Golestan National Park (GNP)” conducted during February 2009 to February 2010, as the Master thesis of ICS’ research associate, Elmira Shaerbafi.

The carnivore’s diet depicts their likely potential preys as well as behavioral and physiological adaptations of a species. It is also important in particular about the apex predators like the leopard, to understand their feeding ecology in order to guarantee the species survival in the frame of saving its prey. The most effective method for this kind of studies is ‘field observations’ which is not always performable. So, faecal analysis was used to define the animal food habits. 115

scat samples which were used in this study, showed a significant difference between the frequency of preys which were used by the leopard. The dominant prey items in the scats were remains of the wild boar *Sus scrofa* and the wild sheep *Ovis orientalis*, respectively. This is also approved according to the direct

observations by GNP’s game wardens.

There was no significant difference between the dry and wet seasons, neither in steppe and forest habitats. Furthermore, during stomach and intestine analyses of two sub-adult leopards which had been killed in road incidents inside the park, Indian crested porcupine *Hystrix indica* remains were found intensively. A paper is in preparation to release

results of this study.



Shakiba



Zamani



Shaerbafi

CONSERVATION MODEL FOR THE PERSIAN LEOPARD: SARIGOL NATIONAL PARK, NORTHEASTERN IRAN

The endangered Persian leopard has recently attracted numerous research efforts in Iran; however, it is highly important that research projects support and improve the conservation status of the cat's habitats. Established in 2005, the Project Persian Leopard in Sarigol National Park is the oldest, but still ongoing, effort in Iran to save the species. It is composed of

three main strands which aim to promote conservation of the area. Ecological research was mainly conducted within the national park to explore population parameters, food habits, reproduction, and prey demographics. At the same time, research was carried out in local communities, a partnership was formed with local stakeholders and educational programs were implemented. Finally, the project results were reported to the Department of Environment for consideration in formulating protection measures.

A complete report about lessons learned from Sarigol leopard project has been published in autumn 2010 issue of IUCN/SSC Cat Specialist Group's Cat News which soon will be available on the ICS website.



“SAVE THE VANISHING LEOPARDS” ON RADIO

In November 2010, ICS' Managing Director, Morteza Eslami, featured on a special program in Farhang (= culture) Radio about the Persian leopard and Asiatic cheetahs in Iran. Morteza discussed the cheetah status from past to now, the animal potential preys and its known habitats in the country. He also described threats that the Persian leopards are already facing in their last stronghold. ICS's educational activities in the Year of Leopard were another issue to be presented by Morteza in this public media.

LEOPARD FOOTAGE



Kuh-Sefid PA, which is located in Damavand territory and is extended to Semnan province borders, is known for rare shots of a Pallas cat in late 2008. Recently, movie of a leopard from the area has put it in top wildlife news of the month. The animal was roaming on a sheer cliff, when Abbas Mirza Karimi - head of Damavand office of DoE - captured a movie of the enigmatic cat. The movie is long enough to show the animal in a nice close view.

BIODIVERSITY EDUCATION IN **KALMAND**, CENTRAL IRAN

The Kalmand-Bahadoran Protected Area (KBPA) is the home for developing biodiversity educational activities, which is launched in March 2010. KBPA is one of the main hotspots of the endangered Persian leopard in Central Iran and is considered to be among the last refuges of the



CACP/Yazd DoE

critically endangered Asiatic cheetah in Iran. The project is supposed to focus on local residents of the Mehriz town, as well as relevant villages.

A variety of threats have been identified in this area affecting adversely survival of the species with poaching and habitat loss as the most important. Moreover, impact of the main regional transit route - which is passed through the



Babgir

area - on the KBPA's biodiversity, is much criticized over recent years because of confirmed death of 5 Asiatic cheetahs in road incidents. Therefore,

with respect to poaching which has been boosted up recently by local youths in KBPA, the educational program was started by the Iranian Cheetah Society (ICS). Hence, this project is training people in different age groups associated with relevant problems in the area in order to protect regional biodiversity and important species, especially the big cats. Negotiating with local stakeholders and developing the baseline of site's socio-economic information

had been the initial steps of conducting this project. Also, similar experiences of the past ICS' project in Bafq were shared with local partners to be more familiar with the project trend. KBPA's game wardens were recognized

to be highly essential in success of the project, so they were asked to prepare the project's goals and outcomes. Finally, the project was continued in local schools, after preliminary knowledge assessment to measure the project's impact after the workshops. Meanwhile, six field-visits for all local students has been planned to visit the area and learn more practically about its rich biodiversity. Their teachers will be also trained by the ICS' educators to become more environmental-friendly teachers.

The Kalmand educational project is implementing with cooperation of Yazd Department of Environment with initial funding from Royal Dutch Embassy in Tehran and will last until spring 2011

UPDATES FOR THE PERSIAN LEOPARD LIBRARY!

New documentations on leopards in Iran have been added to the Persian leopard bibliography at the ICS' website. Also, Dr. Colin Groves kindly helped us to prepare an e-copy of Zukowsky's 1964 renowned paper on the subspecies of leopards, including the Persian leopard.

LEOPARD LOSS COUNTER (NOVEMBER & DECEMBER 2010)

In a strange case, a male leopard found dead on a high-voltage power line in Northeastern Iran. The animal was obviously shot by poachers but the whole story is still unclear. Another leopard is also confirmed to be poached in the Caspian region. Moreover, rumors claim two leopards were shot in Southern Iran.



Razavi Khorasan DOE

BAFQ PROTECTED AREA

The 88527ha (Kuh-e) Bafq Protected Area (BPA) is designated at the northeast of Yazd Province, Central Iran. The area is particularly a great mountainous range with some 70 Kilometers long and owns sparse plains



and rolling hills. Extra-arid and arid climates are dominants in BPA but vegetation cover is moderately rich. Basically, BPA is well-known for a tragic event for cheetahs of

Iran. On 31 August 1994, a few months old cheetah cub along with her two sisters and mother came to a spring adjacent to the city of Bafq to drink some water in a hot noon. Unfortunately, the family was attacked by some local people, the mother run away and just 'Marita' was rescued out of the three young cheetahs. Marita lived in Pardisan Park till 2003, as the only captive Asiatic cheetahs in the world. Since 2007, the Cheetah Day has been celebrated by various



Iranian NGOs and the Iranian Department of the Environment (DoE)'s Conservation of the Asiatic Cheetah Project (CACP) in which numerous educational programs were held inside the main

cities as well as local communities around the cheetah habitat.

BPA is a good leopard country in such arid environment in Central Iran. The area supports healthy population of Persian ibex and wild sheep which could sustain leopards. The animal is captured several times by game wardens, most recently in October 2010 on an ibex kill. Meanwhile, other carnivores including



the secretive caracal, grey wolf, striped hyena and golden jackals occur in the area. The first ever radio-telemetry study in Iran also was conducted in BPA, in collaboration between CACP, DoE, UNDP, WCS,

Panthera and ZSL by capturing 2 adult cheetahs and a male leopard in 2007. However, one of the cheetahs killed - probably - by a resident leopard a few months later and the second animal was lost after finding its radio-collar without any signs.

The leopard was tracked before dropping its collar which gave scientists the first data on the subspecies' ranging patterns.

See Hunter et al. (2007) for more information concerning this project.



FATAL ENCOUNTER IN GILAN

During early July 2008, while patrolling Deylaman No-Hunting Area up in forested mountains of Gilan Province, northern Iran, foresters encountered fresh body of a young male leopard on a trail with fresh kill of an adult female Maral red deer hidden among bushes. As reported to Gilan office of Department of the Environment (DoE), local experts visited the area and set two camera traps. They expected to capture another leopard as signs of a bigger animal were seen there. They were right and the animal guilty in charge was photo-trapped! It was an adult male who was supposed to kill the young male yesterday.

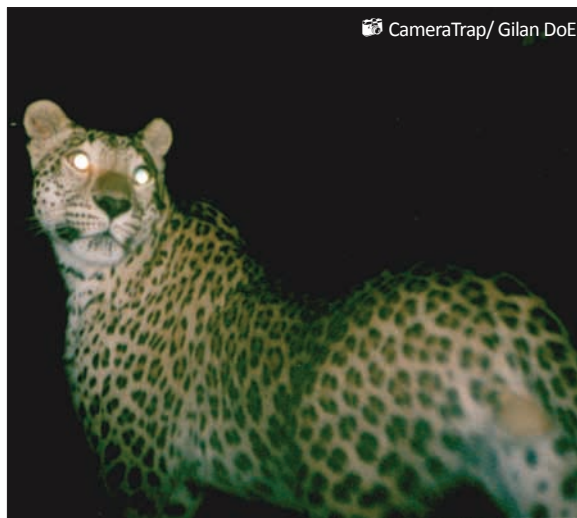
According to Balme 2010; male leopards are territorial, defending a defined home range that contains sufficient resources to ensure

their survival and, more importantly, access to reproductive females. Such defense is normally passive: an individual advertises his presence by means of scent marking or a distinctive rasping call. Familiar neighbors recognize one another and generally respect each other's boundaries. But problems arise when a newcomer enters the scene.

Leopards fatal combats have been already

reported from other parts of Iran, especially from Tandureh and Golestan National Parks (two of the highest density leopard populations in the country) when body of males were found with obvious signs of serious injuries, but it was for the first time that

such an aggressive intra-sexual interaction has been confirmed across the Persian leopard range in Iran.



SPECIAL THANKS TO ...

The Iranian Cheetah Society (ICS) would like to thank the following people and organizations for their generous support to save the Persian leopards in Iran:

- Amersfoort Zoo, the Netherlands
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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 hyeana, 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