

# CAT

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# news





# APA and species working groups

The IUCN Species Strategic Plan works according to the Assess-Plan-Act APA-cycle (Fig. 1). While IUCN certainly has set the gold standard for the Assess component with the Red List and the newer Green Status of species assessments, and the Plan component is well covered through the Guidelines for Species Conservation Planning (IUCN SSC 2017) or the Cat Conservation Compendium (Breitenmoser et al. 2015), a volunteer network such as the Cat Specialist Group is not structured on the Act component. Although most of the Cat SG members are engaged in in situ conservation projects, the group per se is not an implementing body.



**Fig. 1.** The APA cycle from the IUCN Species Strategic Plan: Assess: Understand and inform the world about the status and trends of biodiversity. Plan: Develop collaborative, inclusive and science-based conservation strategies, plans and policies. Act: Convene and mobilise conservation actions to improve the status of biodiversity.

In order to facilitate the implementation of conservation plans and to assure that the findings from the Act element feed back to the Assess and Plan component, we have started to cooperate with bespoke working groups. Such affiliated groups act independently to the rest of the Cat Specialist Group, but sign a Memorandum of Understanding with the Cat SG to define the cooperation. One shared interest is the continuous monitoring of the conservation status of the focal species, but the cooperation can go beyond this. An example for this is the [Persian Leopard Working Group PeLeWG](#), presently chaired by Igor Khorozyan and Mohammad Farhadinia. Many of the present members of the PeLeWG have already been involved in writing articles for a Special Issue on the Persian Leopard ([Cat News SI 15, 2022](#)). This group was then expanded to help develop the [Range-Wide Strategy for the Conservation of the Persian Leopard](#) under the CMS's Central Asia Mammal Initiative CAMI. This was done over several online meetings, as the pandemic and the lack of funding prevented us from holding physical meetings. The Strategy was discussed with and endorsed by the Range States in a CMS-CAMI meeting in Tbilisi, Georgia, in September 2022, and should now be endorsed through corresponding National Action Plans. All populations of the Persian leopard are transboundary, and hence international monitoring and cooperation is crucial to maintaining or re-establishing viable populations. Range-wide strategies can best be overseen by an assembly of respective national experts, and hence it was decided at the Tbilisi meeting to maintain the PeLeWG as a group that would assure the flow of information and support the national conservation agencies in the planning, implementing, and monitoring of local and national conservation activities. We believe that this is a good way to tighten the links between the elements of the APA cycle, as the PeLeWG will obviously be involved in any subsequent assessment and planning concerning the Persian leopard.

The PeLeWG presently has 41 members from all range countries of the subspecies. Other similar working groups range from 14 (the Guigña WG) to 153 members (the African Lion WG). As the number of affiliated groups continues to grow, we cannot invite all colleagues involved to become members of the Cat SG and the SSC, simply because administering such a group would exceed our capacity. However, working with affiliated groups is, in a way, an act of decentralisation, allowing us to expand our reach. We can offer the members of WGs the standardised IUCN approaches to Assess and Plan and respective training, and we can at least indirectly participate in the Act part and profit from the experience and local knowledge of the affiliated groups for improving the Red List and Green Status assessments.

*Urs Breitenmoser*

## References and weblinks

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