



Affiliated partner of the IUCN SSC Cat Specialist Group

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Date: 13 June 2024

To: Dr. Urs Breitenmoser and Dr. Christine Breitenmoser-Würsten
Co-Chairs
IUCN SSC Cat Specialist Group

From: Dr. Igor Khorozyan and Dr. Mohammad Farhadinia, Co-Chairs

TECHNICAL REPORT OF THE PERSIAN LEOPARD WORKING GROUP (PeLeWG) ON ITS ACTIVITIES FROM JULY 2023 TO JUNE 2024

The following **Activities** were implemented during the specified period:

1. I. Khorozyan was hired as the admin officer to manage and coordinate the Group's activities described in the workplan which was developed during online meetings.
2. A. Yachmennikova participated in the online training course "Grant writing for wildlife conservation" (<https://www.wildteam.org.uk/>) and got a certificate (see *Appendix*). Her new skills and knowledge will help us much in joint fundraising efforts for the PeLeWG.
3. We organized a contest for the best logo, in which all members of the PeLeWG had a chance to participate. Seven logos were presented anonymously for Group voting, which announced A. Yachmennikova a winner (see her logo on this letterhead).
4. The website <https://pelewg.net> was designed and created by Webmaker Co. in Yerevan, Armenia (<https://webmaker.am/en>), and info@pelewg.net has become the Group's official E-mail address to replace the previous temporary address persianleopardwg@gmail.com. However, we keep this gmail address to maintain the archived documents and links to our online Google forms (such as the PeLeWG membership form) and some other resources.

This website (see *Appendix*) provides diverse and regularly updated published information, mainly papers, reports and awareness-raising materials. Most of this information is available for free download, but whenever this is not possible for copyright limitations, the links are provided and pdf files are available upon request to the website's e-mail address given above. The website is active by providing links to our partners and other organizations involved in Persian leopard conservation. We believe that this website can become an information hub and a key resource on Persian leopard ecology and conservation, especially for students and young specialists.

5. Establishing Ranger Awards to support, motivate and encourage the best rangers was among the top priorities for the first year of the PeLeWG's work. We decided to apply this

program in the countries where rangers are most severely underfunded and at risk. As rangers are professionally subordinated to national conservation authorities, it was very important to select the countries where the cooperation with these authorities is active and can ensure the support of a wide and representative circle of stakeholders at the award ceremonies.

After consultations, we selected Afghanistan, Iraqi Kurdistan and Pakistan to participate in this program this year. The country representatives of the PeLeWG Steering Committee from these countries – Z. Moheb, H. Raza and M. Kabir – did a great job to consult with local authorities and scientists, write down the rangers’ biographies and achievements for our joint judgements, and nominate the best rangers for awards. We also discussed how to make these awards practical and have a long impact. Finally, on the International Leopard Day of May 3, 10 rangers were nominated from Afghanistan, three from Pakistan and three from Iraqi Kurdistan (see *Appendix*). The award ceremonies were already successfully organized in Pakistan (May 23) and Afghanistan (June 5) (see *Appendix*), and in Iraqi Kurdistan it will take place on the World Ranger Day of July 31. The details of the award ceremonies are posted in the News section of <https://pelewg.net/news>.

The rangers were awarded with field kits, equipment and cash prizes in Pakistan, and with cash prizes and appreciation letters in Afghanistan.

The additional **Activities** included:

Administration

- Invited professionals to become members of our Group. Now we have 43 members, and the procedures of how to become a member are described at <https://pelewg.net>
- Created a Google drive for storing the Group’s documents and other information
- Created a WhatsApp group for quick communication between the PeLeWG Steering Committee members

Networking

- Opened accounts in X/Twitter (@PersLeopWG), Facebook (@PeLeWG) and Instagram (@pelewg) raising non-stopping interest from more and more followers. Here we post interesting information about Persian leopard ecology, conservation and the PeLeWG news, and also present short country reports on the Persian leopard – so far, we did it on Afghanistan, Iraqi Kurdistan, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Russia and Turkmenistan. As on June 10, 2024 we have 298 followers on X/Twitter, 357 on Instagram and 253 on Facebook

Presentations

- Co-organized the side event “Cats of the Silk Road” of the CMS COP meeting in Samarkand, Uzbekistan in Feb 12-17, 2024 where the Range-wide Strategy for the Conservation of the Persian Leopard was officially adopted. Four members of the PeLeWG Steering Committee (T. Rosen, S. Karryeva, A. Yachmennikova and M. Gritsina) participated in this conference
- M. Farhadinia presented at the webinar “Management issues in addressing the challenges of leopard conservation” organized by International Big Cat Alliance, India on International Leopard Day of May 3

Training

- Established cooperation with the Manul Working Group, Snow Leopard Network and Society for Conservation Biology Asia on professional training related to Persian leopard research and monitoring

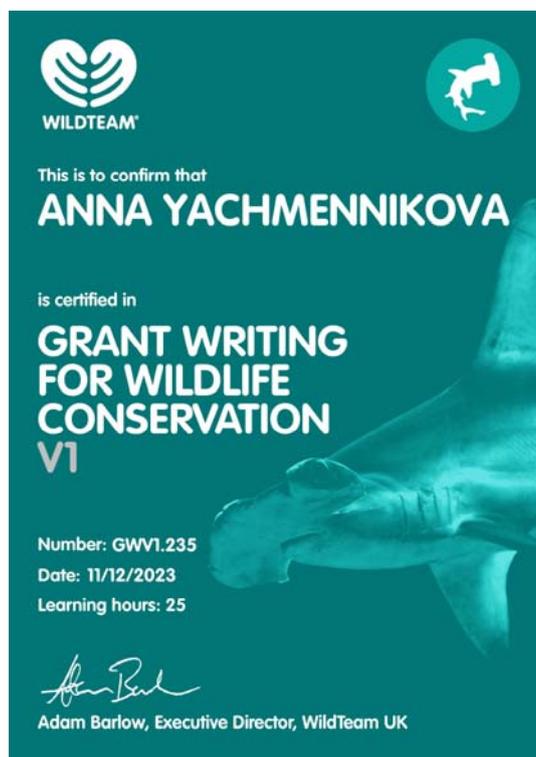
Fundraising

- Established the rangewide monitoring program and submitted a proposal to Peace and Biodiversity Dialogue Initiative (PBDI, <https://www.cbd.int/peace>) to raise funds for it, but it was unsuccessful. We will retry next year
- M. Kabir received a competitive grant from Global Leopard Conference's Bursary Programme for Leopard Conservation for his project "Empowering guardians: involvement of women in leopard conservation in Pakistan" (<https://pelewg.net/news>). The PeLeWG backed up and encouraged this application, and helped with writing.

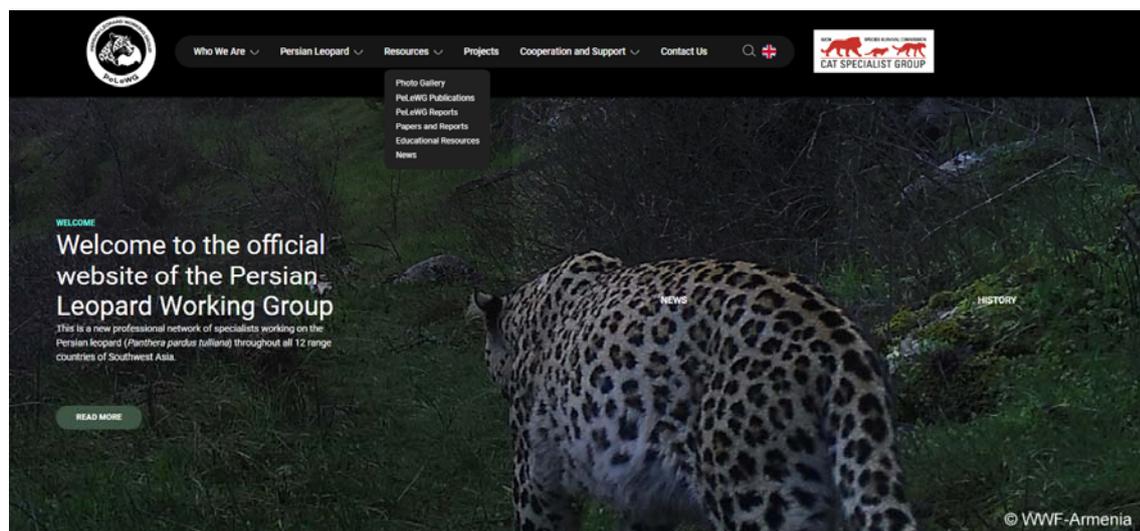
Publications

- The IUCN Red List account of the Persian leopard (A. Ghoddousi, I. Khorozyan, <https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/15961/50660903>)
- The paper "International experts to support the implementation of the Range-Wide Strategy for the Conservation of the Persian Leopard" in CAMI Newsletter (I. Khorozyan, M. Farhadinia, T. Rosen, <https://www.cms.int/cami/en/news/international-experts-support-implementation-range-wide-strategy-conservation-persian-leopard>)
- The paper "Persian leopard conservation is boosted by a newly established working group" in Cat News (I. Khorozyan, M. Farhadinia, in press)
- The report "Review of the status of the Persian leopard *Panthera pardus tulliana* in the Lesser Caucasus" (I. Khorozyan,, M. Farhadinia) is under preparation for submission to the IUCN SSC Cat Specialist Group. This report will describe the most up-to-date information about the Persian leopard ecology and status, major threats and limitations, the status of prey resources, societal support for its conservation, and the metapopulation structure and connectivity (especially the transboundary one). The report will come up with conclusion and an outlook focusing on major limitations, gaps and possible solutions; opportunities for conservation; and conservation measures required to foster population connectivity.

APPENDIX



Picture 1. The certificate given to A. Yachmennikova for taking the online training course “Grant writing for wildlife conservation”.



Picture 2. Home page of the website <https://pelewg.net>



Picture 3. The rangers nominated for awards from Afghanistan, Iraqi Kurdistan and Pakistan, and the locations of their working sites placed on the map of the Persian leopard range. No pictures from one Afghani ranger were available.



Picture 4. The group photographs of the nominees and other participants after the award ceremonies in Afghanistan (left) and Pakistan (right).