Annual Report

2014

Snow Leopard Conservancy
Snow leopard champions come in many forms, from an adventurer like Joe Rohde, who went to the wilds of Mongolia to paint for conservation, to those of you who donate money to create a Snow Leopard Day festival in Siberia, or to buy trail cameras or costly satellite radio collars. Thank you!

We have learned over the decades that championing the survival of snow leopards takes more than thinking with our heads, compiling data to develop a range-wide snow leopard survival strategy, or to legislate against trafficking in snow leopard body parts.

These beautiful, iconic mountain cats need more of us to think with our hearts, to use art and story to encourage new snow leopard champions to discover their power to effect change. Take, for example, twelve-year-old Kyle Trefny, who raised $700 by selling his hand-made greeting cards to help save the animal he loves.

As we embark upon the Conservancy’s fifteenth anniversary year, we reflect on our partners and the creative ways they have found to champion snow leopard survival. Tungalagtuya Khuukhenduu and her associates were decidedly thinking “outside the box” when they created the Nomadic Nature Trunk program for Mongolia’s remote and scattered herder children. So were Mikhail Paltsyn and Sergei Spitsyn thinking creatively when they hired a notorious poacher to lead snare-removal and trail camera monitoring efforts in Russia’s rugged Altai Mountains. And in India, Dr. Tsewang Namgail gave university students a worthwhile volunteer project during their summer break, teaching young students about Ladakh’s mountain ecosystem and the need for snow leopard conservation.

Community-based partnerships are the strength of the Snow Leopard Conservancy; with Dr. Quinton Martins joining our team, we look forward to growing our innovative approach and vision of vibrant mountain landscapes where people and wildlife live in harmony.

Thank you for supporting this critical work!
In early 2014, the Conservancy began to implement a three-year succession plan for founder-director Dr. Rodney Jackson. We were incredibly fortunate that the timing was right for Dr. Quinton Martins to follow his passion for mountain cat conservation from his home in South Africa to a new challenge in California.

Quinton, his wife Elizabeth, and 2-year-old daughter Ayla relocated to Sonoma Valley at the end of December, in time for Quinton to assume his position as Snow Leopard Conservancy assistant director on January 1, 2015.

Quinton founded and directed the Cape Leopard Trust from 2004 to 2014, raising nearly $1.3 million. He was instrumental in working with farmers to effect the first-ever ban of old-fashioned steel traps in a 422,550-acre mountainous area of South Africa’s Cape Province. He received the Cape Nature Special Award in 2008 in recognition and appreciation of an outstanding contribution to Biodiversity Conservation.

After 10 years of growing the Cape Leopard Trust to sustainability, Quinton brings experience and commitment to the work of snow leopard conservation. His expertise includes researching leopard ecology in rugged and remote mountain regions, interacting with government and non-government organizations, helping to modify government policies on leopards and cheetahs, working closely with local communities, and establishing environmental education programs. He is an animated and inspired public speaker who enjoys finding original ways to promote a good cause.

Rodney’s thesis on snow leopards was my “bible” while I worked on mountain cape leopard conservation. It’s an incredible privilege to join Rodney and the Conservancy team, and to work with communities across the snow leopard’s range to conserve this iconic cat.

Snow Leopard Conservancy’s Mission

Ensuring snow leopard survival and conserving mountain landscapes by expanding environmental awareness and sharing innovative practices through community stewardship and partnerships
Program Officer Betsy Mueller and Board Chair Caroline Gabel attended the second annual Jomolhari Mountain Festival in Jigme Dorji National Park. There they joined Bhutan Foundation Director and Conservancy Board Member Tshewang Wangchuk.

The festival celebrates the Jomolhari region’s people and exquisite natural wonders, most notably the endangered snow leopard. Three villages and about 40 tourists participated. Betsy and Caroline provided information about snow leopards and the Conservancy’s work. Students from Jomolhari Mountain School displayed their drawings of snow leopards, sang, and performed a skit depicting the consequences of poaching snow leopards.
After the festival, Betsy (at right) and other members of our Conservancy group visited a community interested in starting a Traditional Homestay program. This was an excellent opportunity to “field test” an overnight in a Bhutanese home.

Our group (below) provided feedback to the Homestay hosts. (Wendy Lama, co-owner of KarmaQuest Ecotourism & Adventure Travel, contributed special expertise based on her long experience in ecotourism planning and implementation.)
For the seventh year running, participants in our Winter Quest for the Snow Leopard had a sighting of this elusive cat in Hemis National Park, Ladakh.

Corral predator-proofing in the remote region of Zanskar was identified as a particular area of need, and for continued conservation success. A three-year plan was developed, with work to begin after the only road into the area is clear of winter snow.

The Conservancy facilitated a visit by Nicolas Lagos of the Andean Cat Alliance with counterparts at the Snow Leopard Conservancy-India. The visit was enabled by Wildlife Conservation Network’s Cross-Partner Exchange Program, which facilitates information exchanges between conservationists, creating deep connections through experiences that go beyond the formal settings of conferences and workshops. The Alliance learned from India’s livestock insurance, corral improvements, and traditional homestays; SLC-IT learned from the Alliance’s habitat modeling skills and experience with guard dogs.

Long-time Conservancy partner Kalpavriksh trained sixteen graduate students from Indian colleges and universities under a new program, “Students for Students.” Trainer Sujatha Padmanabhan led the group through lessons about Ladakh’s biodiversity and how to teach these lessons to children. The students were then sent to three schools in remote areas of Ladakh, where they conducted their program and also shared their college experiences with the children.
A team headed by Dr. B. Munkhtsog, including scientists from the Biology Institute of Mongolian Academy of Sciences, Severtsovi Institute of Russian Academy of Sciences, Mongolian-Russian Uvs Lake Basin Biosphere Reserve and World Heritage Site, and WWF Mongolia, radio-collared a young female snow leopard in Tsagaan Shuvuut Strictly Protected Area, which abuts the Russian border. They named her *Tsagaan*, meaning *kind, great, open heart, and a good future like white pure milk*. Her collar reveals her location every seven hours, and so far she has been staying mostly within Mongolia, with three cross-border visits.

From previous studies we know snow leopards tend to be nocturnal, but *Tsagaan* is traveling a lot by day, indicating that after twenty years of protection in this park, snow leopards (and other wildlife) are becoming less wary of humans.

Dr. Munkhtsog and local national parks staff also continued to conduct trail camera surveys in the Altai Mountains. Besides sites that have been monitored since 2008, surveys were done in two new sites in the far western province of Bayan-Olgii. The team continued to collect scats for the ongoing country-wide genetics survey being led by Dr. Janečka of Duquesne University.
Nomadic Nature Trunks with lessons about snow leopards and their ecosystem were delivered to five protected areas of the Mongolia Altai and the Great Gobi Strictly Protected Area B. Teachers were trained to use the activities and materials in the trunks, such as the wolf stuffie the girls are examining above.

Gobi Gurvan Saikhan National Park used the trunk for their students’ summer camp. The protected area of Uvs Aimag uses the trunk often for communities. Public awareness specialist Javzansuren said that community members appreciate the trunk lessons. They have new knowledge about wildlife such as ibex, argali sheep, and snow leopard; the causes of habitat loss; and the importance of mountain ungulates.

At the community’s request, a snow leopard club was established in Ulaanbataar for kindergarteners, and a new snow leopard curriculum and interactive materials for kids under six years old was created by the teachers.

Since the program’s inception in 2008, it has reached fifty schools with over 20,000 children. Participants have asked to keep the trunks at their school for a longer time, or ideally that their school would have its own trunk.

The lessons are very important. They are easy to understand and acceptable for nomadic people. Now I understand the mountain animals’ food chain.

- Byamba, Yamaat mountain herder
COMMUNITY-BASED CONSERVATION ACTION

NEPAL

Partners: Department of National Parks & Wildlife Conservation; National Trust for Nature Conservation-Annapurna Conservation Area Project (ACAP), Lo Manthang Unit Office

Community-managed Savings and Credit groups in Sagarmatha National Park have grown to 172 members, with total funds of just over $28,000, a 55.6% increase from 2013. $1,384 was invested in snow leopard conservation and education activities. While these are not large sums by western standards, they are significant by local standards, and represent the first example of a community contribution to conservation in this region.

Conservancy Regional Director Som Ale introduced Foxlights (on the pole above the tent) to herders in Mustang and Manang.

Livestock corrals were predator-proofed in the Mustang region, such as the one shown above.

Ian Whalen developed Foxlight LED night-time deterrents to protect sheep on his Australian farm. The Conservancy found that herders love the irregularly flashing lights. Snow Leopards seem to see them as people using flashlights. Further testing is needed to determine whether cats become habituated.
Along with the usual activities of wildlife study, artwork, quiz contests, and a special song performance, students attending the environmental camp also learned about Foxlights (see pg. 9) and worked with local herders to install one in a nearby livestock corral.

This camp was documented in a video shown at the International Mountain Film Festival in Kathmandu.

Watch the video 🎥

The Scouts produced a magazine with text in English and Nepali. Included are articles, news, and poems focused on snow leopards and their prey in Nepal.
PAKISTAN

Partner: Baltistan Wildlife Conservation and Development Organization-Project Snow Leopard, with the support of the government Wildlife Department.

Twelve local teachers were given a three-day training (right) in conservation education followed by observation and coaching in the classroom.

Some 600 boys and girls from twelve local schools gathered at Basha Shigar Middle school to participate in the educational activities.

Feedback from the community is that environmental education focused on snow leopards is a vehicle for quality education, especially for girls, in this remote area.

We are also addressing human-wildlife conflict in a target area of six villages with 590 households in prime snow leopard habitat. Key programs are livestock insurance, construction of predator proof corrals, livestock vaccination, and training of livestock workers.

Photos: BWCD-O-Project Snow Leopard
RUSSIA

Partners: Altai Ministry of Education; Arkhar; Foundation for Sustainable Development of Altai (FSDA); The Altai Alliance; WWF-Russia

The Conservancy continued to support our partners and community monitors in sign surveys (above), camera trap surveys, and snare removal (at right and below) from a 300 km² area in the Argut River watershed, the targeted core area for restoration of the snow leopard.
RUSSIA, Continued

The Snow Leopard Day festival was expanded to two new villages in the remote Sailugemsky National Park, reaching 330 students from kindergarten up. The format followed that of previous festivals. Honored guests included a noble Elder of the host village, along with Mergen Markov and Vyacheslav Igispaev, former poachers who have become wildlife monitors.

Sailugemsky National Park, with an area of about 460 km², protects argali sheep and snow leopards, which move between the park and Mongolia. Established in 2010, the park is the traditional homeland of the indigenous Telengit people.
Drs. Rodney Jackson and David Mallon completed revision of the SLN Snow Leopard Survival Strategy. Released on October 23, International Snow Leopard Day, the document has been posted on the SLN website for open access to conservationists, government officials and interested public.

Rodney also worked with Drs. Charu Misha and Tom McCarthy to update the IUCN Red Listing for snow leopards.

The Conservancy completed work on the range-wide snow leopard habitat and population model, at a scale of 270 meters. We are building a map from the model that will indicate potential or known snow leopard populations and breeding habitat. This can serve as the basis for designating geographic limits of the twenty snow leopard landscape-level populations to be protected under the Global Snow Leopard Ecosystem Protection Plan’s “20 by 2020” paradigm. Range states are currently designating these landscape-level sites.

SACRED SPECIES—SACRED SITES
Partner: Worldwide Indigenous Science Network (WISN)

The Conservancy continued to work with WISN on incorporating the snow leopard group of Indigenous Cultural Practitioners (ICPs) into a larger alliance of ICPs for whom big cats are sacred. An alliance goal is to train ICPs in new technologies such as icon-based CyberTracker software to gain greater involvement in government-level conservation planning, as well as action at the community level.

Rodney and Darla attended an alliance gathering in South Africa, along with Kyrgyz Sacred Site Guardian Zhaparkul Raiymkulov and traditional hunting scholar Mairamkul Asanaliev. San Elder Jan Si Ku, who helped to develop CyberTracker in the 1990s, provided valuable input on how this software could be used to monitor snow leopards and their prey.

*The art of tracking may have been the origin of science.* (Louis Liebenburg, CyberTracker Developer)
“Here you will paint Shaman’s tree,” stated Joe’s camel guide. “Of course,” Joe agreed, and later wrote, “This was one of those moments I have come to treasure as the whole point of field painting among indigenous people, when they become the deciders, the directors, and we all collaborate together on an image that can no longer truly be said to be my creation alone.”

The Primavera Fine Art Gallery and Ojai Playhouse hosted the opening of Joe Rohde’s art exhibition and premier of *The Leopard In The Land*, produced by Joe and filmmaker Jim McEachen. A screening and exhibition was also held in Sonoma. This effort has raised over $50,000 for snow leopard conservation.

**Kid Power!**

Seven year-old Grace Littlefield raised $64 by making posters to raise funds and awareness for endangered animals.

Twelve-year-old Kyle Trefny raised $700 and counting, by creating note cards of his snow leopard artwork (See blog post “Kids Helping Snow Leopards” January). See the video interview between Kyle and Rodney.

**In-Kind Donations**

Brad Clement, Spindrift Films, field equipment
Trish Fedigan, plush snow leopard
Google, Nexus tablets
Maud Hallin, furniture
Safeway, event supplies

Marty Varon, photography
Drew Waters, Predator Guard
Tom Waters, furniture
Whole Foods, event supplies
At the IUCN World Parks Congress in Sydney, Australia, Rodney participated in a workshop titled, *Innovative Approaches For Landscape Conservation Programmes In The Himalayas: Reconciling Development Challenges*. Rodney spoke on snow leopards as an apex predator for fostering landscape-level conservation action.

Rodney was also interviewed by radio commentator Richard Fidler for his popular hour-long *Conversations* program.

*The Leopard In The Land* has been submitted to film festivals in the U.S. and Europe. DVDs are available on the Conservancy’s website.

Rodney gave public presentations at the California Academy of Sciences and the Wildlife Conservation Network Expo in San Francisco, as well as for the Australian Himalayan Foundation in Melbourne and the Taronga Zoo in Sydney, Australia.

**IN APPRECIATION**

The individuals below have given extraordinary gifts of time and expertise. The organizations have provided a platform for outreach and donations:

- Ebay Giving Works
- Charlene Gavette, GIS mapping
- Sujin Lee, website design
- Lyon Ranch, ambassador animals
- Andy Mettke, website design
- Network for Good
- OneToday by Google
- Prepress, Inc., printing
- John Sichi, website design
- Fauna Tomlinson, predator deterrent coordination

*WCN*  
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Grants 40%
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