



The International Snow Leopard Trust

Annual Report, 2000: Continuing Efforts in the Field & Successful Programs with People

Message from the Executive Director *The Year 2000-Challenges and Opportunities*



The year 2000 brought challenges and change as well as growth and opportunities for the snow leopard and the ISLT. As the new Executive Director of the Trust, I thought it would be helpful to introduce this annual report with a commentary on the state of the Trust and the current situation facing snow leopards in the wild.

The snow leopard population continues to be seriously threatened and most experts agree that we continue to see the overall number of cats decline. Key threats continue to be illegal poaching and herders who poison or trap snow leopards in retaliation for, or to prevent, losses of domestic livestock.

While the overall picture for snow leopards has been troubling, there is reason for optimism based on the results of two ISLT supported projects. In Mongolia, surveys of two protected areas showed increases in the estimated snow leopard populations based on density of their markings. This is exciting news and helps demonstrate the positive impact that protected areas can have on snow leopard recovery. The second reason for optimism is the success of Irbis Enterprises – a project that was founded with support from ISLT, WWF-Mongolia, and the David Shepherd Foundation. This village-based handicraft program is successfully raising local herders' incomes while protecting the endangered snow leopard and its habitat.

There are also several reasons for optimism at the Trust. In October of this year the ISLT hired its first full-time Conservation Director, Dr. Tom McCarthy, who has a strong conservation background and more than 7 years experience in snow leopard research. In addition the Trust hired Priscilla Allen as a Program Officer to oversee some of the Trust's work in conservation and education. Priscilla is trained as a teacher and is the founder of Irbis Enterprises. Priscilla will take the lead in expanding the program from its base in Mongolia to other snow leopard range countries. ISLT Founder Helen Freeman continues to provide valuable council to the Trust as an active member of the conservation committee and ISLT board.

These expansions have been possible thanks to our members and supporters. The Trust saw its operating funds increase by 25% from 1999 to 2000 and even larger gains are expected in 2001. We continue to successfully work with national and international zoos with the Natural Partnerships Program. In August, the Woodland Park Zoo Society expanded its long-term commitment to the Trust by providing a \$65,000 challenge grant for 2000 to be followed by a \$100,000 grant in 2001.

With support from our members, zoo supporters, and other donors I am confident that the ISLT is ready to meet the challenges of the coming years and truly make a difference in snow leopard conservation. The International Snow Leopard Trust will continue to work with other dedicated organizations to fight for the survival of this amazing species. By working together we can ensure the snow leopard continues to stalk its mountain kingdom for years to come.

Brad Rutherford, Executive Director

Country Programs

Pakistan: In 2000, Snow Leopard Conservationist (SLC) Abdul Haleem Siddiqui collected baseline data on snow leopard depredation and information about attitudes towards snow leopards in Chitral Gol National Park. Chitral Gol National Park is located in the Northwest Frontier Province in a deep narrow valley. ISLT's most recent study, funded by the Woodland Park Zoo, heard reports of seven snow leopards and evidence that confirms the presence of snow leopards in Chitral Gol. Despite this good news, the study also found that livestock killings by snow leopards are on the rise. Abdul Haleem says, "Over-grazing by livestock in high alpine pastures may be one of the most significant factors involved in the reduction of this wild cat". Programs that encourage sustainable grazing and discourage snow leopards from killing livestock are essential to the animal's continued existence in Chitral Gol. ISLT's Pakistan program is funded by Woodland Park Zoo.

"Over-grazing by livestock in high alpine pastures may be one of the most significant factors involved in the reduction of this wild cat."

— Abdul Haleem Siddiqui
ISLT Conservationist

Bhutan: *SLIMS Research Workshop*

With funding support from Blank Park Zoo, Sacramento Zoological Society and the Cleveland Zoological Society, and in collaboration with the Government of Bhutan and World Wildlife Fund Bhutan, ISLT held a workshop to train Bhutanese wildlife officials in the Snow Leopard Information System (SLIMS) technique of snow leopard research. Guards and deputy wardens from Jigme Dorji National Park were trained in snow leopard and prey species surveying and applied conservation techniques. Other participants in the training included the Nature Conservation Division of the Ministry of Agriculture, the United National Development Program and the National Environmental Commission.

India: *Corral Improvements in Markha, Hemis National Park*

In collaboration with the village of Markha, the ISLT built predator-proof corrals that will protect the villagers' livestock from snow leopards and wolves. By protecting livestock from snow leopards and helping the villagers peacefully co-exist with the animals, the ISLT expects to see a reduction in the number of retaliatory killings against snow leopards. This project was co-funded by the Colchester Zoo in Essex, UK; the Milwaukee County Zoological Society; and the Oregon Zoo Foundation.



Snow Leopard Information Management System (SLIMS) Workshop in Hemis National Park

The SLIMS technique standardizes snow leopard data collection so that research from all twelve countries in the snow leopard's range can be entered into a worldwide database accessible to interested researchers and organizations. This standardization of data results in more accurate assessments of snow leopard populations. Ensuring that Indian wildlife professionals participate in worldwide snow leopard research is essential if conservation efforts across 12 countries are to be successful.

The SLIMS workshop was held in conjunction with a local organization, the Wildlife Institute of India (WII)—an autonomous institution of the Ministry of Environment and Forests. Along with tracking snow leopards, the workshop also discussed the importance of gathering information from the communities surrounding the park and how to involve these communities in snow leopard protection. Workshop facilitators discussed animal husbandry practices, what is meant by "sustainable grazing," and the use of participatory techniques to engage villagers in creating solutions to their communities' own environmental problems.

Mongolia: *Irbis Enterprises*

Irbis Enterprises is a community-based program that helps herders sell hand-knitted hats, gloves and other woolen products to tourists in the capital as well as to craft and snow leopard enthusiasts overseas. At the end of the tourist season the knitters receive a 20% bonus on all the sales.

The program is advantageous to the herders because they can increase the value of their wool more than twenty-fold by making finished products instead of selling it raw. The program also supplies valuable training and advice about how best to make the products so they will sell well. By encouraging production at home and providing training, transportation and marketing services, the program requires very little investment on the part of the herders.



In order to participate in the program, the herders must sign an agreement pledging that they will not kill snow leopards, ibex or argali. If any person in the village violates the contract terms, the entire village loses the 20% bonus. This element gives snow leopard conservation a tangible value to villagers and makes snow leopard conservation the responsibility of the whole community and not just the government or an individual. Irbis Enterprises cooperates with the Mongolian Association for Conservation of Nature and Environment and is supported by ISLT, the Columbus Zoo, the David Shepard Conservation Fund and WWF-Mongolia.

Snow Leopard Research and Community Involvement

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The goal of this program is to verify the existence of snow leopards both in Mongolia's protected areas (specifically Altai Taivan Bogd, Khokh Serkh Nuruu, Har Os and the Har Hira Mountains), as well as outside of reserves in areas such as Khvsogol, the smaller mountain ranges of the Gobi, and the Hangai Mountains. In addition to actual fieldwork, the ISLT conducted trainings to ensure that staffs of the protected areas are familiar with the ISLT-developed Snow Leopard Information Management System (SLIMS) database program. The project also works to develop cooperation between herders and wildlife officials and to raise awareness about the importance of the protected areas and the communities' role in contributing to conservation. This project was undertaken with the help of Peace Corps, and was funded through grants from Great Plains Zoo and Parco Natura Viva.

Former Soviet Republics: *Asia-Irbis*

The ISLT, with support from the San Antonio Zoological Gardens and Aquarium, Project Survival/Cat Conservation Group, the Jardin Zoologique de Granby, Tulsa Zoo and Living Museum and in collaboration with the Sacred Earth Network is supporting Asia-Irbis, a non-governmental organization comprised of scientists and wildlife professionals. The group's mission is to coordinate information on the snow leopard and advocate for greater protection and support throughout post-Soviet Central Asia. The support provided by the ISLT will fund a small grants program for research and other conservation projects to be implemented by the members of Asia-Irbis.

Supporting local research and conservation efforts in the former Soviet Union is crucial if the snow leopard is to continue to exist in the region. Researchers have estimated that poaching in the Kyrgyz Republic alone has grown so dramatically that the snow leopard population has decreased by 75%. This project will address the crisis by making funding possible for local researchers to implement conservation strategies in their area. The ISLT has invited the members of Asia-Irbis to propose projects that contribute to the growing body of research on snow leopards or that actively work to promote snow leopard conservation.

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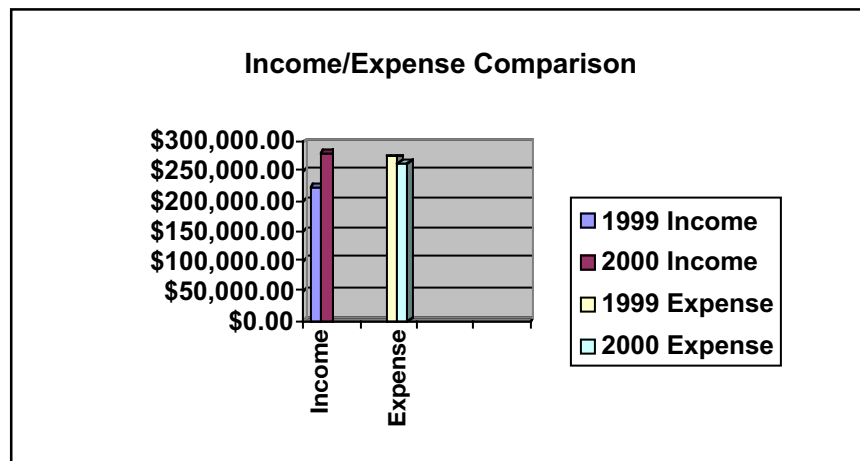
Nepal: Education

In a joint effort with the Snow Leopard Conservancy and with funding from the Calgary Zoological Society, ISLT helped develop and publish two Nepali children's books. The first book, entitled My Grandma Says, has very young children as its target audience. The second book, Pasang and the Sheep Thief, is written for older children and tells the tale of a young shepherd who loses livestock to a snow leopard. These books are intended to introduce young readers to problems surrounding interactions between snow leopards and humans, and to educate them about the animal's behavior and the importance of conserving them.

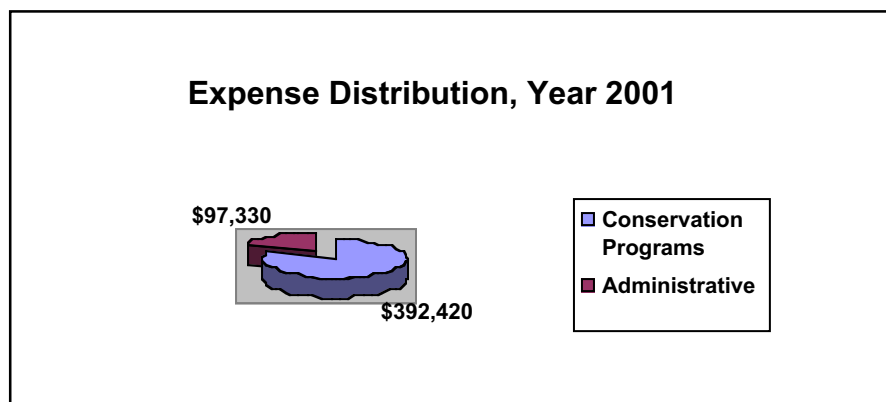
Finances

ISLT relies on a diversity of funding sources from donors, zoos, members and other supporters. In 2000, ISLT saw substantial increases in funding from individual contributions, membership dues, grants, and the Founders Circle.

In the year 2000, ISLT saw a substantial increase in total income and a decrease in total expenses. These are occurrences any organization would be proud of. Income grew from 1999's level of \$223,422 to \$280,015 in 2000. The growth in income came primarily from an increase of over 41% in contributions and donations. In addition, expenses were trimmed from \$271,873 in 1999 to \$246,770 in 2000.



As proposed by the 2001 budget, more than eighty cents of every dollar donated to the International Snow Leopard Trust will go directly to conservation efforts. The balance of each dollar covers the administrative functioning of the Trust.



Natural Partnerships Program

In 2000, the Natural Partnership Program continued to supply ISLT with valuable funding for our conservation programs. In all, sixteen zoos supported ISLT through various grants and donations. Participating in the program is a convenient way for zoos to demonstrate their conservation efforts to their members and visitors, while helping ISLT to accomplish its goal of saving the snow leopard and its mountain habitat. The ISLT is tremendously grateful to the many zoos who have shared their passion for wildlife conservation with us.

Personnel

The year 2000 saw the addition of several new faces to the ISLT staff. Dr. Tom McCarthy joined the Trust in October of 2000 as the ISLT's new Conservation Director. Dr. McCarthy brings an extensive background in snow leopard conservation and research to the trust, including spending much of the past seven years in the remote mountains of Mongolia studying snow leopard behavior and movement.



Dr. McCarthy collars a snow leopard



Priscilla makes a new friend

Priscilla Allen also came on-board in October of 2000 as the Trust's new Program Officer. Her background in education will aid her in the propagation of Irbis Enterprise programs which link snow leopard conservation with income generation for herders in snow leopard habitat. Priscilla has also been instrumental in the ongoing development of ISLT's website.

New field members were hired in 2000 as well. Zou Hongfei, a professor at a prestigious Chinese university has joined ISLT as a Snow Leopard Conservationist (SLC) in her homeland of China. J. Purevjav (Pugii) has joined current Mongolia SLC Bariusha Munkhtsog as a field assistant and SLIMS database manager.

Board

President Charles Morse continued to provide strong leadership for the ISLT Board of Directors, assisted by Vice Presidents Lew Macfarlane and Robert Pennell, and Secretary-Treasurer Steven Kearsley. Continued support from Board members Norma Cole, Marilyn Fite, Skip Fox, Thomas Ginn, Michael Harris, William Valenti, and Michael Waller was instrumental in the Trust's growth and successes in 2000. Founder Helen Freeman has continued to remain active and supportive of trust activities.

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