



International Snow Leopard Trust

Annual Report

2002—A Coordinated Approach

2002 was one of the most important years in snow leopard conservation since the founding of the International Snow Leopard Trust in 1981. For the first time, there is a comprehensive strategy guiding the conservation efforts of the many organizations working to ensure the long-term survival of the snow leopard in the wild.

The Snow Leopard Survival Strategy (SLSS) was crafted during a week-long summit hosted by ISLT and the Woodland Park Zoo in Seattle, WA in May of 2002. 65 of the world's most knowledgeable snow leopard conservation professionals from 17 countries worked to identify the threats to the snow leopard's future and to craft appropriate strategies for addressing these threats. From the summit emerged a blueprint that will guide the future work of ISLT and other snow leopard conservationists across the cat's range.



The SLSS was not the only positive outcome from the summit meeting in May, however. The cooperative meeting was also the impetus behind the creation of the Snow Leopard Network (SLN) – an international network of dedicated researchers, resource managers, and conservation professionals charged with oversight of the implementation of the SLSS. This group stays in constant contact through the use of an email list-serve, and their activity has already had positive outcomes.

2002 was also a busy year for our field staff. ISLT's flagship conservation/income-generation project, Snow Leopard Enterprises (SLE) continued its expansion efforts into the Kyrgyz Republic, and initial steps to begin an SLE program in Pakistan are also underway. In India ISLT is supporting a livestock insurance initiative that helps local herders live in close proximity with snow leopards and other predators without resorting to poaching in retaliation for livestock loss. Our Mongolia program saw snow leopard and prey species population monitoring is helping us to evaluate the success of our conservation projects, and the continued success of SLE in the project's pilot country.

Balanced against these positives was the challenge of raising funds to support our efforts in the current economic environment. Foundation sponsorship was hard to come by as both large and small funding organizations cut back on support in the wake of the bear market. Fortunately individual donations increased in 2002, which helped to offset setbacks in grant receipts.

Much was accomplished in 2002, but our work is far from complete. Though ISLT continues to grow and many vital relationships were developed in the past year, there are still significant threats to the snow leopard's future. With the help of our members and our other supports, I am confident that we will ensure the cats' long-term survival.

Executive Director

ISLT's field programs continued to prosper in 2002. The backing of our membership, sponsoring foundations, and other supporters has allowed ISLT to undertake consistently effective conservation, research, and education programs in several of the countries that the snow leopard calls home. Moving forward, our efforts here at the Trust will continue to be augmented by cooperation with other organizations working to protect the endangered cats.

Mongolia

ISLT and Peace Corps Mongolia continued their successful collaboration in 2002, as Peace Corps Volunteers worked hard to monitor snow leopard and prey species population densities and to train educators in the importance of including lessons on biodiversity and ecosystem health in their curricula. This partnership has proven to deliver cost-effective results over the past four years, and we look forward to continuing to work closely with Peace Corps.



Peace Corps Mongolia continues to help educate school children in this important snow leopard range country.



Snow Leopard Enterprises continues to grow and serve more and more rural families..

Snow Leopard Enterprises (SLE), ISLT's income generation/wildlife conservation project, continues to grow in Mongolia. Over 200 nomadic families are now taking part in the program and receiving additional income through handicraft production. Sales of SLE products in 2002 grew to more than \$19,000 – up more than 700% over 2001 sales. SLE also took an important step towards becoming a self-sustaining program last year as ISLT staff worked with volunteers from the Seattle business community to develop a comprehensive business plan. By following the guidelines of the plan, we hope to have Snow Leopard Enterprises reach economic self-sufficiency by 2006. Indications are that poaching of snow leopard and prey species in the project areas is substantially reduced – a good sign for the cats!

India

Several new initiatives were implemented in India in 2002, many of which were aimed at reducing the levels of livestock depredation by snow leopards. Poaching of snow leopards in retaliation for livestock loss is a major threat to the cats, and by reducing the levels of domestic animal loss suffered by local people, we hope to make living in close proximity to predators more acceptable.

One step we are undertaking is the creation of a grazing reserve. By providing native prey species of snow leopards, primarily wild sheep and goats, a place where they can graze unfettered by competition from domestic livestock, we hope to stabilize their populations. By working to increase the numbers of wild sheep and goats, we hope to decrease the frequency of snow leopard attacks on livestock and the subsequent retaliation by herders.

Additionally, we are implementing a livestock insurance program. Participants pay premiums into a village-managed fund to insure their herds. If their animals are victims of predator attack, herders can file a claim and receive compensation for their loss. As an incentive for actively guarding their livestock against predation, herders who do not lose any animals in a given insurance period are refunded a portion of their premium.



Livestock depredation and the resulting poaching of snow leopards continues to be a major problem in India.

Kyrgyz Republic

The first wave of Snow Leopard Enterprises products crafted by local people in the Kyrgyz Republic arrived in Seattle in late 2002, and the items are currently being marketed on our website. The handicrafts are made from sheep wool felt and include slippers, cushion covers, and handbags.

SLE was instituted in the Kyrgyz Republic in order to provide the families of protected area rangers an opportunity to increase their incomes in exchange for their assistance in anti-poaching efforts. Since the collapse of the former Soviet Union, the economic situation in the Kyrgyz Republic has become so poor that rangers are not being paid by the government to protect the wildlife in national parks. In order to make enough money to support their families, rangers are often forced to poach the very wildlife they are employed to protect. By offering these people an alternative source of income, we are working to reduce the levels of snow leopard and prey species loss due to illegal hunting.



Snow Leopard Enterprises' expansion to the Kyrgyz Republic will make a real difference for the cats and the local people in this economically challenged country.

Pakistan



Surveys to determine the health of local snow leopard populations using the Snow Leopard Information Management System (SLIMS) methodology were a high priority in 2002. Establishing baseline data is of vital importance in measuring the success of future conservation efforts. Many kilometers of transects were monitored in 2002 in order to get a clear picture of the current density of local snow leopard populations.

Also undertaken in 2002 were initial steps to expand Snow Leopard Enterprises' reach to this important snow leopard range country. A project site was chosen based upon levels of livestock depredation, the presence of handicraft traditions, and willingness of local people to engage in the program. Additionally, potential products were identified and training sessions were held to improve quality standards from the participants.

China

ISLT staff led a training program in the Meili Snow Mountains of northwest Yunnan Province for scientists from the Kunming Institute of Zoology (KIZ) and other associates of The Nature Conservancy's (TNC) China Program. TNC has been working in partnership with government, local communities, and academic institutions for the past three years to help study and protect this area, one of the most biologically and culturally diverse landscapes on earth. ISLT helped to develop a wildlife database and to teach the Snow Leopard Information Management System (SLIMS) methodology so they can determine whether snow leopards are present in the Meili Snow Mountains.



ISLT staff worked closely with scientists from the Kunming Institute to conduct surveys in the Meili Snow Mountains in yunnan, China.

The Snow Leopard Survival Strategy



Participants in the 2002 Snow Leopard Survival Summit.

The most significant accomplishment of 2002 was the creation of the Snow Leopard Survival Strategy (SLSS). After being delayed due to the events of September 11, 2001, the SLSS was crafted during a summit meeting held in Seattle in May of 2002. Sixty-five conservation professionals from 17 different countries attended the workshop held at the Woodland Park Zoo. The participants worked hard over four days to identify and rank threats facing snow leopards in different areas of the cats' range, highlight potential actions to be taken to address these threats, and prioritize research and conservation initiatives.

The results of the meeting were incorporated into the Snow Leopard Survival Strategy document, which is currently being reviewed by members of the conservation community in snow leopard range countries. A tremendous amount of hard work went into hosting this conference and developing the SLSS, the first comprehensive range-wide strategy for ensuring the snow leopard's long-term survival, and the resultant plan will guide the efforts of all agencies working on conservation of the endangered cats.

Also accomplished at the workshop was the creation of the Snow Leopard Network (SLN), a committee of snow leopard conservation professionals who will continue to monitor implementation of the SLSS, coordinate field programs, and gauge the success of conservation efforts. Dr. Tom McCarthy, ISLT Conservation Director, will chair the group.

The Natural Partnerships Program

21 zoos provided critical support of snow leopard conservation initiatives in 2002 through ISLT's Natural Partnerships Program (NPP). Zoo sponsorship helped to make community-based conservation programs possible in India while supporting the expansion of Snow Leopard Enterprises in Pakistan and the continuing Peace Corps Mongolia partnership. Thanks to all of our 2002 NPP partner zoos!

Binder Park Zoo (Battle Creek, MI)
Colchester Zoo (United Kingdom)
Lee Richardson Zoo (Garden City, KS)
Mill Mountain Zoo (Roanoke, VA)
Oklahoma City Zoological Park (OK)
Parc Zoologique de Doué la Fontaine (France)
Philadelphia Zoological Gardens (PA)
San Antonio Zoological Gardens & Aquarium (TX)
Societe Zoologique de Granby (Canada)
Tulsa Zoo (Tulsa, OK)
Zoo New England (Boston, MA)

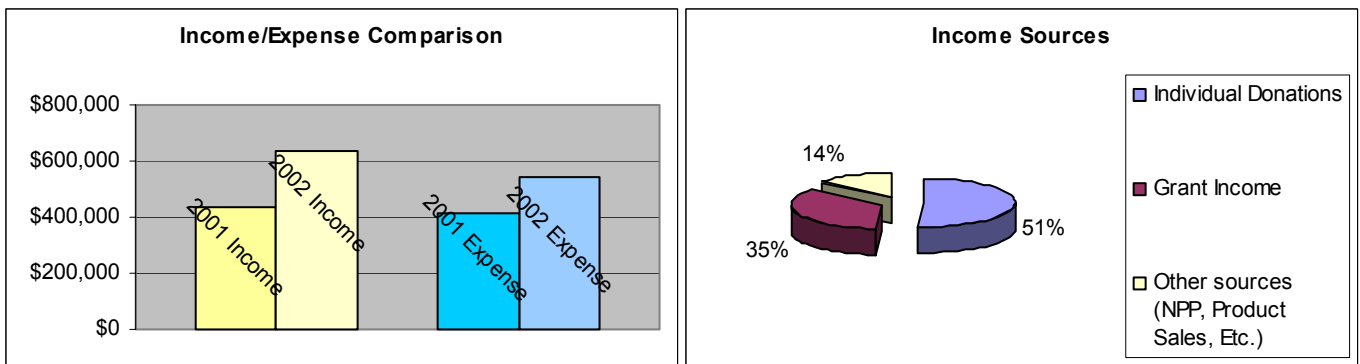
Blank Park Zoo (Des Moines, IA)
Great Plains Zoo (Sioux Falls, SD)
Marwell Zoological Park (United Kingdom)
Milwaukee County Zoological Gardens (WI)
Oregon Zoo (Portland, OR)
Parc Zoologique de Thoiry (France)
Sacramento Zoological Society (CA)
San Francisco Zoo (CA)
Tautphaus Park Zoo (Idaho Falls, ID)
Utah's Hogle Zoo (Salt Lake City, UT)

Finances

2002 was a challenging year for raising money by any measure. Foundations typically determine the amount of funding they will make available based upon the performance of their investments in the previous year. The economic slump that began in 2001 caused many foundations to substantially reduce their funding levels.

Despite this challenging environment, ISLT was able to, for the third year in a row, increase its net operating income over the previous year. This was due to a 40% increase in membership numbers and a substantial increase in grant income. All told, 2002 saw a 45% increase in operating income over 2001 levels. This additional income was used to add additional in-country staff members and expand conservation programs such as Snow Leopard Enterprises to more areas of the snow leopard's range.

In total, 80% of ISLT's expenditures were made on direct field conservation, research, and education programs; the remaining 20% covered administrative costs.



2002 Board of Directors

The Trust continues to be led and supported by a very involved Board of Directors. President Charles Morse continued to supply excellent leadership along with his fellow officers, Vice Presidents Norma Cole and Robert Pennell, and Secretary/Treasurer Steven Kearsley. Board Members Marilyn Fite, Skip Fox, Thomas Ginn, Michael Harris, Lewis Macfarlane, and Michael Waller remain committed to providing strong leadership and guidance for Trust activities. Additionally, ISLT's founder, Helen Freeman, continues to be an integral and active supporter of the Trust's work.

Mission Statement:

The International Snow Leopard Trust is dedicated to the conservation of the endangered snow leopard and its mountain habitat through a balanced approach that considers the needs of local people and the environment.

The International Snow Leopard Trust is a private, nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization
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