

ISLT Hires Snow Leopard Conservationist in China

Zou Hongfei, Ph.D., has been hired as ISLT's Snow Leopard Conservationist (SLC) in China.

Dr. Zou is currently an Assistant Professor and Lecturer in the Department of Wildlife Resources at Northeast Forestry University (NFU) in Harbin, People's Republic of China. She teaches courses at NFU in wildlife ecology, wildlife management, and population ecology.

Dr. Zou received a B.S. degree in Biology in 1988 from Beijing National University, an M.S. in Wildlife Management from NFU, and her Ph.D. from NFU in 1998. She has been a longtime student and colleague of Ma Jianzhang,

Dr. Zou Hongfei

the distinguished Chinese academician who is the Dean of the College of Wildlife Resources at NFU. Dr. Ma has recently joined ISLT's International Advisory Board *(see story on page three)*. As ISLT's Snow Leopard Conservationist in China, Dr. Zou's responsibilities include preparing a list of nature re

serves within the snow leopard's range in China and entering relevant information on reserve size, administration, physical features, biological resources, and related topics into ISLT's Snow Leopard Information Management System (SLIMS) database; preparing a summary report on needed actions to ensure healthy populations of snow leopards; coordinate a SLIMS field techniques workshop that includes classroom and field exercises in snow leopard habitat; among other tasks.

Dr. Zou's hire has been made possible by a two-year grant from the Midcontinent Ecological Science Center (U.S. Geological Survey) in Fort Collins, Colorado.

Six New Zoos Join Natural Partnerships Program

Six zoos -- four in the U.S., one in Canada, and one in England -- have recently joined ISLT's Natural Partnerships Program (NPP). The six new members are: Cleveland Metroparks Zoo (Ohio USA); Colchester Zoo (Stanway, Essex, UK.); Great Plains Zoo (Sioux Falls, South Dakota); Jardin Zoologique de Granby (Quebec, Canada); Tulsa Zoo (Oklahoma USA); and the Zoological Society of San Diego (California USA). As it enters its second year of existence, the NPP has attracted the support of 18 zoos worldwide.

During 1998, NPP members were responsible for a variety of important on-the-ground field conservation and conservation education programs. Thanks

to the support of Seattle's Woodland Park Zoo, ISLT was able to hire its first full-time Snow Leopard Conservationist in Pakistan. Thanks to the support of the Columbus Zoo, ISLT undertook a variety of training, herder incentive, and education programs in Tibet's Qomolangma Nature Preserve.

In addition, livestock corral improvements, herder education programs, and survey data input were supported by a number of NPP members: Marwell Zoo, San Antonio Zoo, Utica Zoo, and Zoo New England

An audio-visual education initiative was supported by the Sacramento Zoo. The Milwaukee Zoo supported the publication of a conservation manual, while the

St. Louis Zoo and the Parc Zoologique de Thoiry supported field training for Afghani biologists. Mill Mountain Zoo supported the distribution of a conservation education poster in Tibet, while the Calgary Zoo supported the preparation of a conservation education calendar poster to be distributed in Mongolia in 1999.

1999 Field

by *Dr. Rodney Jackson*
Conservation Director

ISL T's 1999 field conservation efforts will focus upon reducing those factors that seriously threaten the snow leopard in its high mountain stronghold: retribution from angry herders who have lost livestock (often because of a combination of lax guarding and depletion of the natural prey base); poaching of snow leopards for their pelts and bones;

A herder education meeting in Tibet's Qomolangma Nature Preserve

and weak management in key protected areas that harbor significant numbers of snow leopard.

Given the remoteness of the snow leopard's range, our best option for reducing poaching may lie in educating the general public, locally and internationally, on the importance of maintaining healthy and intact alpine ecosystems in Central Asia, with the snow leopard as an "indicator species." We seek to build the capacity of local communities and organizations to protect wildlife through an interrelated set of initiatives from training to baseline monitoring and

Conservation Program of Work

research. Community-based participatory conservation initiatives seek to link for the area;

biodiversity protection, community development and land stewardship in ways which better protect snow leopards, their prey and habitat - using incentives, signed agreements and co-financing arrangements.

Our goal is to have projects implemented by a range country Snow Leopard Conservationist, who works in close collabo

ration with local NGOs and governmental agencies with whom we have collaborative projects. Currently, we have field SLCs in four countries, Dr. Zou Hongfei in China (*see story on page one*), Dr. Yash Veer Bhatnagar in India, Bariushaagin Munkhtsog in Mongolia, Ahmad Khan in Pakistan. In addition, part-time field associates have been hired - Dr. Eugene Koshkarev in Russia, and Rinchen Wangchuk and Rinchen Angmo in Ladakh in northern India.

ISL T's 1999 field conservation program activities include:

-A SLIMS (Snow Leopard Information Management System) training workshop in Nepal's Shey-Phoksundo National Park in collaboration with the Nepal Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation and WWF-Nepal as the basis for developing and

implementing a sound management plan
-Beginning work by our Snow Leopard Conservationist in China to develop a database on snow leopard, prey species, other wildlife, and management issues of China's rapidly increasing number of high mountain reserves. This database will assist ISL T and other conservation organizations to enhance the capacity of the Chinese agencies to manage these reserves amid increasing pressures from nearby residents;

-Snow leopard training and village-based conservation planning workshop in the Hemis National Park, Ladakh, India in September. Participants will include village leaders, herders (of both genders), and members of the wildlife department. Using the latest interactive "grass-roots" techniques, workshop members will explore how best to reconcile people-wildlife conflict due to livestock depredation, while also strengthening resource and wildlife conservation in this internationally important protected area. Our goal for the workshop is to produce a signed document specifying how each stakeholder's goals can be met, including co-financing arrangements and a detailed task implementation and monitoring plan to be implemented in the coming few years.
-Mobilizing a small conservation team led by Dr. Yash Veer Bhatnagar to undertake surveys and social assessments in Ladakh as a basis for ISL T's long-term conservation work in the region;

-SLIMS surveys in four important areas in Pakistan, including two national parks and two community conservation areas;

- Livestock corral improvement programs in the two major snow leopard

(continued on page three)

1999 Conservation Education Program of Work

by *Darla Hillard*

Conservation Education Director

ISL T's 1999 conservation education efforts will see continuation of the production of our "Web of Life" series of posters to be distributed throughout the mountain villages in Central Asia. Last year, posters were produced and distributed in Tibet, Nepal, and Pakistan. A version for Ladakh (in northern India) has been produced, and versions are underway for Sikkim and Bhutan. A special calendar-poster, more appropriate to herders in the high deserts of Mongolia, will be produced and distributed this year in and around the Gobi Desert. The 18"x24" color poster, "The Food Web of Central Asia's High Mountains," is produced from original artwork by Leslie Nguyen. The style is an adaptation of the traditional Buddhist *thangka*.

With the poster as the centerpiece, group educational activities among villagers and village school children will be carried out in 1999, under the direction of ISL T's Snow Leopard Conservationists. A special calendar poster in Mongolia, ISL T is spearheading a project to produce radio programs to be broadcast to herder villages throughout

Field Programs

(continued from page two)

areas of Pakistan, in collaboration with WWF-Pakistan, supplemented by an assessment of the role of women in protecting wildlife in the Northern Areas;

-Continued collection of samples from range countries for genetic analysis in order to assess the variability of the wild snow leopard population, using state-of-the-art, non-invasive techniques. DNA will be extracted and examined

from fecal samples collected in Russia, Mongolia, Nepal, Tibet, and Pakistan (extreme north and south range limits).

the country. The programs will feature snow leopard conservation themes and will include interviews with Bariushaagin Munkhtsog, ISL T's

Snow Leopard Conservationist, among other field conservationists.

ISL T's conservation education program will continue its collaboration with students at Waldo Middle School in Salem, Oregon. Through their own fundraising efforts, the students have provided a significant portion of materials needed to reinforce livestock corals in Tibet's Qomolangma Nature Preserve. This year, the students are turning their attention to the Ladakh region of northern India and will provide edu

New International Advisory Board Members

For the past several months, ISL T has been reconstituting its International Advisory Board (IAB) to include more representatives from the twelve "snow leopard countries" of Central Asia.

ISL T is pleased to announce that three distinguished individuals from three snow leopard countries have recently

joined the IAB:

Divya Chavda Senior
VP - Operations Taj
Group of Hotels New
Dehli, India

cational materials for use in local nature clubs in schools.

ISL T will also be providing assistance

in 1999 to the Ladakh Dept. of Wildlife Protection to redo their Hemis National Park tourist brochure and develop materials aimed at discouraging the capture by villagers of snow leopard cubs perceived as being abandoned by their mothers.

Finally, in response to feedback from visitors to our website, we will be posting an extensive bibliography of publications about snow leopards and their mountain ecosystem, as well as expanded pages for kids.

Ali Hassan Habib
Director General
WWF-Pakistan
Lahore, Pakistan

Ma Jianzhang, Dean Professor
College of Wildlife Resources
Northeast Forestry University
Harbin, P.R. China

The IAB will eventually have at least two representatives from each snow leopard country of Central Asia as well as representatives from North America and Europe.