Snow Leopard Network
Report of Activities
2009

The Snow Leopard Network (SLN) was established as a conceptual organization in May 2002 by the participants in the Snow Leopard Survival Strategy (SLSS) summit meeting in Seattle, USA, and has since grown to include 340 members from the public and private sectors.

2009 Accomplishments

Funding:
The SLN was supported in 2009 by contributions from the Snow Leopard Trust ($5,000), the German nature organization NABU ($5,000), Charlie Knowles of Wildlife Conservation Network ($5,000), and the Snow Leopard Conservancy ($2,500).

Executive Director:
In late November 2009, SLN executive Director Dr. Tom McCarthy stepped down after 7 years of service. We are looking forward to Dr. Charu Mishra of the Snow Leopard Trust and Nature Conservation Foundation, India, taking the reins of the SLN.

Program Coordinator:
In November 2008, Rana Bayrakçı started as the new Program Coordinator. She works on Mondays and Tuesdays for 12-16 hours per week.

Membership:
The SLN began with approximately 65 members. Since then, it has grown to 340 members. The Bylaws identified 3 types of membership: Full (professional), Affiliate (non-professional) and Organizational. Currently, there are 267 Full, 42 Affiliate, and 30 Organizational members. This is an increase of 36 Full and 10 Affiliate members and a decrease of 3 Organizational members.

The range country Membership Committee representatives have not been active this year. Recruitment efforts were undertaken by the Membership Committee Coordinator, Dan Prain, and the Program Coordinator, Rana.

When the website is launched in multiple languages, we hope to recruit snow leopard experts who are not comfortable communicating in English who may apply for membership with help from their country's membership representative.

Communications:
The SLN's primary purpose continues to be to foster interchange between specialists in the field of snow leopard research, policy, and conservation. Several avenues are available online for members to communicate, with more being developed.

Listserve
The listserve continues to serve as a discussion forum for SLN members, as well as the most effective avenue to distribute information. Although most members do not actively post as often as would be ideal, many announcements do incite interesting and insightful discussion.

Website
The website was last redesigned in 2006. A French language version of the website was officially launched in July 2008. Attempts to launch the website in non-Latin language characters were unsuccessful without the necessary programming expertise. Rana recruited a volunteer who has been helping to completely rebuild the website and corresponding membership database. The dedicated volunteer, Seamus Smith, started the project in February and has already spent 320 hours on the project including many hours training and working with Rana.

Chinese, French and Russian translations of the website have been completed.

News Distribution
SLN member Guillaume Chapron developed our automated News Feed for the website. This continually searched the web for stories on snow leopards and automatically updates in English.

Project Database
The project database idea was dissolved after input from the IUCN Cat Specialist Group and their experience with lack of involvement in their similar database. A project database would require members to voluntarily input project details and that requires a very involved membership. With only about 10% of members voting in the Steering Committee election, we were reluctant to put limited resources into the database.

Bibliographic Database:
The Snow Leopard Bibliography has grown from 869 entries in 2008 to 1100 entries, over 300 of which are in Russian, many in Chinese, and a few are in Nepalese. Most of the links to listed articles in the bibliography were found to be invalid. With the assistance of a work study student, Rana spent many hours tracking down all possible references available for posting (more than 200). The remaining missing articles (~60) are not available for posting primarily due to copyright issues, old date of references, and size constraints (books).

Snow Leopard Conservation Grants:
In 2009, the Snow Leopard Conservation Grants (SLCG) Program is supporting 6 projects in China, India, Nepal and Pakistan with $30,000. For 2010, the SLCG program awarded $15,000 to 3 projects in China, Mongolia and Pakistan. Funding was provided by the Snow Leopard Trust and the Snow Leopard Conservancy.

Committee Status

Steering Committee:
Elections for the 6 Steering Committee members and the Chair were held in December 2008. The 7 Steering Committee members began their two-year terms in January 2009; their terms will end on 31 December 2011. Only ~10% of the membership participated in the voting process. Future direction discussions were attempted with past and current Steering Committee members without much success.

Ashiq Ahmad Khan- *Chair*	Pakistan
Bayarjargal Agvaantseren (Bayara)	Mongolia
Mukesh K. Chalise, PhD	Nepal
Badri Vinod Dahal	Nepal
Alexander Esipov	Uzbekistan
Joe Fox	Norway
Thorsten Harder	Kyrgyzstan

Committee Chairs:
Overall, committees have not been particularly active this year. Membership seems to have been most active as shown by the number of new SLN members. The Action Plan Committee Chair David Mallon and former SLN Executive Director Tom McCarthy have been working closely with the Academy of Sciences in Tajikistan to develop that country's Snow Leopard Action Plan. Both Tom and David have made multiple trips to Dushanbe in part to move the plan forward. A final plan is expected to be completed and ready for government action in early 2010. The process has been supported by funds from NABU, FFI and Panthera.

Policy and Position Statement Committee, Chair – Available

Membership Committee, Chair – Dan Prain
Dan Prain and Rana have been coordinating efforts to actively recruit new members. Dan has also been approving new members into appropriate membership categories throughout the year.

Communications Committee, Chair - Patricia Williams

Action Planning Committee, Chair - David Mallon

Science Committee, Chair - Rodney Jackson

Looking to the Future

Funding:
Charu is currently working with the Steering Committee to determine funding possibilities for 2010.

Communications:
Website
We hope to launch the new English-version website in early 2010. Once that is successfully launched, we will work to launch abbreviated versions of the new website in Chinese, French, Hindi, Mongolian, Nepalese, and Russian thanks to translations provided by SLN members. The Hindi, Mongolian and Nepalese translations should be completed in early 2010.

With the new website, we will also be able to gather data on what web pages are most visited/utilized. When members are signed in and move around the website, we will be able to see what pages are most useful specifically to our members. This information will allow us to prioritize pages to develop further.

Membership:
Membership committee members are encouraged to recruit all snow leopard experts and relevant policymakers to join the SLN and therefore strengthen our networking capacity.

Problems and Necessary Improvements

The largest challenge to the SLN over the years has been the limited involvement of many members. However, as the website expands and multiple language options are increasingly available, members will have greater opportunity to be involved. However, even if all members maintain their current levels of involvement, networking opportunities will remain, discussions will still take place via the listserve, and the valuable resources such as the SLSS, Bibliography, and Membership Database will still be utilized by many members.

Many member profiles still remain incomplete since the 2007 change in web hosting companies that led to the loss of membership information. Ideally, each member should log in and update their profile. When the new website is launched with some new database fields, we hope to encourage more members to finish filling out their profiles.

The SLN will be revitalized by the energy of our new Executive Director, Charu. He is familiarizing himself with the SLN and initiating a dialogue with the Steering Committee. He plans to hold virtual meetings over Skype to discuss SLN priorities for the future. He is also planning virtual meetings with our other committees.

Priority Actions for the SLN in 2008 – 2010: an update on progress

At the Steering Committee meeting in Beijing in March 2008, fifteen action items were identified, and they have been progressing at varying paces. Below is a full list, as well as a status update on each one. Many have already been discussed in the previous sections, but were left to keep the list complete.

a. Long-term funding strategy – establish a finance committee with Terms of Reference and targets.
Status: In discussion by the SC.

b. Add at least one member from each country on the membership committee
Status: Many members already designated and active. Waiting for nominations from remaining countries.

c. Actively recruit SLN members in range states with targets. Increase of 10% per year in the next 3 years in the Full and Organizational members. 5% increase in Affiliate members.
Status: Range-wide membership recruitment is a priority, and the membership committee members are actively recruiting or will be in the near future. Additionally, all Snow Leopard Conservation Grant applicants are encouraged to join, and many already have. The Network has been growing at this rate or higher for the past three years, and shows little signs of slowing.

d. Continually update SLN website. Have local language options on the web – Chinese, French, Hindi, Mongolian, Nepalese, and Russian. Use web statistics to gauge success.

Status: Volunteer programmer found by Rana and since February 2009, they have been rebuilding the entire English website and database, and will soon be incorporating statistics. The updated English-version website should be launched in early 2010, followed by the additional languages. Translation into Chinese, French, Hindi, Mongolian, Nepalese, and Russian is in progress and should be completed by June 2010.

e. Distribute summary SLSS in Chinese, Mongolian & Russian.

Status: All translations are complete; Russian and Chinese versions available online. Rana has contacted Munkhtsog and will post the Mongolian translation as soon as he emails a copy. Hard copies will be printed and distributed by the end of August.

f. Collect and make available all existing action or strategic plans.

Status: Action plans compiled and web page is completed and available online at http://snowleopardnetwork.org/actionplans.html. Web page is updated as new action pans are implemented.

g. Place guidelines for action plan/strategy development on the website.

Status: Web page prepared; waiting for guidelines to be completed.

h. Add all Chinese papers on snow leopards to the bibliography. English abstracts, titles, citation, keywords.

Status: Dr. Jiang provided 18 full text Chinese language papers. Those that already had an English language abstract attached have been uploaded to the bibliography, while those that did not have been sent to Ge Yun for a volunteer to provide.

i. Focal Points (discussed at Beijing meeting) to create a list for each country of key government people/positions who should receive summary info (senior officials with wildlife linkages, CITES, etc.).

Status: Waiting for Role of Focal Points to be defined.

j. Revitalize the Policy Committee and identify a new Chair. Develop a list of the 3 or 4 most crucial policy issues and develop statements on these. Distribute these statements to people who need to have the position statement.

Status: There has been brief discussion among the Steering Committee, but a Policy Committee chair has not been identified yet.

k. Maintain databases on conservation, research and education projects. Add page one Steering Committee reports, annual reports.

Status: As mentioned above, the project database idea was dissolved/put on hold due to lack of participation compared to amount of programming effort necessary to complete the project. When annual reports and committee reports are produced, a web page can be developed in 2010 to share these with SLN members.

l. Post expert knowledge map of snow leopard range extent.

Status: Map available on SLSS page of the SLN website. Interactive map from the Beijing conference will go online after formal publication.

m. Place links on SLN website to websites of successful conservation initiatives or models.

Status: Link web page available on SLN website: http://www.snowleopardnetwork.org/Links.htm, but does not specifically identify successful programs.

n. Prepare for December 2008 Steering Committee election.
Status: Completed.

o. Prepare budget and annual report for 2007-2008.

Status: Budget & annual report for 2007-2008 appear to be close to completion by the previous SLN Program Coordinator, Heather Hemmingmoore. Rana is checking status with Brad to confirm the budget.