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Andean mountain cat group, working to save the highly endangered cat, holds first meeting in Arica, Chile with support of California-based Wildlife Conservation Network

South American Meeting Showcases Ground-Breaking Programs to Save Endangered Cat

Los Altos, California, April 22, 2004— Wildlife Conservation Network (WCN), a nonprofit organization focused on funding community-based wildlife conservationists, brought together representatives from four countries in South America (Chile, Peru, Argentina and Bolivia) to develop an action plan to save the small and very elusive Andean mountain cat (*Oreailurus jacobita*). Elaine Iverson, WCN's Program Manager for the newly created group, Alianza Gato Andino (AGA), led the meeting with moderator Claudio Sillero-Zubiri.

"WCN is thrilled to be a part of this effort. These conservationists have been working with little coordination or support to save this rare species of cat. WCN is facilitating the development of a Conservation Action Plan and then providing the resources for the implementation of that plan. The conservationist will then have the strategy and funding necessary to work with local communities to save these cats and their ecosystems" said Charlie Knowles, WCN Executive Director.

Christine Hemrick, a member of WCN's Board of Directors and a Vice President for Cisco Systems, Inc., sponsored the meeting. "AGA is an excellent example of the conservation model that WCN promotes and finances. We provide support and incentives for local conservationists to work cooperatively and learn from each other and other experts in the WCN network", said Ms. Hemrick.

The Andean mountain cat is one of the five most endangered cats in the world and probably the rarest wild cat in South America. Very little is known about this small carnivore that lives exclusively in the remote high-altitude deserts of the Andes in Argentina, Bolivia, Chile and Peru.

WCN is the liaison between US funding and international projects. When donors designate their dollars to the Andean mountain cat, 100% of their gift goes to that project in the field.

About Wildlife Conservation Network

WCN (www.WildNet.org) was founded in 2002 to fund and develop conservation entrepreneurs focused on implementing community-based conservation programs in developing countries. WCN provides back office support—fundraising, marketing, administrative and technical expertise—to conservationists, enabling them to work more effectively and spend more time in the field. WCN uses a “Venture Conservationism” fundraising model based on the relationships that have evolved between high-technology entrepreneurs, investors and venture capital (VC) firms. Acting as a very efficient VC, WCN identifies high-potential conservation entrepreneurs and projects, ensuring due diligence is completed up-front, providing ongoing advisory services, and forging alliances between donor-"investors" and conservation entrepreneurs. WCN is the first to use this approach to fund and support worldwide conservation efforts.

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