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More than 1000 Enthusiasts Participate in Wildlife Conservation Expo

Peninsula Event Raises Over \$200,000 for Independent Conservationists

Los Altos Hills, California, October 27, 2003—Wildlife Conservation Network (WCN), a nonprofit organization that funds and supports independent conservationists, hosted an enthusiastic crowd of more than 1000 wildlife devotees at its 2nd annual Wildlife Conservation Expo on October 11 and 12, 2003. The event brought together 20 conservationists from around the world, including Dr. Jane Goodall, 20 wildlife and animal welfare organizations, along with the general public. The Expo was held on the campus of Foothill College in Los Altos Hills, California.

“WCN is extremely pleased with the results of the Expo,” said Charles Knowles, WCN Executive Director. “The participants were enthusiastic and committed, and seemed especially pleased to know that when they select a conservation project to support, WCN passes 100% of their gift to the designated project. Thus contributors can be confident that their contributions will have maximum impact supporting critical conservation work in the field. To date we have received checks and commitments for more than \$200,000.”

These funds will be used to support the community-oriented conservation initiatives on 3 continents:

- The Snow Leopard Conservancy
- The Ethiopian Wolf Conservation Program
- Save the Elephants
- Cheetah Conservation Fund
- Cheetah Conservation Botswana
- Okapi Conservation Project
- Sumatran Rhino Conservation
- Small Cat Conservation Alliance
- The Andean Cat Alliance
- The Jane Goodall Institute

The Expo, which brings conservationists from around the globe to California, also serves as a venue for discussions and workshops that support these conservation activists in their work. This year WCN sponsored two events to build network support for field conservationists. The first was a workshop, co-sponsored by The Mountain Institute, on

Community-based Conservation. This workshop allowed seasoned conservationists, including Dr. Iain Douglas-Hamilton of Save the Elephants, Dr. Rodney Jackson of the Snow Leopard Conservancy and Dr. Laurie Marker of Cheetah Conservation Fund to share their experience and coach the next generation of field conservationists, such as Dr. Olga Uphyrkina of the Amur Leopard Project and Rebecca Klein of Cheetah Conservation Botswana.

The second pre-Expo activity was for the benefit of Andean Mountain Cat conservation. “Currently no conservation project focuses on the plight of the highly endangered Andean Mountain Cat (AMC), a tiny wild cat which inhabits mountainous habitat in Bolivia, Argentina, Chile and Peru,” explained Knowles. “Effective conservation will require the coordination of work in all four range countries, so WCN brought 6 key AMC researchers to the Expo to support them as they develop a cooperative conservation plan for the cat. At the Expo, they could tap the knowledge and experience of leading conservationists who had faced many of the same start-up challenges. We also introduced them to several potential conservation ‘investors’, who might be sources of additional financial support.” One conservation investor pledged \$50,000 in start-up funds for the AMC conservation project, contingent on progress made toward creating a multinational organization with a conservation action plan to save the Andean Mountain Cat.

During the Expo, the first AMC workshop was facilitated by Dr. Claudio Sillero-Zubiri, an Oxford University-based conservationist who founded the Ethiopian Wolf Conservation Program, and included Dr. Jim Sanderson, a leading authority on the world’s endangered small cats and on the use of remote camera traps for wildlife research. The group made substantial progress toward their goals, and appears on target to receive initial funding for their new Andean Mountain Cat conservation initiative.

According to the wildlife conservationists, who work in remote areas where they are out of touch with their supporters and others in the field, the Expo is unique. “The WCN Expo was wonderful. It was a combination of really interesting content and the sheer enthusiasm that the WCN supporters brought to it all,” said Dr. Iain Douglas-Hamilton of Save the Elephants. “I so enjoyed being one of the participants and the feeling that this is a long-term relationship that we are developing to help secure the future for endangered wildlife.”

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. WCN provides back office support—fundraising, marketing, administrative and technical expertise—enabling the conservationists to work more effectively and spend more time in the field. WCN uses a “Venture Conservation” fundraising model based on the relationships that have evolved between high-technology entrepreneurs, investors and venture capital (VC) firms. Acting as a non-profit VC, WCN identifies high-potential conservation entrepreneurs and projects, ensures due diligence is completed up-front, provides ongoing advisory services, and forges 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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