



SCIENCE AND
CONSERVATION EVENTS

INTERNATIONAL POLICY FOR BIG CAT CONSERVATION



DATE

Tuesday 24 September
2024

TIME

6pm – 7:30pm

LOCATION

Huxley Lecture Theatre,
ZSL

Free to attend

Registration required

AGENDA

Professor Sarah Durant

Professor, Institute of Zoology, ZSL

*The benefits and challenges of international
policy for cheetah conservation*

Dr Valeria Boron

Senior Programme Advisor, WWF and

Melissa Arias

Wildlife Trade Specialist, ZSL

*The benefits and challenges of international
policy for jaguar conservation*

Dr Sahil Nijhawan

Research Fellow, Institute of Zoology, ZSL

*The benefits and challenges of international
policy for tiger conservation*

Paul de Ornellas

Chief Advisor, Wildlife, WWF

*Opportunities and challenges for big cat
conservation over the next decade*

Chaired by **Dr Susan Lieberman**

**Vice President, International Policy Wildlife
Conservation Society**

ABSTRACTS

The benefits and challenges of international policy for cheetah conservation

Professor Sarah Durant, ZSL

Since most cheetahs live outside of protected areas, their survival depends on finding ways to live alongside local communities and maintaining vital wildlife corridors that connect populations across large landscapes. This talk will explore the ecology and behaviour of the cheetah, explaining why they need large areas for their survival and are less abundant than most other large cats. It will go on to provide an update on cheetah conservation status and threats, and will discuss how cheetahs, along with other big cats, can be used as symbols for large scale biodiversity efforts.

Real-world examples show how cheetah conservation contributes to international conservation policy goals, such as those in the Biodiversity Convention's Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), including protecting habitats, recovering connectivity, and promoting sustainable land use.

Finally, the talk will explore how aligning cheetah conservation with these global goals can improve species recovery, increase public awareness, and help make ecosystems stronger and more resilient.

***Sarah** is a Professor at ZSL's Institute of Zoology and leads the Africa Range-wide Cheetah Conservation Initiative. Sarah is a conservation scientist and practitioner, with expertise in carnivore ecology and conservation; human wildlife coexistence; biodiversity monitoring; conservation management; landscape conservation and connectivity; rewilding; land use change; and conservation policy. She has more*

than 30 years' experience in scientific research and conservation of cheetahs and other felids. Since 1991 Sarah has led the Serengeti Cheetah Project in Tanzania, which is the longest ongoing study of individually recognised wild cheetahs.

Save jaguars save so much more: policy and conservation of Latin America's iconic big cat

**Dr Valeria Boron, WWF and
Dr Melissa Arias, ZSL**

Jaguars (*Panthera onca*) are keystone and umbrella species, with crucial roles in maintaining healthy ecosystems. Their vast habitats store carbon, hold abundant biodiversity and deliver a wide range of ecosystem services. However, jaguars already lost 50% of their historic range and their populations are declining due to habitat loss, decline of their prey, and direct killing due to conflict and the illegal trade. Since 2010, reports of illegal trade in jaguar parts, particularly teeth, have surged across Latin America, with notable cases in Bolivia and Suriname. This trade is driven by various factors, including retaliation against jaguars for livestock depredation, traditional customs involving jaguar parts, and international demand from wildlife markets in Asia. These pressures altogether pose a significant threat to jaguar populations.

In response, jaguar range countries have strengthened their collaboration under the United Nations Conventions on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) and Migratory Species (CMS), as well as the Jaguar 2030 Roadmap, developing policies and agreements aimed at conserving jaguars at a transboundary level and curbing killing of jaguars and the illegal trade. WWF is also increasing its efforts to protect jaguars across the range with actions that aim at protecting jaguar strongholds, fostering connectivity and sustainable development, stopping jaguar killings, catalysing cooperation, and creating enabling conditions such as sustainable financing and political will.

***Valeria** has been working at the interface between jaguar science and conservation for over*

a decade. Her research focuses on jaguar and other felids' ecology, conservation priorities, and policy. She holds a MSc from Imperial College and a PhD from DICE, University of Kent. Currently, Valeria is WWF UK's Senior Programme Advisor, Latin America, and Jaguar Lead, conducting range-wide science and advising implementation of jaguar and Amazon projects on habitat conservation, connectivity, human-wildlife coexistence, and trade. Previously, she worked as Science Coordinator for Panthera South America and as Regional Manager and Jaguar Advisor for WWF UK.

Melissa is ZSL's Wildlife Trade Specialist, guiding efforts to combat illegal wildlife trade and promote sustainable, traceable, and legal use. Her work bridges the social and natural sciences, addressing critical issues like wildlife trade, human-wildlife coexistence, anti-corruption, conservation area management and wildlife policy. Previously, she served as WWF's Amazon Jaguar Coordinator and Anti-corruption Manager and consulted for United Nations Biodiversity Conventions and Latin American governments on wildlife trafficking, with a focus on jaguars. Melissa holds a PhD from the University of Oxford and a Master's from Yale University, with research focused on endangered felid conservation in Latin America and Asia.

The benefits and challenges of international policy for tiger conservation

Dr Sahil Nijhawan, ZSL

India is home to around 70% of the world's wild tigers. While India's 55 tiger reserves, covering 2.3% of the country's land area, offer a safe haven for tigers, an estimated 35% of tigers exist outside this protected network. Over the past two decades, tiger numbers have increased substantially within the reserves, many of which are currently at carrying capacity, producing more tigers than they can host. As conservation aims for 10,000 wild tigers, areas outside the reserve network will become crucial. Here, tigers share lands, lives and aspirations with the country's 1.4 billion residents. How would future tiger recovery be achieved in the world's most populous country

where wildlife, people, and industry are all vying for the same real estate? This talk shares stories from crowded cities to tribal and village lands where tigers share space with people to reflect on what it means to live with tigers. It argues that human-tiger coexistence isn't a future possibility, it always has been and continues to be India's reality. Finally, it investigates whether India's existing legal framework and its implementation adequately represent everyday realities of coexisting with tigers.

Sahil is an interdisciplinary conservation anthropologist who has worked on human-wildlife relations across Latin America, Southern Africa and India. For the past 12 years, he has worked alongside the Idu Mishmi people of Arunachal Pradesh - a journey that began with his doctoral research on socio-cultural, ecological and political relations between the Idu Mishmi and tigers. He is now part of several local teams in Northeast India working on a range of locally-led initiatives towards rights-based bio-cultural conservation and research. He is a scientist at the Nature Conservation Foundation (India), research fellow at ZSL's Institute of Zoology and a member of the Coexistence Consortium.

Opportunities and challenges for big cat conservation over the next decade

Paul de Ornellas, WWF

Big cats are key species within ecosystems and have specific conservation needs around habitats and prey, ecological connectivity, wildlife trade, and human – carnivore - coexistence. They are also amongst the species that resonate most with people. Their role as potential flagship or umbrella species that serve as symbols or surrogates for the conservation of biodiversity more broadly, are well documented. Despite this they remain one of the most endangered groups of species globally.

From the mid-1970s countries have come together through global policy mechanisms that have sought to try and address issues around the conservation of wild species including big cats.

This presentation will provide an overview of how such international policy have been used to support big cat conservation since that time – providing legal frameworks to address key threats such as unsustainable and illegal wildlife trade, using international Conventions to catalyse co-operation on critical issues such as ecological connectivity and through range state led agreements to support and co-ordinate conservation of individual big cat species. As we look forward to the actions needed to meet the global commitment to halt and reverse the decline of biodiversity by 2030 and beyond, we will consider how policy frameworks such as the Convention on Biological Diversity can better support big cat conservation. We will also explore how big cat conservation can help inform and catalyse action to meet these wider biodiversity goals and commitments and help address the nature crisis.

***Paul** is the WWF-UK Chief Advisor for Wildlife, acting as the technical and policy lead on wildlife issues and overseeing the WWF UK species programme that supports wildlife related work around the world (including on 4 of the big cat species). Areas of particular interest include species recovery and conservation planning, addressing illegal and unsustainable wildlife trade, ecological connectivity, human wildlife co-existence and wildlife policy. Before joining WWF in 2018, Paul spent 10 years at ZSL as part of their Africa regional team, lead on Illegal Wildlife Trade and CITES Focal Point. He is also a qualified veterinary surgeon and member of the IUCN Species Survival Commission.*

EVENT FORMAT

- This event will take place in the Huxley Lecture Theatre and will be filmed and published on our Science and Conservation YouTube channel (zsl.org/IOZYouTube). Please be aware, by attending you consent to being recorded during the Q&A session.
- Seats are allocated on a first-come, first-served basis.
- Before attending, please read our Code of Conduct found [here](#).
- The event will run from 6-7:30pm
- It will consist of short presentations from the speakers, followed by a Q&A and panel sessions.
- To submit a question to a speaker prior to the event, please send it to scientific.events@zsl.org. Please be aware we may not be able to answer all questions.
- There is no charge for this event, but registration is required.



COMING UP...

Tackling Deforestation in the Supply Chain

8 October 2024, 6-7:30pm

In person; Huxley Lecture Theatre, ZSL

How can management of supply chains combat climate change and biodiversity loss and address global drivers of deforestation?

This event will showcase best practice, including ZSL's work supporting private-sector compliance, and informing the public of a key public policy aimed at eliminating deforestation.

www.zsl.org/science/whats-on

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