



Caprinae



Newsletter of the IUCN/SSC Caprinae Specialist Group



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Editorial

Surveys and genetic studies of caprins, primarily *Ovis*, in Turkey and neighbouring Nakhticevan by an international team, form the first report in this newsletter. This is followed by the results of recent work in Semien National Park, Ethiopia, home of the Walia Ibex, and a short note on an isolated population of Nilgiri Tahr in southern India.

During the very successful 3rd World Conference on Mountain Ungulates, held in June 2002, in Spain, the CSG took the opportunity to hold a meeting. The minutes are presented in this newsletter.

David Shackleton
Editor

Armenian Mouflon Survey in Eastern Turkey and Nakhticevan

Funded by NATO Science Programme, the project entitled "Genetic Resources and Origins of Endangered European Sheep and Goats" aims to carry out research about wild sheep and goats and to share knowledge and experience between the participating countries. Project partners are France, Turkey, Russia and Azerbaijan. In this project, a

field trip was held in Turkey and Nakhticevan in November 2001. From France Gordon Luikart and Albano Pereira, from Azerbaijan Suceddin Guliyev and Elshad Askerov, from Russia Paul Weinberg, from Turkey Aykut Kence, Özge Balkız and Deniz Özüit participated in the trip. During the field trip, horn and skin samples from trophies (old hunter kills) of *Ovis gmelinii gmelinii* and *Capra aegagrus* were collected.

In Turkey, two subspecies of *Ovis gmelinii* are present. *Ovis gmelinii anatolica* named as "Anatolian mouflon" was widely distributed in Central Anatolia, but has been restricted in its distribution to a single location since 1950s, and has been under protection since 1966.

The other subspecies found in Turkey is so-called Armenian mouflon (*Ovis gmelinii gmelinii*), which was found in Eastern Anatolia, basically in eastern and southeastern regions of Lake Van extending to the high mountainous province of Hakkari, but most probably extinguished from most of the region mainly due to poaching and presence of domestic livestock. Poaching has increased in eastern and southeastern Anatolia since the terrorist activities has died down in the last few years. When the terrorist activities were taking place, the mountains in the region were cleared from people except soldiers and terrorists; hence shooting at mouflons (or any other animal) was avoided. The main difference of *Ovis gmelinii gmelinii* from *O. g. anatolica* is that females do have horns but smaller than those of males.

According to the records of Turkish Ministry of Forestry General Directorate of National Parks and Game-Wildlife, a protection area was established in 1971 in the province of Van (Van-Ozalp Wildlife Protection Area) but it became practically

non-functional mainly because of the terrorist activities that took place until the last few years in the region. There have not been any detailed studies conducted on the subspecies (no information on size, distribution etc.). But it is said to migrate between Turkey and Iran, which is also stated in the Turkey section of the IUCN book, "Wild Sheep and Goats and Their Relatives".

Although the main aim of the field trip to eastern Turkey was to survey for and collect samples of *O. g. gmelinii*, we also came across the wild goat. *Capra aegagrus* is widely distributed along a diagonal starting from Datca at the west corner of Turkey and through Taurus and Anti Taurus Mountains up to the northeastern Turkey and also extends to eastern and southeastern Turkey. During the field trip to villages that we visited we were also able to collect tissue and horn samples from this species. No protection area for *C. aegagrus* is present at the surveyed area and poaching, habitat loss and domestic livestock are also the main threats that the animals are facing.

The field trip in Turkey was held between 9th and 11th of November 2001. Because of the limited period of time, the main objectives of the study were: i) establishing contacts with the governmental officials and local people, ii) collecting skin and trophy samples of wild sheep and goats from local contacts, and iii) determining several potential sites for both population census, and sampling studies (e.g. faeces) to be carried out in the near future.

The surveyed area in Turkey covered the southeastern regions of Lake Van. The area that was covered during the field trip was around 400 km². In the area, habitats suitable for both *Capra* and *Ovis* are present. Whole region is surrounded by high mountain ranges, Mount Agri

(Ararat) 5165m. in the north, Gokdag Mountains (3700m. the highest point) in the south. In between these ranges the area is mainly composed of high uplands and rolling hills with semiarid steppe vegetation. The area typically consists of semiarid vegetation and continental climate with hot and dry summers and cold winters. During our study in the region, a number of districts and villages were visited, which were selected according to the relevant information obtained from officials and local hunters. Within this area we focused on several villages that are around two main districts of Van province: Saray and Gurpinar. The villages that were visited in Saray district are: Beyarslan village near the Iran border and Orenburc, Karahisar, Keklikduzu, Topsakal, and Turan villages around the north of Gokdag Mountain. Bolmecali and Isikpinar villages in Gurpinar district are around the Cat Mountain. All of these villages are small settlements with few inhabitants. Totally, during this field trip we were able to collect samples from 5 mouflon and 7 wild goats. However, the more important part of this trip was the information gathered from hunters. Part of this information was first obtained prior to the field trip and provided us with the name of certain localities in the region to look for animals and samples. Further information about the probable habitats of mouflon and goat was gathered from the villagers in these localities.

The overall picture of the mouflon was that it has been extinguished from most of its range including most of the localities where mouflon herds were seen at least 20 years ago. The only area where the mouflon apparently still survives was Cat Mountain, located near Van province. It was told that 20 years ago the size of the population was around 500, and it declined to 300-400 five years later, and in the time being only 50 mouflons are left. They are said to be leaving the Cat Mountain in winter and coming back in summer, which is in concordance with the supposed migration pathway between Turkey and Iran. The proof of the presence of the mouflon in the area is a skin of a 3-year-old female mouflon hunted apparently in Autumn 2000. In fact there had been several other occasions in which we were told about some recent observations of several small herds of mouflon. Hunters from big cities, such as Ankara and

Istanbul and even from abroad come to the area (for instance, we heard that a German hunter killed 2 male mouflons in year 2000). As we mentioned above, during the last few years of peace in the area, mountains has become accessible to hunters, which led to increased poaching.

Therefore Cat Mountain appears to be the most appropriate place to monitor the mouflon population and create a conservation area. The information and findings suggests that *O. g. gmelinii* still survives in the surveyed area. The presence of the mouflon populations should be confirmed with another field trip to the area, which should be made in the right season, namely summer, when the mouflons are most probably in Turkey.

Capra aegagrus seem to be more widespread and abundant in the area, based on the fact that the samples collected were higher in number and belonged to more recent hunts. But still, from the information obtained about *Capra*, we can say that there is a decline - though perhaps not as sharp as that of *Ovis*- in their numbers. The hunted animals' skin and the skull were used in the houses for decorative purposes like those of *Ovis*. During the survey, a total of 7 individuals were sampled. Those individuals were hunted in May Mountains, Kanhisar Mountains, mountains around Baskale, and in the area at the north of Keklikduzu village. Also from the interviews made with the local people, the possible habitats that the wild goats seem to survive other than those areas that we listed above is Spiril Mountain, Kirkgecit, Tendurek Mountain. There is no clear picture of the population status of the species. But still to get more information about the distribution of *C. aegagrus* populations within the area, the necessity of further field studies becomes obvious.

All the samples collected during the survey will be analysed genetically and further sampling efforts will enable us to get more information about the genetic make up of both *Ovis* and *Capra* species. This information can be used in order to guide conservation actions. Primarily population structure and distribution should be determined. And in the long run, reintroduction studies can be carried out based on this information, which is also considered urgent for the other

mouflon subspecies, *O. g. anatolica*, for which only one population remains.

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Conservation News

Conservation status of Semien National Park, Ethiopia: a personal account

For 3 consecutive years (1998-2000) when I was working at Bahir Dar University, Ethiopia, I together with departmental colleagues and our 4th year Biology students of Bahir Dar University, travelled to the Semien National Park to make simple observational studies of its wildlife. The following is a report on some of the conservation activities in the park, and of some of the changes we witnessed over the 3 year period. My own observations are limited to the most accessible part of the park which extend from the southern entrance to about 45 km to the north. However, I met many people who live in other areas of the park (north and eastern sides), and have discussed with the person in charge of conservation in the park. I also had the pleasure to be guided by well informed scouts who have travelled extensively in the park. These additional observations should be taken into consideration with respect to the following discussion.

The Semien National Park was established in 1969 in West-central Ethiopia. It was placed on the World Heritage List in 1978. It has an area of 22,000 hectare and includes an altitude range between 1900m to 4430m a.s.l.

Brief description of Semien:

Physical

Much has been written about the Semien, and the dangers it faces. Many have tried to describe the magnificent nature and the extraordinary beauty of the breathtaking massifs and gorges. Nevertheless, even to the well-seasoned

traveller, no description will prepare them for what they would encounter at the Semien. Normally one enters the park from south from the Gondar-Tigray road following a newly constructed, rough gravel road, which climbs almost continuously until it reaches the tableland. This area is bordered on the north by massif cliffs and cut-off in places by steep river gorges. The south-western side has a gentler slope and is at an altitude of about 3000m.

Human settlement and activities

On the left side of the road, close to the cliff are situated the two camping sites where the park scouts reside, the first Sanka-ber and the second Geech, a third is situated deep within the park. On the southern side of the mountain is constructed a new road. On its southern side are situated small, grey and stonewalled houses. The first group of such houses are noticeable close to Debarq and continues until close to the Geech camping site. On the northern side close to the base of the cliffs is a sparse settlement. A few kilometres away, once the terrain becomes flatter, the settlement on this northern side becomes noticeably denser than the one on the southern side. The main activity of the people in the area is farming, though some are involved in additional income generating activities.

In addition to the settlements described, our 1999 trip brought us face to face with other form of, probably temporary but extremely destructive, human activity. When we arrived at Geech the place was filled with smoke rising above the heath forest into the night sky, giving us the impression that the whole forest was under fire. A closer observation revealed that Geech in fact has been one of the food distribution sites for those people who lost their crops due to draught the previous rainy season. Any reasonable person would agree that the priority concern should be the well-being of people and the human crisis at hand than any other element. However, knowing the harsh weather (Temperature below 0° C during the night) and the large number of people involved (at least in thousands), the responsible authorities for food distribution should have taken into consideration the impact this will have on the environment when they chose the site for such a purpose.

Everyone tried to keep warm whole night by burning the already sparse *Erica arborea* trees. To our dismay no attempt was made to minimise the damage either by changing the site or by grouping the people in an area, though the person in charge of conservation of the park was present when this happened. Furthermore the same site may also be used for a similar purpose in the future exposing the site for a complete destruction.

Vegetation

Most of the land on both sides of the road is farmed, barley and wheat being the main crops in the area. The unique natural Afro-alpine form of the Semien vegetation is not noticeable for a while even after one has entered the park. One needs to drive for a while to be able to notice that the environment indeed has animals and plants that differ from the surrounding low land areas. For most part it is either farmed or it is barren or it is covered by grass. The first heath forest (*Erica arborea*) is encountered only close to the Sanka-ber camp, even that is so sparse that it won't stand the current human pressure unless dramatic measures are taken.

Wildlife

Previous reports showed that the park was rich in its wildlife. Recently these claims have not been confirmed. We will consider only the most known three endemic mammals.

a) Walia ibex (*Capra waliae*):

This is the flag-ship species of the Semien, but unfortunately it has retreated through the years to places which are most inaccessible to humans. The animal is naturally shy and avoids humans and this made it difficult to trace and has greatly contributed to its survival even under the existing pressure. Sites where once this species was common to see are now inhabited by only humans and their domestic animals. In our three trips we counted only 14 individuals of the species below and at the side of the cliff close to Geech.

In addition to the mere presence of humans, habitat destruction through deforestation is one reason why this species is retreating. With time settlers there seem to extend the border of what was "inaccessible". We noticed human

trails on the sides of cliffs, which under normal circumstances would be inaccessible to a non-climber. This shows that the environment is under constant pressure from the human side and this would only aggravate the situation for the wildlife as human population increases.

On the other hand hunting, claimed by most to be the reason for the reduction of Walia's population in the past century, currently seems to be either non-existent or impossible to trace. The presence of permanently stationed park scouts rather than raised awareness of the people in the area may have contributed positively in this respect, as the attitude of most people is one of interference in their land than considering these animals as an asset..

b) Semien fox or Ethiopian wolf (*Canis simensis*)

As the name implies the Semien fox was once associated with this part of Ethiopia, but that is not true any more. The fox is almost extinct from the park, during our three trips the number of foxes we managed to see was only one. The main reason for the extinction seems to be expansion of agriculture and transforming of natural grass land into farmland. The grassland houses mole rats that serve as food for the Semien fox.

Though, this species, is still present in good numbers in the Bale National park in the southern part of the country, its complete absence in the Semien National park should be a good harbinger seen within the light of the forest fire that has destroyed a large part of the forest in the southern part of the country last year, and the warning of a similar fire during the dry season of 2001.

c) Galada baboon (*Theropithecus gelada*)

This is currently a species not threatened by extinction. We counted about 1000 individuals in the area we visited. But, with the current trend of human activity, it will not be surprising if the species become endangered in the next ten years. The main threat to the species is habitat destruction through the transformation of grassland into farmland.

Conservation measures taken and management constraints

The Ethiopian Wildlife conservation Organization under the Agriculture Bureau of the regional state at Bahir Dar

is currently organising activities to improve the situation in the park. The number of staff responsible for the park has grown and a trained park expert has been assigned at Debarq since 1999 to supervise conservation activities. Nevertheless seen in light of what is happening on the ground and what is needed to improve the existing fast deterioration, all the projects hitherto designed to help restore the park have not produced the intended results.

The main problem that hinders improvement and increases deterioration is population pressure. Despite the absence of data, camp scouts pointed out that the number of people living in the camp has grown recently. Farm land has extended to places that once used to be out of reach and has come close to the sites where the endemic Walia ibex's last refuges.

The following are 3 of the main human activities in and around the park.

(a) Road construction resulting in habitat fragmentation and making the park accessible for all kinds of vehicles and passengers which may increase the risk of erosion as well as noise disturbance. It should be noted that backpacker travellers, who prefer to walk and who come there for the value of nature and extraordinary scenery, are the main visitors of Semien. Therefore the benefit of a road construction, if it is meant to facilitate tourism, may not outweigh its disadvantages.

(b) Deforestation and habitat encroachment due to increasing demand for farmland and the loss of top soil through erosion. Also expansion of farmland and destruction of natural habitats may result in the destruction of sites which house sources of food for the wildlife.

(c) The presence of domestic animals which may interbreed with the wild animals in the park.

The only consoling positive development is the increasing awareness of the significance of the well being of the park by the scouts whose livelihood is closely associated with it. But their impact on its future is very limited. Though there has been a recent attempt by IUCN to increase awareness and to bring the issue into the attention of concerned officials, the refusal of the regional government to consider it as an endangered site has

hampered further developments. This is the singularly most serious drawback with regard to issues concerning the park, as these very officials are the ones involved in decision making concerning all sorts of human activities in the park. This, however, does not surprise those of us within the country, as it is a grim reflection of the general situation in the country. Currently let alone conservation of a remote park, education of the whole region itself is not a priority in the war-ridden system.

What is to be done?

It may not be helpful to point finger at one responsible body to the blame for what happened to the Semien National Park. Nevertheless seen within the development of a recent culture (though needs to be changed) that the government in the form of its institutions is the ultimate and in most cases the only authority in Ethiopia (leaving the community powerless), the government, without question is the only able body to organise and co-ordinate most activities for the foreseeable future. But it would be advantageous if the government would give the role to co-ordinate the recovery of the Semien to other non-governmental institutions or institutions of higher learning, as this may reduce the bureaucracy and may bring the issue closer to concerned professionals. The absence of an institution of higher learning close by the Semien to organise such activities could still be a hindrance.

The following actions would reverse the present deterioration of the park:

- a) Encourage locals to travel to these sites. This can be done, for instance, through school programs, itself being a requirement for a subject in Environmental Conservation integrated in the school curriculum (in Cupertino with the ministry of Education). Taking the economic situation in the country this can be effected though designing projects in Cupertino and including concerned international environmental organisations.
- b) Create an atmosphere where local as well as international tourists can travel in a hassle-free way but access all sites with the necessary precaution.

- c) Let the respective communities share benefits of the wild animals (parks) through participation in the management process and investment of the small income.
- d) Ultimately design, experiment and execute a way of life which either may allow the living together of humans and wild animals as in other areas (eg. The Massai people in Kenya) or reduce the human settlement and its pressure on the environment through resettlement programs.
- e) Generate funding either from the small tourist industry or from other sources and design an educational program to raise awareness of the local community and execute it. Get an active participation of the community in question while designing the plan.
- f) Develop and execute the reforestation of the Semien together with all or some of the above mentioned. Reforestation alone may not be a solution for it may happen again.
- g) Create an atmosphere where eco-tourism becomes an integral part of livelihood of the potentially tourist sites.

In conclusion except for the Galada baboon, most species once thought to flourish in the Semien National Park are under threat. The environment is under continuously increasing human pressure and this needs to be given attention while other issues are dealt within the area. An urgent recognition of the area as 'a heritage in danger' by the local as well as federal government may just be a starting point to what needs to be done to improve the situation and save the unique flora, fauna and physical environment of the park for the greater good of mankind.

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Ponmudi-Ibex Hill: vanishing habitat of an isolated population of Nilgiri Tahr

Nilgiri Tahr (*Hemitragus hylocrius*), locally known as *Varayadu*, is the only species of Caprinae endemic to the southern ranges of Western Ghats of India, where its habitat is confined to altitudes from 1000 to 2600 m asl. Due to the dwindling habitat and population numbers, Nilgiri Tahr is listed as endangered in the IUCN Red Data Book of Endangered Species. The only viable population of around 1000 individuals exists in Eravikulam National Park located in the southern section of the Western Ghats in Kerala State. The few other populations found in these mountains of this region, are small and fragmented, each comprised of less than 100 individuals. All these are facing the threat of local extinction due to habitat loss, poaching, forest fires, and possibly even inbreeding due to their isolation. Such an isolated population of around 100 individuals of Nilgiri Tahr has been located and the subject of study by the members of GREENS, the nature lovers club of the Government Secretariat of Kerala State, through our observation during the last 20 years. The population is found on "Ponmudi Ibex Hill" in the Southern Western Ghats, situated in the Thiruvananthapuram District of Kerala State (8° 45' latitude and 77° 6' longitude). "Ponmudi Ibex Hill" is a distinct hill with a height of 1,081 m asl and its precipitous inaccessible peaks is typical Tahr habitat with a rich biodiversity. The grasslands occur above 1000 m, and the ridges are covered by thick shola formation, while the low lands are covered by evergreen, semi- evergreen, riverine and deciduous forest types. The population of Tahr remains despite various pressures, because of the natural protection offered by the topography nature in the form of distinct ridges, deep valleys with rock cliffs, deep and inaccessible ravines with dense forest cover, green wide expanse of grass lands, etc. The Nilgiri Tahr on Ponmudi Ibex Hill have not yet been surveyed in any of the wildlife census or status surveys by the Kerala Forest Department, by the Government of India, or by any other agency.

The biodiversity of the region comprises many different species of trees, plants, wild animals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, insects and micro flora. In this sensitive habitat. The areas is dominated by tropical evergreen forests with a transition from tropical to subtropical forests. Tree species in this area include *Plangium salvifolurim*, *Litsea* spp., *Elaeocarpus* spp., *Polyalthia suberosa*, *Garcinia* spp., *Julostylis polyandra*, to name a few, plus rare woody climbers like *Reissant grahamii*, straggling shrubs such as *Elaeagnus conferta* and medicinal plants like *Alstonia venenata*. It is also rich in orchids including *Arundina graminifolia*, *Brachycorythis aiantha*, *Cheirostylus flabellata*, and *Bulbophyllum trimullum*.

Besides the Nilgiri Tahr, other mammals inhabiting the Hill include bear, sambar and mouse deer, wild boar, bonnet macaque, dhol, Malabar giant squirrel, small Travancore flying squirrel and black-naped hare. Elephants and leopards are the other occasional visitors. Monitor lizard is a reptile common to the region, and a status survey of bird species of the region, conducted during 1990-99, recorded 256 species of residents, local migrants or migrants.

This forest region is facing the threat of degradation. The Local Government Order granting temporary permit to tribal people to cut down 12 species of trees listed as domestically cultivated has resulted in the loss of timber wealth of this region and other nearby forest reserves. Reforestation projects using exotic varieties of trees like Acacia, Mahogany, Silver Oak and Wattle, have encroached on the moist and dry deciduous forests, which host the natural vegetation of hardwood species such as *Dalbergia latifolia roxb*, *Arto carous hirsutus lamk*, *Hopeaonga dennst mabber*, *Gluta travancorica*, etc. Damming of the Kallar river that flows south from the sholas of the eastern side of Ibex hill for the proposed "Vamanapurain Irrigation Project", submerge roughly 300 ha of precious forests along the northeastern slopes of the catchment area, resulting in an irreversible loss of habitat for the Tahr population. In addition, the proposed new road to the nearby "Ponmudi Hill Resort & Tourist Centre" runs close by sensitive tahr habitat. It seems inevitable that these

changes will destroy the tranquil and fragile ecosystem on which the Tahr depends.

Hunting and poaching still occur in the region and along with illegal camping, cause forest fires. Illegal activities such as arrack (country-made liquor) distilling, and logging, are also active in this area. Illegal mining for precious stones also occurs in the rocky grassland areas and deep ravines of the mountain. The deep trenches formed by mining act as catalysts to frequent landslides in the region.

If strong measures are not taken to conserve this habitat, there is the distinct possibility that this population of tahr will become extinct. To strengthen the conservation of its fragile ecosystems, the Ponmudi-Ibex Hill region should be treated as protected area and an area of around 27 km² must be declared a Sanctuary. Conservation strategies developed for the Tahr population in Eravikulam National Park should be applied to the Ponmudi-Ibex Hill region also. Competent scientists and other agencies should be invited to survey the Tahr population and to study such topics as the genetic variation of the resident animals with those from other areas including Eravikulam National Park.

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Minutes of the Meeting of Caprinae Specialist Group - 14th June 2002

A meeting of the IUCN's Caprinae Specialist Group (CSG) was held on 14th June 2002 during the 3rd World Conference on Mountain Ungulates. Marco Festa-Bianchet chaired the meeting, which was attended by several members of the CSG and many delegates to the Conference. The following items were on the agenda:

- Short reports from: Chair, CSG; Taxonomy Working Group Chair, and Disease Working Group Chair
- Future of the CSG Newsletter and increase in submission of articles
- CSG participation in the IUCN Red Listing Process

- CSG position on CITES listing of trophy-hunted Caprinae
- Procedures for membership in CSG
- Next meeting of the CSG and next Conference on Mountain Ungulates
- Any additional item from CSG members

Short Reports:

Chair CSG: Marco Festa-Bianchet presented a brief report on the work of the CSG, particularly what is CSG and what does it do? He mentioned that the goal of CSG is to foster conservation of Caprinae species. This is achieved through exchange of information and provision of technical advice to other organisations like CITES. Marco became Chair of the CSG in 2001, after Dr. David Shackleton completed his term. An executive committee of the CSG assists the Chair in taking decisions on affairs of the group and provide input on certain issues. The present structure of the Executive Committee is as follows:

Marco Festa-Bianchet - Chair
 Rich Harris - Deputy Chair
 David Shackleton - Past Chair
 Sandro Lovari - Past Chair
 Gordon Luikart - Chair, Taxonomy Working Group
 Marco Giacometti - Chair, Wildlife Diseases Working Group
 Amjad Tahir Virk -Secretary

While highlighting activities of 2001, the Chair mentioned that an interactive CSG website has been developed, which provide information on Caprinae species and some important issues, such as the CSG's position on trophy hunting. In addition, the CSG has sponsored other meetings on mountain ungulates, but does not have a budget that would allow it to provide financial support.

Taxonomy Working Group: Dr. Gordon Luikart presented a brief communiqué on the activities of the Working Group. He mentioned that a website has been developed which highlights objectives of the group and provide names of the people working on Caprinae taxonomy. He stressed that if someone working on the taxonomy of Caprinae wishes to be included, he/she should send name and contact details to the Chair of the Taxonomy Group. Anybody working on the taxonomy could send information to the Chair that would be added to the website. He also

mentioned that a protocol for sample collection has been developed, which include protocol for sampling faecal material.

Disease Group: Dr. Marco Giacometti presented a short report on the activities of the Disease Working Group. He said that there is need to share more information on Caprinae diseases. He solicited information on disease outbreaks and mentioned that stochastic mange is a major disease, which has effected many populations of Caprinae in the past, particularly wild sheep. He hopes to establish collaborations with other groups working on Caprinae diseases.

Caprinae News, the CSG Newsletter

The Chairman raised several questions about the continuation of the newsletter. Do we want to continue it, and what direction it should take? Do we want to see it serve different/additional functions? If we want to keep it, how can we increase the submission rate of articles? David Shackleton, former chair of the CSG and current Editor of the Newsletter regrets the currently low rate of submission of articles from CSG members. Submissions do not have to be journal articles. Anyone can provide a page or two on their work, particularly from remote locations. Graduate students are particularly encourage to provide short items on their work. Dr. Shackleton will retire soon and we must find a new editor.

There was a consensus on the usefulness of the newsletter and several members spoke in favour of continuing it. Rich Harris, Deputy Chair of the CSG said that people could send short communications (updates) on what they did or documented, and on unique observations that they want to share with others. Gordon Luikart suggested that abstracts from published papers could be put in the newsletter and these would be useful to share with those who do not have access to many journals. Dr. Nicolas Franco said that anyone could contribute to the newsletter. The Chair encouraged all CSG members and other Caprinae researchers to send to the Newsletter Editor items on whatever they think is appropriate to share with colleagues.

Decision: CSG newsletter will continue and more efforts by all CSG members will be made to enhance the submission rate of articles.

CSG Participation in IUCN's Red Listing Process

The CSG is responsible for providing information and making status assessments of Caprinae species. The Chair mentioned that many Caprinae species may have to be listed as "data deficient". If the necessary data are not available, we should simply say that we cannot assess the conservation status of the species. Dr. Sandro Lovari supported this idea and pointed out that "data deficient" really should mean "research required". Finally, the Chair reminded CSG members that it is part of their responsibilities as members to take the initiative to evaluate species for the IUCN Red List, and encouraged members to provide Status Evaluations for species for which they have the required information.

CITES Listing of Trophy-Hunted Caprinae

The Chair said that he was not entirely comfortable with the CITES listing process for trophy-hunted Caprinae. Bill Wall from SCI said that there is difference in trophies, skin and the export of other body parts. Trophies are considered personal effects. It is different kind of trade. He said trophy-hunting programs have conservation benefits. Therefore, it is useful and appropriate for the CSG to give their opinion on the appropriateness of listing in CITES appendices. Ute Grimm said there is a general feeling that the present listing of *Ovis vignei* is helpful. The CSG is an international scientific authority and a group of specialists; therefore, people expect it to provide a fair evaluation of listing proposals. Rich Harris said that the CSG is an appropriate group to provide that information. Therefore, we should have consensus on this. He also said that the most important conservation problems of Caprinae are habitat loss and diseases, not trophy-hunting.

Decision: CSG members will be broadly consulted by the Chair regarding CITES listings of Caprinae species, and responses to CITES will if required reflect a diversity of opinions.

Procedures for membership in CSG

The Chair mentioned that he has renewed the membership list. Former members that are either inactive or never

responded to queries were not renewed. The membership of the group is structured to provide diversity of expertise and of viewpoints. There are already many members from North America and Europe, but we need more people from Asia and other regions. Whenever request for the membership are received by the Chair, they are reviewed by the Executive Committee, but eventually decisions on membership are made by the Chair.

CSG members expressed their approval for the current process of selecting members for the CSG.

Next meeting of the CSG and next Conference on Mountain Ungulates

Mr. Balan Madhavan from Nilgiri Tahr Foundation, India, very generously offered to host the Fourth International Conference on Mountain Ungulate at Kerala, India. The CSG accepted this offer, provided that the political situation in the region remained calm. It was agreed that the next CSG meeting and fourth international conference on mountain ungulate would be held in India in August 2006.

Other Issues

CITES Documentation of Trophy Export: Dr. Ute Grimm brought up the issue of documentation of export/import of trophies by the custom official/CITES management authorities and their subsequent reporting to the CITES Management Secretariat. She said, there were incidents when an Appendix II species was recorded as Appendix I while documenting import of trophies. For example, export of *Ovis vignei cycloceros* (an Appendix II species) trophy from Pakistan was documented as *Ovis vignei vignei* (an Appendix I species). Inappropriate documentation could negatively affect conservation hunting programs. In other cases, species were recorded as being exported from countries outside their geographical range. Dr. Grimm encouraged CSG members to address this issue and assist CITES Management Authorities to provide correct documentation of export/import of trophies.

Caprinae Action Plan Update: Mike Frisina mentioned that the Caprinae Action Plan needs to be updated. There have been many changes in the status and distribution of many Caprinae species over

the last ten years. These changes should be incorporated in the plan. The Chair said that the Action Plan should be updated every ten years, and that's what he plans to do. He will initiate contacts to work on a new edition of the Action Plan within a year.

The meeting ended with concluding remarks from the Chair. He thanked all the participants for attending the meeting and participating in the discussion. He particularly thanked Dr. Juan Herrero and other members of the Local Organizing Committee for their superb Organization of the meeting.

CSG Web Site

<http://callisto.si.usherb.ca:8080/caprinae/iucnwork.htm>

Editorial Note

Views expressed in the articles in this newsletter, do not necessarily reflect those of the Caprinae Specialist Group



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Submissions of articles, including **research reports, conservation news, recent publications, etc., on wild or feral Caprinae**, are welcome from any professional biologist. A potential author does not have to be a member of the Caprinae Specialist Group. Please send submissions to the Editor, either by post or by e-mail attachment.

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