

New Auto-camera Picture of Cheetah Family in Iran

As a species the cheetah is still in dire straits in Iran, so it is extremely encouraging to see an apparently healthy family in their native habitat,” said Dr Peter Zahler, from the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), which has been working with Iranian biologists to survey the cats since 2001. “Images like these give hope to conservationists that there is still time to save these magnificent animals.”

Initiated by a major grant and ongoing support from the United Nations Development Programme’s Global Environment Facility, WCS began its collaboration with Iranian scientists by surveying five protected areas where cheetahs were still thought to exist. The group found a variety of suitable habitats, but also discovered that prey species, such as jebeer gazelle *Gazella subgutturosa* and urial sheep *Ovis vignei*, were scarce. The latest photographs hint at the gradual recovery of prey populations.

“Cheetahs in Iran live on a knife-edge in very marginal habitat,” said Dr



Family of Asiatic cheetahs (Photo: I.R. Iran DOE/CACP/WCS/UNDP-GEF).

Luke Hunter, coordinator of WCS’s Global Carnivore Program.

“The fact that this female has managed to raise four cubs to six months of age is extremely encouraging”.

“Hopefully, this indicates there are areas where the cheetah’s prey spe-

cies are coming back, a goal the Iranian Department of Environment and UNDP has been working very hard to achieve.”

(Source: Iran DOE website and BBC online 2 September 2005)