

Q&A with the Chairman

Following is a Q&A with Panthera's Founder and Chairman of the Board, Dr. Thomas S. Kaplan.

Panthera...the Basics

What is Panthera...and who are the principals behind it?



Panthera is a public charity founded in 2006 by my wife, Daphne Recanati Kaplan, and myself. With offices in New York and London, the founders and directors of Panthera conceived of it as a unique vehicle: an integrated approach to the broad spectrum of challenges facing big cat conservation, from ensuring a pipeline of future scientists to species survival to recognition of high achievers in the field. The three founding directors were Dr. Thomas S. Kaplan, who serves as the Chairman; Dr. Alan Rabinowitz, who is now Panthera's CEO; and Michael Cline, who serves as both a Director of Panthera as well as the originator of Tigers Forever, our flagship project for the species. Subsequently, they were joined on the Board by Directors Bill Natbony, Claudia McMurray, Matthew Bostock, and David Hirschfeld. In London, Ali Reza Erfan, a key member of our global network of supporters, became the first member of the board of the British entity, Panthera (UK) and serves as a Trustee. Dr. Luke Hunter, formerly Director of the Great Cats Program at WCS, acts as Panthera's President and Treasurer. Dr. George Schaller serves as both Panthera's Vice President and Chairman of its Cat Advisory Council, which encompasses the broadest assembly of the collective wisdom and experience in felid conservation. Andrea Heydlauff, also our Vice President and Corporate Secretary, runs the operations of our head office in New York and Jessica Craig, our Program Officer in England, acts as our liaison for project submittals and program development. In addition, Panthera's home offices are being complemented by a developing staff structure comprising some of the field's most seasoned and accomplished professionals, including Dr. Tom McCarthy (Snow Leopard Program Executive Director) and Dr. Howard Quigley (Jaguar Program Executive Director), two of the leading authorities on snow leopards and the Americas' cats, respectively. Panthera's most recent additions, Dr. Guy Balme, Director of the Lion Program, and Dr. Joe Smith, Director of the Tiger Program, both were Kaplan Scholars, and now occupy full time positions in steering two key species programs.

What is the Cat Advisory Council and who are its participants?

The Panthera Cat Advisory Council harnesses the thinking, experience, and charisma of some of the best minds in the field of cat conservation today in order to help steer Panthera's initiatives. The Advisory Council is chaired by Dr. George Schaller, with Dr. Alan Rabinowitz, and Dr. Luke Hunter serving as Co-Chairs. Throughout the year, individuals from the Advisory Council are asked to evaluate proposals and assess the most urgent priorities for cat conservation. Each year a meeting of the advisors is held to review and critique the progress of wild cat conservation, brainstorm



new ideas, and develop initiatives for the coming year. The Advisory Council is a yearly appointment and each year new members will be nominated. The Advisory Council currently consists of:

- Dr. Christine Breitenmoser, Co-chair of the IUCN/SSC Cat Specialist Group
- Dr. Urs Breitenmoser, Co-chair of the IUCN/SSC Cat Specialist Group
- Dr. Peter Crawshaw, Founder and Lead Carnivore Scientist of the National Predator Center, Brazil
- Dr. Laurence Frank, Director of Living with Lions
- Dr. Rafael Hoogesteijn, Jaguar-Cattle Conflict Coordinator, Panthera
- Dr. Maurice Hornocker, Director of the Selway Institute
- Dr. Ullas Karanth, Senior Conservation Scientist, WCS
- Dr. David Macdonald, Director of the Wildlife Conservation Research Unit (WildCRU) at Oxford University
- Dr. Laurie Marker, Founder and Director of the Cheetah Conservation Fund (CCF)
- Dr. Tom McCarthy, Executive Director of the Snow Leopard Program, Panthera
- Dr. Gus Mills, Research Fellow with The Tony and Lisette Lewis Foundation
- Dr. Dale Miquelle, Director of the Russia Program, WCS
- Dr. Craig Packer, Director of the Lion Research Center, and McKnight University Professor at the University of Minnesota
- Dr. Howard Quigley, Executive Director of the Jaguar Program, Panthera
- Dr. John Seidensticker, Head of the Conservation Ecology Center at the Smithsonian's National Zoological Park
- Dr. Mel Sunquist, Professor in the Department of Wildlife Ecology & Conservation at the University of Florida

What is the Conservation Council and who are the members?

Panthera's Conservation Council is an expert advisory board that contributes to the direction of the organization and the implementation of Panthera's mission. Chaired by Glenn Close, the Council provides Panthera with actionable advice and guidance on fundamental topics relevant to the growth, development and success of Panthera, including: increasing Panthera's influence on public policy and access to decision-makers around the world; assessing programmatic initiatives and activities; increasing Panthera's exposure in the media and enhancing the organization's public profile; expanding the base of funding sources and building long-term sustainability in fund-raising; helping to build a broad-based and continually growing constituency for Panthera's activities; and fostering a diverse network of partners, cooperators and allies that can assist with Panthera's mission.

Members are selected by the Board of Trustees and senior management of Panthera. Appointees to the Conservation Council are chosen for their interest in Panthera's mission combined with their specialist expertise and skills that complement the abilities of the Board and Staff to execute Panthera's mission. Current members include:

- Jane Alexander, Tony and Emmy award-winning and Academy Award nominated actress
- Matthew Bostock, CEO and co-founder of Lake 5 Media
- Glenn Close, Founding Conservation Council member, and Emmy, Golden Globe, and Tony Award-winning actress
- Ali Reza Erfan, Venture capitalist and President of Tigris (UK)
- Dr. Paul Klotman, Chief Executive Officer and President of Baylor College of Medicine; and former Chairman of the Samuel Bronfman Department of Medicine at Mt. Sinai Medical Center, New York
- Claudia A. McMurray, President and CEO of Mainstream Green Solutions, LLC, and former Assistant Secretary of State for Oceans, Environment and Science, and Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Environment
- Dr. John Mitchell, Research Fellow at the New York Botanical Garden; Chair and Executive Secretary of the Beneficia Foundation
- Katherine Chatwin Mitchell, artist, traveler and nature enthusiast
- Jonathan Powell, Managing Director and Senior Adviser at Morgan Stanley in London; Chief of Staff to former Prime Minister Tony Blair; negotiator and Senior Adviser on different conflicts across Europe and Asia for the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue in Geneva
- Nicolle Wallace, writer and political commentator; former communications chief for President George W. Bush, and senior advisor for the McCain-Palin campaign.

The Background to Panthera

What inspired you to found Panthera?

I have always felt a tremendous affinity for the big cats. At the tender age of seven, in the days before Dr. George Schaller, Dr. Alan Rabinowitz and others redefined the nature of big cat literature, I was presented with Jim Corbett's *The Maneaters of Kumaon*...and, for good measure, *The Maneating Leopard of Rudraprayag* when I turned eight. As a boy, my room was plastered with paintings and posters of big cats, and visitors to our home would have to make a donation at the door for the World Wildlife Fund's Project Tiger. At ten, I was already tracking bobcats in Florida. It was on such an adventure that I had the rare privilege of encountering a Florida Panther...whose pugmark was memorialized with a plaster cast. By eleven, I was in Colombia looking for jaguars...under the watchful eyes of my mother.



Big cat conservation was clearly my passion and I entertained the prospect of becoming a felid zoologist. In time, the fascination for zoology gave way to a stronger gift for history, which I indulged at Oxford, and tremendous luck in my business exploring for untapped minerals and energy. If my avocation has been history and my vocation natural resources...conservation has remained my first love. It is my privilege that I can apply the lessons I have learned in other fields, and indeed the important contacts

that my professional life affords me, to drive a highly aggressive environmental agenda. The opportunity to help fund and reward those who have given their lives to the pursuit of preserving the big cats and, equally importantly, the habitats and eco-systems which sustain them, is the closing of a virtuous circle that began in my youth.

How did you come to know Dr. Alan Rabinowitz, and how did that lead to the creation of the Rabinowitz-Kaplan Prizes?

When I first read Alan's classic volume, *Jaguar*, I realized that this Jewish boy had done what I had wished to do as a youngster. I felt an immediate, indeed filial, affection for the man, and knowing connection to the depth of his passion. We've jokingly said we were 'separated at birth'. I resolved one day, when it was within my means, to help him accomplish his biggest ambitions in a way that he had, unknowingly, lived out so many of mine. In the great circle of life I felt I had prospered so that others would be able to excel at what we loved...and live our common dreams.



I have often said that Alan is the embodiment of all the virtues I hold dear in the conservation field...only magnified. To many an iconic figure in his profession for his multitude of achievements and extraordinary character, he certainly represents all that I would have aspired to be had I similar aptitudes. As I grew to know him more, I realized that one of my obvious missions in life was to fulfill his dreams in direct proportion to the way that his life reflected the one I would have led...were I a more talented and less acquisitive person. Collaborating with him has given life and context to a passion that could easily have been unrequited. With fraternal sincerity, it was my great honor that, after having been the first recipient of the Kaplan Prize, for the subsequent prizes he accepted linking our destinies in the Rabinowitz-Kaplan Prizes, which are presented for both Lifetime Achievement in wild cat conservation, as well as the Next Generation for a young scientist or individual whose accomplishments portend real potential for further achievement. The first recipients of both renamed prizes, George

Schaller (for his life-long commitment to conservation) and Dr. Ivan Seryodkin (for his dedication to conserving Amur leopards and tigers in the Russian Far East) respectively, represent brilliant examples of what and whom we seek to encourage in both categories. Dr. Gianetta Purchase was the following (2008) recipient for the Next Generation Prize, for her years of work on conserving cats in Africa; she was followed in 2009 by a Mongolian native, Bayarjargal Agvaantseren, for her innovative community work to benefit snow leopards. This year's 'Next Generation' recipient will be announced in late 2010. Carlos Manuel Rodriguez followed Dr. George Schaller as the second recipient of the Lifetime Achievement Award. As the Minister of Environment and Energy for Costa Rica, Carlos Rodriguez implemented visionary policies that succeeded in halting the nation's rampant deforestation and hence restoring critical habitat for jaguars. Among his many contributions to conservation, Carlos is perhaps best known for developing the concept of payment for ecosystem services. The next Lifetime Achievement award will be announced in 2011.

Isn't focusing on wild cats a narrow viewpoint in terms of the broader challenges facing wildlife conservation?



No, to the contrary, at its core any prospect of saving the big cats is predicated on preserving and protecting two key ingredients: land and prey. Bearing in mind the wide ranges of these apex predators, and their need for readily available protein, saving wild cat species is an intelligent way to save the habitats and ecosystems that are most at risk today. Being very often the sexy, charismatic mega fauna in any given hotspot, the concept may be distilled to a simple phrase: saving the big cats is the most easily marketable way to save everything else in its territory. As such,

Panthera's agenda of saving the big cats throughout their natural range is a gambit not merely to indulge a love for these iconic species...but to preserve a meaningful portion of the world's natural endowment.

How is Panthera different from other non-governmental organizations (NGOs)?

While Panthera is a public charity, we can best be described as a pro-active cat conservation think tank that supports the best people, the best programs, and the best ideas in order to continually raise the bar and enhance the effectiveness of current cat conservation activities. Our focus is to channel all our energy and resources into the field where the need is most urgent; as such, Panthera strives to keep staffing and bureaucracy to a minimum. With a core group numbering fewer than a dozen, Panthera is extremely lean in personnel...yet in our first few years of existence alone, we have already devoted more resources to cat conservation than any other NGO. Additionally, one of the unique aspects of our organizations is that we can offer you, our supporters, something which very few philanthropic organizations can provide. As a consequence of my wife, Daphne, and my funding for all of Panthera's overhead and administrative costs, there is never any overhead taken from donations: in other words, 100% of any donation made to Panthera goes to the field.

Panthera and its challenges

What are Panthera's criteria for developing and enacting programs and projects?

At this stage, we are still young enough not to be hobbled by a stifling or bureaucratic culture...nor do we ever intend to be. To be sure, good science, combined with an achievable conservation component, lies at the root of our analysis because, at the end of the day, all sustainable undertakings require an intellectual rather than strictly emotional underpinning. Panthera uses decades of expertise to develop and implement range-wide, as well as site-specific, conservation projects. While the bulk of our programs are being carried out or lead, by Panthera staff, we also accept proposals for outside projects that seek financial and technical support through our various grant programs. We have of necessity turned down projects for a variety of reasons, and will continue to do so. Our most important metric for judging our programs remains straightforward: how does it benefit wild cat populations on the ground? The overwhelming priority for Panthera is that the projects we embark upon produce measurable

conservation gains to cats in the wild. Naturally, everyone believes that their cause is the most exciting or urgent. The task of matching resources to objectives requires a discrimination that may be painful to proponents of any given project...not to mention ourselves. Having said that, the careful development of our professional staff, as well as the creation of genuine consultative bodies such as the Cat Advisory Council, are part of a process of encouraging the most rigorous adherence to best practices and transparency in our field.

Does Panthera feel conflicted by operating in countries which are criticized over human rights?

Not really. Attacking conservationists for trying to preserve the natural heritage of any people, no matter the form of government they find themselves living under, is an unfair charge. The idea that, by working to save tigers in Myanmar or cheetah's in Iran, conservationists are responsible for conferring legitimacy on these governments is an absurdity. Would a doctor serving patients in these countries be criticized? As wildlife conservation today in many places is akin to triage, the answer is clear. Like all conservation groups, we try to adhere to a basic principle: to enfranchise the wildlife with more than a modicum of chance of survival in a hostile world. Until such time as tigers, lions or snow leopards are shown to have undermined human rights or elected governments, we'll focus more on saving them for future generations of their host countries than in playing politics.

Panthera and its Range-Wide Species Programs

How was Tigers Forever established and what are some of the milestones to date?



Tigers Forever represents the promise of an exciting new paradigm for saving the tiger. It is the brainchild of Michael Cline, a Panthera Director, and was initiated in 2006, with the goal of increasing tiger numbers at key sites by 50% over a ten year period. A seasoned venture capitalist and passionate big cat conservationist, Michael, in conjunction with Alan Rabinowitz and the world's leading tiger specialists at the Wildlife Conservation Society, Ullas Karanth, Dale Miquelle and Colin Poole , devised a truly novel approach to superimposing a business model, with a results-oriented funding mechanism, onto conservation in a way that has the ability to transform conventional methods of measuring success in tiger conservation... and ultimately in conserving other species as well. Michael is the rare man who puts his money where his heart is...and in a substantial way. Having devised the concept, he and his wife made the first pledge of \$5,000,000. My wife, Daphne, and I pledged to match those funds. The \$10,000,000 already pledged to Tigers Forever makes it perhaps the most aggressive tiger conservation initiative ever.

Today, several Tigers Forever sites are recognized as the best protected areas for tigers in Thailand, Lao PDR, Malaysia, India and Myanmar. Panthera's CEO, Dr. Alan Rabinowitz, is responsible for the creation of the world's largest tiger reserve in the Hukaung Valley, Myanmar. In Malaysia, just last year, due to

Tigers Forever efforts, a ban was created on all commercial hunting of any wildlife in Johor State, one of the two states encompassing our Tigers Forever site in the Endau-Rompin landscape; and in Sumatra, we just completed tiger surveys across northern Sumatra's Aceh province, a remote and rugged area that had never been surveyed for tigers.

How did the Jaguar Corridor come about?

Expanding on his work in creating the first jaguar reserve, the Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary in Belize, Dr. Alan Rabinowitz devised a plan to create a 'corridor' connecting jaguar populations throughout a range extending from Mexico to northern Argentina that would allow for both genetic transference and habitat continuity. Jump-started by funding from the U.S. Department of State in 2005, today, Panthera's Jaguar Corridor Initiative spans 13 of the 18 jaguar range states from Argentina to Mexico, and is ensuring connectivity between key jaguar populations, so that jaguars can move safely and breed, and pass along their genes into the future. In 2010, Panthera secured a Memorandum of Understanding with the Vice President of Colombia, endorsing the Jaguar Corridor; the Corridor was also formally recognized in Costa Rica and Belize this past year, adding to the list of jaguar ranges states whose governments continue to support jaguar conservation efforts and partner with Panthera, An offshoot of the Jaguar Corridor Initiative is Panthera's Strategic Lands Initiative, which aims to assist in the public and private acquisition of critical habitats that will be managed for long-term jaguar conservation within the context of traditional land usage, such as cattle ranching, as well as new enterprises including eco-tourism. To date, 170,000 acres of such habitat has been taken off the market with more land under negotiation.

What is Project Leonardo?

Building on the successful adoption of the corridor model, Panthera's team created Project Leonardo, an ambitious program developed by Dr. Luke Hunter, and now led by Dr. Guy Balme, to preserve the African lion across key populations that are threatened due to human pressures. Despite its apparently ubiquitous profile, the lion is likely to be classified as 'endangered' in the short to medium term as habitat destruction and human persecution ravage lion populations and their ranges, which are already down more than 80% in the last 250 years. As recently as a



hundred years ago, over 200,000 lions were living in the wild; today, fewer than 30,000 remain. Cognizant of the perils of waiting till the very last hour to act, as was done with the tiger, Project Leonardo's aim is to forestall the precipitous decline in status of the African lion by creating viable connections between lion populations throughout Africa and to mitigate human-lion conflict similar to the offence-oriented philosophy underpinning Panthera's jaguar efforts in the Americas. Panthera is currently working in nine African countries with various partners. In Kenya, we have supported the expansion of the Maasai Lion Guardians from an area of 1,200 km² to 5,100 km²; we have helped to halt distribution of agricultural poison Furadan in East Africa; and we just recently completed the first ever lion surveys in unknown regions of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Cote D'Ivoire, Nigeria, and Northern Kenya.

What are the aims of the Snow Leopard Initiative?

In 2007, as a consequence of a fortuitous engagement with the Government of Pakistan, Panthera moved to convene a conference of all the dozen range states that host wild snow leopard populations. The aim was to hold the first assembly of stakeholders for the purpose of not only comparing on-the-ground research but to develop a comprehensive and long-term action plan for the species' survival in which Panthera would take the lead funding role. In March 2008, Panthera sponsored in Beijing, with the Snow Leopard Trust, WCS and the Snow Leopard Network, the International Conference on Range-Wide Conservation Planning for Snow Leopards. Dr. Tom McCarthy, Panthera's Snow Leopard Program Director, is steering the longest-ever snow leopard study to date, in Mongolia's Gobi; Panthera has worked with the government of Tajikistan to develop their first ever Snow Leopard Action Plan, and Panthera has deepened a presence in seven other snow leopard range states.

Panthera and the Next Generation

What are the Kaplan Scholarships and what are these grants meant to accomplish?



To ensure that there is a next generation of felid zoologists, and that there is thus a healthy 'pipeline' of credentialed big cat conservationists for the future, my family has established a scholarship program which provides funding for postgraduate candidates who are undertaking field work in felid conservation. Overseen by Dr. Luke Hunter and Dr. Alan Rabinowitz this program has gained consideration traction and critical mass in a way that gives us encouragement that we can meet this challenge. Starting with one scholarship in the Spring of 2006, the number of recipients researching species varying in size

from Pallas cats and jaguarundis to snow leopards and tigers has mushroomed to over 49 students covering 31 countries, and continues to grow as word has spread about this unique initiative.

Are there other steps being taken to bring new conservationists on board?

Having begun to redress a key need to incubate and create seasoned biologists, we are now working with educational institutions to address another potential bottleneck for wild cat conservation: the scarcity of trained entry-level and mid-level field staff in the developing world, and the need to develop more indigenous opportunities for incipient environmentalists. This we plan to redress through regional training hubs based in several key countries as well as our groundbreaking alliance with Oxford University.

What is your attitude to teaming up with new players in the field?

Panthera's philosophy is not about competing with any groups, but to seek out and forge the optimal alliances to accomplish our common aims. We have numerous ventures with several different organizations. While not promiscuous, neither are we exclusive. Panthera is always looking for, and receptive to, new opportunities for partnerships and strategic relationships. In fact, there are numerous countries where our success hinges on the local and governmental partnerships we forge and cultivate. Panthera is designed to be collaborative, building bridges with any and all organizations that have programs that meet our objectives.

What is the Panthera-WildCRU alliance?

The partnership which has been established between Panthera and Oxford University, with whom I have had longstanding ties, is extremely exciting and ambitious. Beginning with our sponsorship of the Felid Biology and Conservation Conference at Oxford in September 2007 and its subsequent workshops, our relationship with the extraordinary Dr. David MacDonald and his team at the Wildlife Conservation Research Unit (WildCRU) has developed into a broad collaboration with the University, including a suite of fellowships and scholarships at Pembroke College, a research



visitors program at Lady Margaret Hall, and a truly groundbreaking initiative which has created a new fully-funded Oxford-accredited diploma course available to the best graduates from developing countries to study practical felid conservation techniques. Known affectionately as "The Panthers", these motivated graduates are viewed by all as one of the best means to ensure that national talent is properly nurtured and given the tools to both promote and execute best practices in wildlife conservation in their home countries and beyond. The alliance with Oxford also includes funding for Panthera projects that are being led by WildCRU. As a consequence of these various efforts, Panthera and WildCRU have now rendered Oxford the foremost academic institution with an established focus on felid conservation. It is our mutual intention that the unique platform rendered by this alliance will be broadened to encompass strategic linkages with other academic institutions around the globe in both research and conservation projects, as well as transferring knowledge of best practices in the training required for the various disciplines of felid conservation.



Under Panthera's partnership with WildCRU, we are collaborating on a clouded leopard study on the island of Borneo. With even their basic ecology poorly understood, clouded leopards are one of the least known large cat species, and only eight individuals have ever been radio-collared. We do know however that their habitat is being lost due to conversion into oil palm plantations and illegal logging, and that they are hunted for their extraordinary skins that are in high demand across Asia. With Panthera's President Dr. Luke Hunter advising the project, WildCRU is

collecting critical baseline data on the ecology of clouded leopards, utilizing camera trapping and GPS telemetry, to plan effective conservation actions for this rare cat.

Getting Involved

How can people help in their own way?

Since its inception in 2006, Panthera has emerged as one of the most focused and dynamic new forces in cat conservation. As with collaborations that are being created with governments and institutions all over the world, Panthera welcomes relationships with individuals, corporations and foundations that wish to be involved with its ambitious agenda. With Tigers Forever, Project Leonardo, the Jaguar Corridor Initiative and the Snow Leopard Program showing the way forward in both catalyzing and accelerating some of the most ambitious projects in our arena, we are more than capable of providing a philanthropic outlet for like-minded people who have a desire to support our broad vision... or even specific cat species. Always keen to leverage our capital through matching (or "challenge") grants, we are very open to providing opportunities for those who are motivated to sponsor and name new and existing programs, to acquire land in critical habitats for long-term conservation, or to offer assistance in any way they can to promote or advance the protection of the world's wild cats. One of the unique aspects of our organization is that we can offer our supporters something which very few philanthropic organizations can provide. By being able to guarantee that all money, every dollar, donated goes right into the field for programs, our donor community is directly linked to our field staff and global partners in a way that offers a special channel for those people who share our passion to get involved, to make a difference and to be a part of a new model which is advancing the most comprehensive and effective strategies in wildlife conservation.

