

Preface

To undertake a major edited book on the biology and conservation of an entire taxonomic family of wild carnivores might seem foolhardy. Having done so once (on the Canidae) then to do it again (for the Felidae) may be the hallmark of a slow-learner! Nonetheless, that is the task we have shouldered in producing the *Biology and Conservation of Wild Felids*, the sister volume of the *Biology and Conservation of Wild Canids* by David Macdonald and Claudio Sillero-Zubiri, which was published by Oxford University Press in 2004. We believe that the two, as a pair, are more than the sum of their parts.

This book had several beginnings, as did our own interests in felids. In 1978, as the culmination to a study of farm cats, one of us (David W. Macdonald) produced a BBC TV documentary on the intricacies of their sociality, which reported for the first time such then emerging phenomena as communal nursing and infanticide. There were two upshots of this documentary, *The Curious Cat* (World About Us). First, and this will not surprise those who have stood watch over the interminable sleepiness of felids, is that *Private Eye* magazine produced a lengthy satirical spoof on David W. Macdonald, who was portrayed radio-tracking a family of slugs in order to discover how long it would take them to circumnavigate the globe! Second, in the behaviour of those farm cats Lucky, his father Tom, mother Smudge, and aunts, Pickle and Domino were shadows of all the images that have made lion society rivetingly interesting to a generation of behavioural ecologists. Thus began a journey from domestic to wild felids, which initially dwelt—in the context of the preciously rare Scottish wildcat—on the technically and philosophically tricky question of what is a wildcat (Chapter 22, this volume). Then, in 1995, as the two of us sat by moonlight at a waterhole in Zimbabwe, chatting over a thermos flask of coffee while radio-tracking jackals, our great friend the late Lionel Reynolds confided in us his fears for the future of lions in

Zimbabwe and beyond. Lionel, a pillar of the Zimbabwean Hunters and Guides Association, feared that excessive hunting quotas, pursuit of easy money, and a tangle of lions in conflict with communities, presaged sinister, but then unheeded, warnings for the lion's future. Thus began the WildCRU's (Oxford University's Wildlife Conservation Research Unit's) Hwange Lion Project, which celebrated its 10th anniversary in 2009 (see Chapter 11, this volume). Meanwhile, the WildCRU initiated projects on felids large and small, which now span Andean cats of Bolivia to the manul in Mongolia to the bay cat in Borneo, the jaguar to the cheetah to the tiger, and the leopards—spotted, clouded, and snow. Indeed, of the 128 world-leading felid experts contributing to this book, 18 are, or have been, from the WildCRU stable.

Thus, with 'the canid book' published in 2004, it seemed that the obvious next step was 'the felid book'. Learning from the former, the process began with an international conference—from 17 to 20 September 2007 some 300 delegates from around the world gathered in Oxford to discuss felids. At the same time, we organized two workshops, one an IUCN red-listing session workshop (with Mike Hoffmann and Jan Schipper), the second a think tank on conflict and its resolution. All these events were sponsored by Panthera which, at that time, was exploding on the scene as a major new force in felid conservation. Many of the speakers who attended the Felid Biology and Conservation Conference in Oxford are authors in this book. However, this book is not a conference proceedings, and its chapters are much more than the written version of conference speeches. Rather, the brainstorming excitement of the conference and associated workshops were part of a process of identifying the world leaders in felid biology, and the ideas that most excited them. These people have been assembled into carefully constructed teams to produce the two types of chapter that dominate this book. These,

the Review chapters and the Case Studies, serve different functions, but together are intended to make the contents of the book both topical and enduring, both meticulously encyclopaedic and vibrantly empirical. Together, they offer a view that reveals both the woods and the trees.

Each Review chapter tackles an overarching theme in felid biology. We deliberately recruited at least three accomplished authors for each review, ideally from different institutions, perspectives, and even continents. Bringing together their heterogeneous experience, and sometimes conflicting styles and opinions, has been a major task for them, and for us as editors. However, the resulting syntheses are truly original, and both broad and deep. In contrast, the Case Studies are written by teams, sometimes assembled specially for this book, who have deep insight into a particular species or guild and a particular set of issues. We agonized over whether or not to include chapters specifically on domestic cats, and while no single chapter is dedicated to them, domestic cats feature heavily in many of the reviews and, in the case of the threat they now pose to wild cats, in the Case Study of Scottish wildcats (Chapter 22). In addition to the Review and Case Study Chapters, the book begins with a *dramatis personae* (Chapter 1) which introduces every living species of wild felid, and it ends, as did the sister volume on canids, with a substantial essay on conservation (Chapter 29). It is in this concluding chapter that the inescapable need for interdisciplinarity that is the hallmark of this book becomes most strident. Issues in felid conservation encompass not only the biological and social sciences, but lead us through dilemmas in governance and development to, ultimately, difficult judgements and thus politics.

Although this Preface comes first in the book, inevitably it was written last! The task of writing and editing the book leaves us with almost nothing left to say, except that when we started we thought we knew quite a lot about felids, but we surely know a lot more now—and we believe that for years to come this will be the experience of anybody who reads these pages. Above all, we are immensely grateful to everybody who has joined us on this journey—most importantly, the authors have worked tirelessly and

fruitfully. They will tell you that as editors we have been relentless, demanding, intrusive, and nit-picking—they must often have been reminded of the words of the Bob Dylan song 'knowing you is such a drag!'—we apologize, and we hope that they, the authors, and you, the reader, will think with hindsight that our harassing has been worthwhile in the end!

In addition, we want to thank the core team of people who helped us bring both the conference and the book to fruition. In alphabetical order, the tireless endurance runners in this race have been Dawn Burnham, Susan Cheyne, Joeline Hughes, Kerry Kilshaw, Joanne Loveridge, and Rosalind Shaw—they are few in number which emphasizes the heavy burden that each has shouldered. Naming these few is not to diminish our gratitude for the huge effort of the many in the wider WildCRU team who were selflessly devoted to working behind, around, and in front of the scenes, in order to make the conference a success. The book is enhanced by its illustrations, and we are particularly grateful to Andy Rouse, who is extraordinarily generous in his support of the WildCRU in allowing us to use his stunning photos, and to Priscilla Barrett whose frontispiece to the book captures the beauty that drives us to care so deeply for the felids whose lives and travails are explained in these pages. At Oxford University Press, Ian Sherman has nurtured both canid and felid projects, and Helen Eaton has been tirelessly supportive. Closer to home, and mindful that when, all too rarely, at home we have been steadfastly and unsociably glued to editorial computer screens for well over a year, we thank our wives, Jenny and Joanne, and families for their tolerance.

Finally, our personal research in particular, and the WildCRU's felid initiatives in general, owe much to the support, vision, and friendship of Tom Kaplan, his family, and our friends Alan Rabinowitz, Luke Hunter, and others at Panthera and in the extended family of its Cat Advisory Council. As we conclude this book, the new Panthera Buildings at WildCRU are also being completed—creating a centre where future generations of felid conservationists will be trained for work in far distant, remote corners of the world. In acknowledgement of all that they

have made possible, we are proud to dedicate this book to Tom and Dafna. Already, our diploma course has recruited so-called WildCRU Panthers from Albania, Bhutan, Bolivia, China, Iran, Kenya, Madagascar, South Africa, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe. Hopefully this book will be an inspiration and guide to these dedicated people and many others like them, and will create a foundation for the under-

standing and conservation of wild felids for many years to come.

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Andrew Loveridge and David Macdonald radio-collar an immobilised lion, Hwange National Park, Zimbabwe.

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