

notes from the field

FALL 2016



Cusp's
Rescue

Future
Conservation
Leaders

Gaining
Cotton-Tops Trust



WCN

Wildlife Conservation Network

On the Cusp of a Brighter Future for Painted Dogs

Six days of relentless searching in scorching temperatures. Six days of false alarms and close calls. That's how the team at Painted Dog Conservation (PDC) tracked down Cusp, one of the 700 painted dogs left in Zimbabwe. Unbeknownst to Cusp, PDC was trying to save her life.

A few days earlier, Cusp had had been caught in a poacher's snare, a circle of copper wire set to catch a small antelope. A lack of rainfall and poor crop yields has led to farmers relying on such bushmeat for food. Consequently, snares have become pervasive and painted dogs routinely get caught in them, suffering agonizing death or lethal infections if their wounds go untreated. PDC makes it their mission to find these dogs and remove the snares. After nearly a week of non-stop reconnaissance, PDC finally located Cusp; her neck was deeply lacerated. The team cut the wire, cleaned her wound, boosted her full of antibiotics, and monitored her progress from afar. This was the first of six snaring interventions that PDC conducted this year.

With so few left, every painted dog is indispensable. As the alpha female of her pack, Cusp is particularly important. Alphas are the only females in a pack that have puppies; without them the pack disbands. That snare was not only killing Cusp, it was taking down her entire pack. Today, apart from a scar banding her neck, Cusp has made a full recovery and recently gave birth to 12 puppies. Several packs in the area have birthed a dozen or so pups this year. This is a good indication that after such devastating incidences with snares, the future for painted dogs is bright. ■

We extend heartfelt thanks to Imvelo Safari Lodges for their instrumental role in helping to rescue Cusp.

Above: Cusp with her most recent litter of 12, and an adult pack mate. Inset: Cusp's healed neck injury.



That snare was not only killing Cusp, it was taking down her entire pack.

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INVESTING IN THE FUTURE THE WCN SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

The WCN Scholarship Program was founded ten years ago to mitigate the growing threats against our most imperiled species worldwide. We believe one of the most effective solutions to protecting endangered animals is finding and nurturing the next generation of conservation leaders in countries where these threat levels are high.

With this vision in mind, our Scholarship Program focuses on giving bright emerging conservationists with a collaborative and solutions-oriented mindset the opportunity to hone their knowledge, learn new skills, and build life-long connections with their peers. To date, our Scholarship Program has awarded 80 scholarships for graduate level education to brilliant men and women from 28 countries. The recipients of these awards have demonstrated exceptional skill, courage, and commitment to wildlife conservation. ■

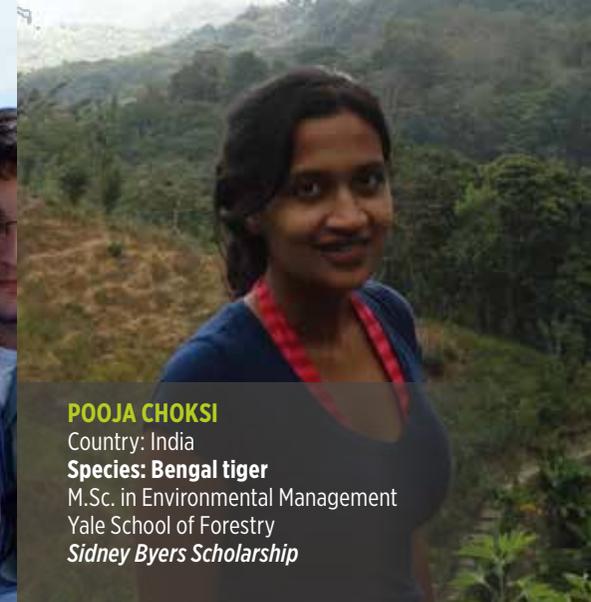
If you'd like to help support these future conservationists, visit www.wildnet.org/scholarships

2016 SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS ▶



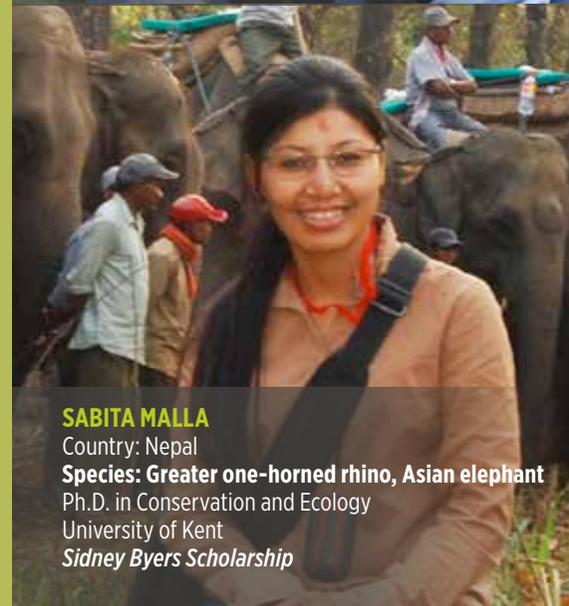
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Country: Brazil
Species: Jaguar
Ph.D. in Anthropology
University College London
Handsel Scholarship



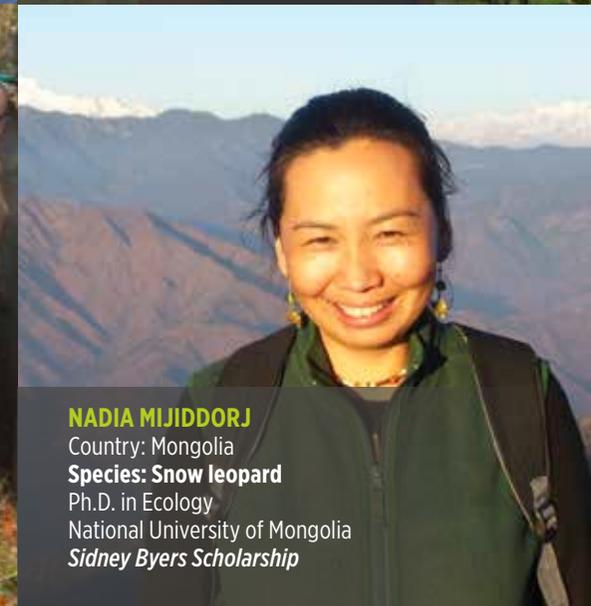
POOJA CHOKSI

Country: India
Species: Bengal tiger
M.Sc. in Environmental Management
Yale School of Forestry
Sidney Byers Scholarship



SABITA MALLA

Country: Nepal
Species: Greater one-horned rhino, Asian elephant
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NADIA MIJIDDORJ

Country: Mongolia
Species: Snow leopard
Ph.D. in Ecology
National University of Mongolia
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ANA FRANCIS AURICH

Country: Peru
Species: Spectacled bear
M.Sc. in Forestry
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JUSTIN CHAMBULILA

Country: Tanzania
Species: Large carnivores
M.Sc. in Wildlife Management
Sokoine University of Agriculture
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TUTILO MUDUMBA

Country: Uganda
Species: Lion
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SONAM TASHI LAMA

Country: Nepal
Species: Red panda
M.Sc. in International Nature Conservation
Lincoln University and University of Gottingen
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Building Trust with Cotton-Top Tamarins



Lisa Hoffner



Jon Wang

Center: Years of slash and burn agriculture have left the forest in patches in the San Juan Nepomuceno region. Right: A dominant male wearing a telemetry "backpack"

Putting a transmitter onto a cotton-top tamarin isn't easy. You need to win its trust first. So biologists at Proyecto Tití (PT) in Colombia are spending a few months acclimating cotton-tops to their presence, making it easier to capture a dominant male and place a small telemetry device onto his back. These devices attach like a backpack and are critical to understanding cotton-top biology, behaviors, and conservation needs, particularly which trees they feed from and which they must sleep on to stay safe from predators overnight. The habituation process occurs annually and ultimately enables PT to create a vivid picture of how cotton-tops live.

PT recently expanded their conservation efforts to the San Juan Nepomuceno region, where years of slash and burn agriculture left the forest in patches, forcing cotton-tops to live in isolated islands of trees amid impassable tributaries of low brush. As they never come to the ground or step beyond the forest borders, population numbers of these critically endangered monkeys are only healthy if there's enough forest to live in. PT combats this problem by connecting these forest islands with private farming lands, literally building arboreal bridges to expand habitat for cotton-tops. Using information gathered from the transmitters over the past 25 years PT can create the right kind of forest corridors that cotton-tops need to survive. Ironically, as human induced habitat loss is the biggest threat to cotton-top survival, the first step to protecting them is to gain their trust. ■



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