

**African Wildlife Foundation • American Zoo and Aquarium Association •
American Veterinary Medical Association • Born Free USA •
Conservation International • Defenders of Wildlife •
Flora and Fauna International • Humane Society USA •
International Rhino Foundation • Iranian Cheetah Society •
IUCN African Lion Working Group • Jaguar Conservation Fund •
Snow Leopard Conservancy • Snow Leopard Trust • Small Cat Alliance •
The Nature Conservancy • The Wilds • Toledo Zoo • Tulsa Zoo •
Wildlife Conservation Network • Wildlife Conservation Society •
Wildlife Trust • World Wildlife Fund**

Dear Representative:

We strongly support H.R. 1707, the Great Cats and Rare Canids Act of 2005, introduced on April 19, 2005, by Rep. Clay Shaw (R-FL) and cosponsored by Reps. Tom Udall (D-NM), Ed Royce (R-CA), and John Tanner (D-TN) – the four co-chairs of the House International Conservation Caucus. We urge you to cosponsor this important legislation and to support its passage by the U.S. Congress.

The Great Cats and Rare Canids Act would assist in the conservation of rare cat and canine populations outside the United States. Through the Multinational Species Conservation Fund (MSCF), the Act would provide much needed financial resources for more than a dozen species that are recognized as endangered or threatened by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and/or the World Conservation Union (IUCN) Red List of Endangered Species. These include the majestic jaguar of South and Central America, the African lion, the snow leopard, the cheetah, the African wild dog, and other rare predator species. As with other multinational species funds, the Act would leverage private conservation dollars – by as much as four to one – and foster international cooperation for conservation initiatives.

In addition to the habitat loss, poaching and environmental degradation that threaten wildlife worldwide, wild cat and canine species face an array of threats driven by humanity's long fascination with and fear of large carnivores. Human-wildlife conflict, exploitation for skins and the medicinal trade, and persecution driven by mythology and misperception all have a devastating impact on the world's wild cat and canine species.

Wildlife experts from around the globe agree that protecting "keystone" or "umbrella" species such as large carnivores can provide ancillary benefits for the many other species that share their ecosystems. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, with the stalwart support of Congress, has led America's effort to aid other species covered by the MSCF, such as tigers, rhinos, elephants, great apes, and most recently marine turtles. Since 1990, the Service has administered the funds provided by Congress under the MSCF to produce effective, on the ground results in host nations. However, the tiger is the only carnivore currently receiving support through the Fund.

The conservation of rare cat and canine populations requires a global commitment. Unfortunately, many countries lack the funding and infrastructure to conserve species of

concern. Those countries that are taking action to aid threatened species need further assistance in implementing effective conservation strategies. With your help, we can continue America's proud tradition of leadership in the conservation of imperiled wildlife, and protect rare cat and canine species around the world for future generations to enjoy.

Again, we urge you to cosponsor H.R. 1707, The Great Cats and Rare Canids Act of 2005.