

## **Executive Summary - Status Survey and Conservation Action Plan: Wild Sheep, Goats, and Their Relatives**

Wild Caprinae are an extremely valuable group of mammals. Most live in mountains but some inhabit desert grasslands, tropical forests or Arctic tundra. They range in size from the 30kg goral to the 350kg muskox, and show a tremendous range of horn shapes and sizes as well as elaborate coat and body coloration. Several species are highly prized by hunters because of their magnificent horns. Domestic sheep and goats, two of the world's most important and numerous species of livestock, also belong to this subfamily. However, despite the importance of their domestic relations, most wild Caprinae are poorly understood and in danger of being lost forever. Over 70% of Caprinae taxa are threatened, with more than 30% endangered or critical. Many live in environments of relatively low productivity and therefore are naturally not very numerous. But today, with increasing human pressure on these areas, wild caprins face three major threats: overharvesting, habitat loss, and resource competition from livestock. Together, these result in reduced Caprinae numbers and increased population fragmentation, raising significantly the risks of extinction.

Necessary conservation legislation is either absent, or more often, ineffectively enforced, while protected areas are generally inadequate in number, size, or both. Many of the most threatened Caprinae face an additional threat because trophy hunters are willing to pay large sums to shoot them. The result is that some governments are tempted to exploit them without adequate biological information or trained personnel to do so sustainably.

Caprinae can be conserved and provide a wide range of sustainable substantial benefits to humans if reliable and accurate data on their demographics and distributions are gathered immediately. Also, adequately trained field and management personnel will be required to oversee their conservation and management. A key factor in the success of any conservation effort, and especially in any sustainable use program, is involvement of local people; both in the decision-making process and in reaping benefits. Besides the caprins, local people are the ones who stand to lose most, because it is their livestock, their energy requirements, and their other resource needs that will be lost if restrictive measures are required to conserve wild Caprinae and their habitat.

While specific conservation actions are contained in each of the Country Reports (**Chapters 4 to 10**) and general actions and their implementations in **Chapter 12**, it is clear that:

- 1) The overall goal of Caprinae conservation must be maintenance of maximum genetic diversity, not simply preservation of a few populations.
- 2) Many countries with wild Caprinae will require financial and technical support from international conservation agencies to train staff, carry out population censuses, and develop and implement conservation management plans. The limited use of sustainable hunting programs may be considered where population data indicate it is appropriate and **if** they will create conservation actions that benefit the caprin and its natural habitat.
- 3) For many Caprinae the number and size of protected areas should be increased, together with significant strengthening of conservation legislation and its enforcement.

4) Effective legislation to control national and international trade in Caprinae requires a workable taxonomy. The taxonomy of Caprinae is in need of revision. It should be the task of the IUCN/SSC Caprinae Specialist Group to establish and co-ordinate a Taxonomy Group comprised of scientists and lay specialists in various disciplines to revise the subfamily's taxonomy.

Success of this Action Plan's conservation recommendations will be significantly higher if closer working relationships are developed among users (locals, hunting organisations), regulators (governments) and professional biologists (government, universities, NGO's). Such co-operation, which will benefit each of these groups, will require networking at an international level to increase the flow of information, and the efficiency of transmission of new ideas and techniques, and to maintain professional standards of wildlife management and conservation. The role of the IUCN/SSC's Caprinae Specialist Group will be central to developing this relationship.