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**AFGHANISTAN**

## SUCCESS STORY

# Victory for Endangered Species

### USAID works to protect rare and endangered species in Afghanistan



Photo: WCS

*The mother and daughter ibex pair shown above are members of one of 33 species which are now legally protected in Afghanistan thanks to USAID programs.*

*USAID programs are helping Afghans to improve natural resource management, preserve biodiversity, and ensure sustainable development.*

When the Presidential Decree banning certain types of hunting in Afghanistan expired in March of 2009, rare and endangered local species were suddenly at greatly increased risk. Happily, a USAID environmental program initiated three years earlier was ready to respond.

USAID through its implementing partner, the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), has been working closely with the Afghanistan National Environmental Protection Agency (NEPA) to develop lists of protected and harvestable species in the country. At the end of May, the first protected species list including 33 rare and endangered birds, plants, insects, amphibians and mammals was officially published, putting these species under legal protection.

The list, which includes the snow leopard, the Marco Polo sheep, the Siberian crane and the Paghman salamander, is still being expanded through a unique collaboration between WCS, Kabul University, and the University of Richmond in Virginia. Students majoring in environmental studies assess proposed species, make recommendations, and then participate in joint electronically convened discussion sessions with the Afghan Wildlife Executive Committee (AWEC). AWEC is the official body established to create species lists.

Conservation is still a new topic for most government officials and academic professionals in Afghanistan. WCS worked diligently with NEPA to facilitate the creation of AWEC, and continues to provide the committee with technical assistance and training. Members of AWEC include professors from Kabul University, and representatives from the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL) and NEPA.

WCS and AWEC anticipate that by the end of the review process in 2009, approximately 70 species will be on the final protected list. WCS is also working with Afghan authorities and local communities to create the infrastructure (including a trained and equipped ranger cadre) to enforce environmental regulations.