

# Donors pledge \$80 million to protect wild cats

June 1 2014, by Adam Schreck

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The crown prince of the oil-rich Mideast emirate of Abu Dhabi and other international donors committed a combined \$80 million on Sunday to fund the conservation of tigers and other wild cats whose survival is under threat.

The donors announced the 10-year funding effort, a partnership with New York-based cat conservation organization Panthera, following a private signing ceremony in the United Arab Emirates capital of Abu Dhabi.

Panthera's founder and chairman, mining investor Thomas Kaplan, described crown prince Sheik Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan as "a catalyst" for accelerating the wider funding effort that he hopes will attract more donors from around the world.

Other backers are Jho Low, CEO of Hong Kong-based investment firm Jynwel Capital, businessman Hemendra Kothari, who chairs DSP Blackrock India and India's Wildlife Conservation Trust, and Kaplan and his wife Daphne Recanati Kaplan.

"This is a truly multinational advance. And we hope it serves to be a template for [wildlife conservation](#)," Kaplan said in an interview. "We hope it's just the beginning."

Each person or family is committing \$20 million over a decade.

The funds will go toward Panthera's aim of helping to conserve 38

species of wild cats through projects such as anti-poaching efforts and occasional land purchases to create safe corridors for the animals. Some will be allocated for existing programs, while others will contribute to new initiatives.

"For conservation to be effective, it's got to scale up," Panthera CEO and cat expert Alan Rabinowitz said. "That takes funding."

The crown prince plays a significant role in the day-to-day running of the United Arab Emirates, a seven-state federation and OPEC member that includes Dubai. He is next in line to succeed Emirati President Sheik Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, his half-brother, as ruler of Abu Dhabi and likely as UAE president. Sheik Khalifa suffered a stroke in January and the severity of his illness is unclear.

The crown prince's contribution to the funding effort will be managed through a conservation fund he set up in 2009 that awards grants primarily to small [conservation](#) projects in the developing world. Unlike some rich Emiratis and other Gulf Arabs, he does not keep captive big cats of his own, said the fund's director-general, Frederic Launay.

Panthera was created in 2006 to focus on conserving wild cats, in particular tigers, lions, jaguars, snow leopards, cheetahs, cougars and leopards.

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