Turning the Tide for Big Cats
Around the World

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION SOCIETY
WCS
125 YEARS

POSTCARDS FROM THE FIELD

GALA 2020

PHOTO: LUKE HUNTER


Tiger (*Panthera tigris*)


Snow leopard (*Panthera uncia*)


Lion (*Panthera leo*)


Sunda clouded leopard (*Neofelis diardi*)


Mainland clouded leopard (*Neofelis nebulosa*)


Jaguar (*Panthera onca*)


Leopard (*Panthera pardus*)


Cheetah (*Acinoyx jubatus*)


Puma (*Puma concolor*)

WCS has more people working on the ground to conserve the world's largest cats than any other conservation NGO. We focus on conserving the world's nine largest cats – those most in danger of extinction.

PHOTOS: NICK GARBULT, LUKE HUNTER, SEBASTIAN KENNERKNECT, AND WCS

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PHOTO: GEORGE SCHALLER/WCS

PHOTO: LUKE HUNTER

A long history of conserving cats….George Schaller joins WCS in 1966 and launches the first scientific study of the African lion. His book arising from that research, *The Serengeti Lion*, is still a classic. Our formula for conserving big cats started with the science, and WCS continues to publish A-rated peer-reviewed papers on cats every year.

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From our early days of pioneering big cat science, our work on big cats has grown to focus intensely on the factors driving the decline of cats- especially illegal, commercial poaching and trafficking. This is the single most important threat to tigers, and it affects all other big cats.

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PHOTO: WCS

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So WCS's approach to big cat conservation has transformed, reflecting the specialist expertise we need to be effective. As well as many of the world's leading big cat scientists, WCS staff includes hundreds of specialists on wildlife law enforcement providing support to protected area authorities, rangers, police and the judiciary in big cat range countries around the world.

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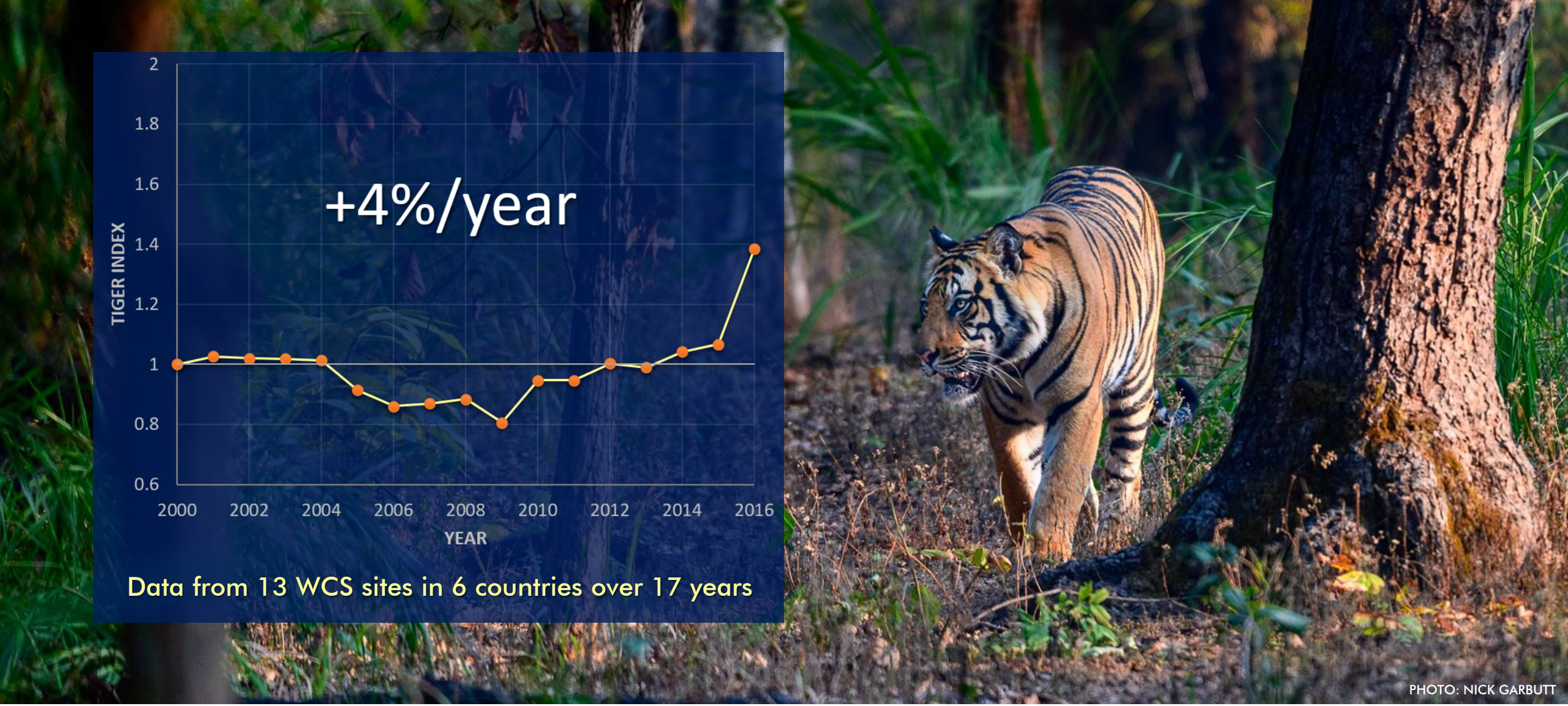

PHOTO: NICK GARBUTT

That strategic, long-term approach is gradually turning the tide. After many years of decline in most populations around the world, tigers are now increasing at WCS sites at an average of 4% growth per year since 2009.

PHOTOS: LAND OF THE LEOPARD/WCS

Other cats in the same landscapes are benefitting, like these cats all photographed along the same trail in the Land of the Leopard National Park, Russia. By tackling the main underlying reasons that drive the decline of tigers—illegal hunting of tigers and their prey—the entire ecosystem is better protected. Tigers are the umbrella for the recovery of the massive, wild landscapes where WCS works.

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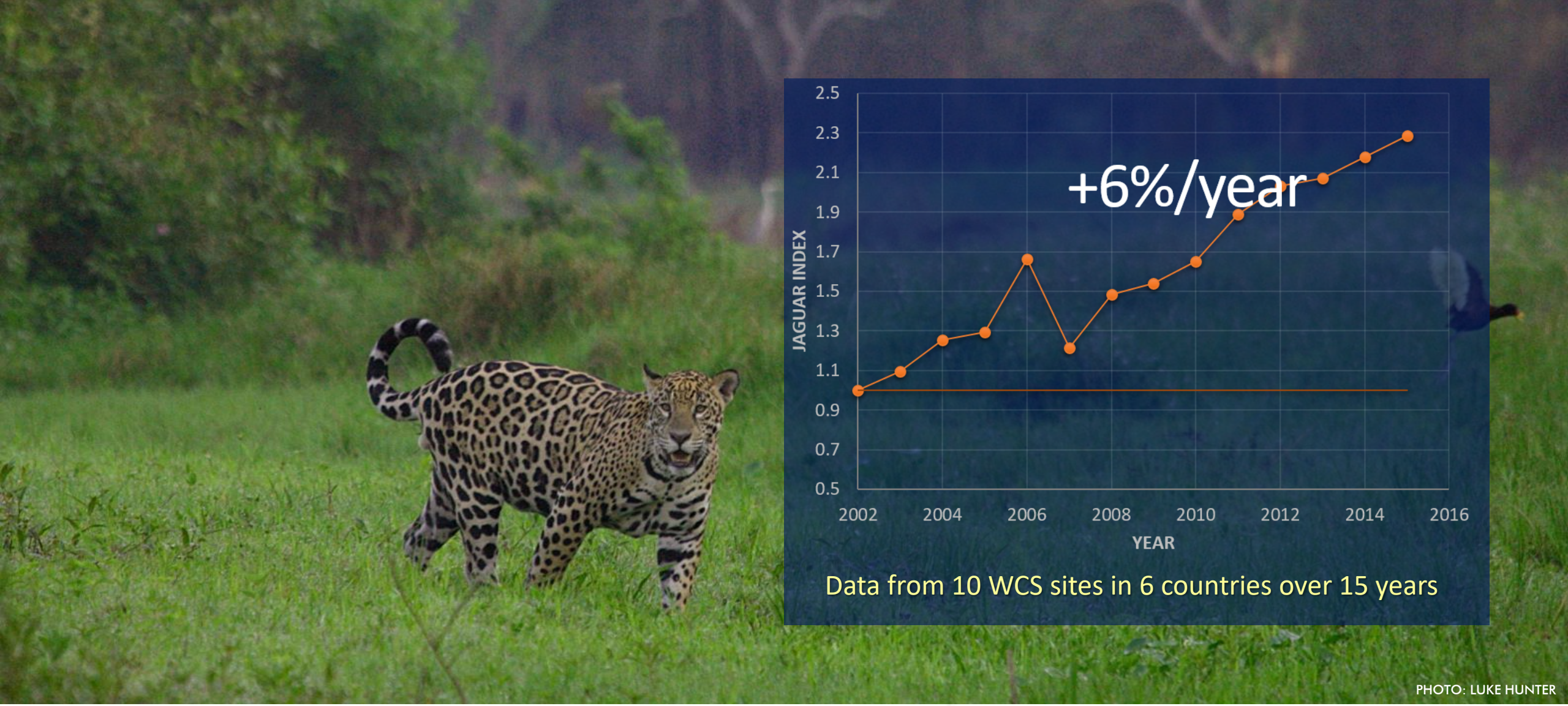

PHOTO: LUKE HUNTER

And we are encouraged that the same pattern is underway in other big cat landscapes where WCS works. The results of our jaguar program are even more encouraging. Jaguars are increasing on average at 6% per year across WCS landscapes.

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PHOTO: LUKE HUNTER

Success takes time. Our monitoring data over many years shows that big cats respond to long-term protection. A key element of WCS's recipe is an enduring commitment to the critical landscapes for big cats. A long-term presence, with the appropriate expertise on the ground focusing on addressing the key threats translates to recovery of cat populations.

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PHOTO: LUKE HUNTER

Our next challenge. Now, WCS is bringing this strategy to saving the African lion. Lions have declined an estimated 43% since the early 1990's. Our approach focuses on reversing that decline, as for tigers and jaguars.

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Over the next 25 years, our goal is to **increase lion populations by 50%** in all WCS sites where lions occur. Success means increasing the current population of 4250-4500 to **6375-6750 lions.**

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