

Ian Ross (1958–2003)

(from Martin Jalkotzy's tribute in International Bear News, November 2003)



After graduating from the University of Guelph (1982), Ian studied the impacts of industrial development on grizzly bears in northwestern Alberta. It was the beginning of an illustrious 20-year career conducting research on large mammals in western Canada. He worked on cougars in southwestern Alberta from the early 1980s until 1994. That project became one of the longest running research projects on *Puma concolor* in North America.

The cougar project received national recognition on radio and television and Ian used that attention to foster a thoughtful and effective wildlife conservation message. He participated in drafting a management plan for cougars in Alberta as well as a conservation strategy for

large carnivores in Canada. He was the senior author on nine papers in peer-reviewed journals in addition to many other technical reports and popular articles.

After the cougar project wrapped up, Ian conducted environmental impact studies in western and northern Canada. He recently re-wrote the grizzly bear status report for COSEWIC (Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada). He also worked tirelessly with The Wildlife Society – Alberta Chapter dealing with wildlife conservation issues. He served as President of the Chapter in 1997. Ian also continued to capture wildlife, including grizzly bears, for research projects, and in doing so assisted many graduate students with their research. He conducted his capture work using an exacting professional approach while retaining an empathy for the wildlife he was pursuing. He cared for each individual and did his utmost to conduct captures humanely.

Ian was a committed and emotional friend and family man. Having no children of his own he was a hero to his young nieces, nephews and children of friends. He always remembered everyone's birthdays. He hiked the foothills of the Rockies west of Calgary, as well as the U.S. desert southwest, the Canadian Arctic, Mexico and Africa. He loved to hunt and his dinner table was a testament to his hunting prowess. His conservation ethic permeated all of his life. He did not consume needlessly and he encouraged all of us to do the same.

In January 2003, Ian returned to field research when he joined Dr. Laurence Frank on the Liakipia Predator Project, a project designed to find ways to allow for the coexistence of hyenas, lions, leopards and people in the agricultural matrix that exists outside national parks in most of southern Africa. Two days before his death he was on top of the world having collared his first leopard. On the evening he died, Ian was tracking a radio-collared lion from a light aircraft. Its wreckage was located by searchers the next morning. Ian Ross died at the peak of his career,

doing what he loved. As he wished, Ian was cremated and his ashes dispersed in Kananaskis Country, a place where he had spent a lot of time with his cougars.