

= George Schaller =

George Beals Schaller (born 1933) is an American mammalogist , biologist , conservationist and author . Schaller is recognized by many as the world 's preeminent field biologist , studying wildlife throughout Africa , Asia and South America . Born in Berlin , Schaller grew up in Germany , but moved to Missouri as a teen . He is vice president of Panthera Corporation and serves as chairman of their Cat Advisory Council along with renowned conservationist and Panthera CEO Alan Rabinowitz . Schaller is also a senior conservationist at the Bronx Zoo @-@ based Wildlife Conservation Society .

= = Early life = =

Schaller received his Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Alaska in 1955 , and went on to the University of Wisconsin ? Madison to obtain his PhD in 1962 . From 1962 to 1963 , he was a fellow at the Behavioral Sciences department of Stanford University . From 1963 to 1966 , Schaller served as research associate for the Johns Hopkins University Pathobiology department , and from 1966 to 1972 , served as the Rockefeller University 's and New York Zoological Society 's research associate in research and animal behavior as part of the Institute for Research in Animal Behavior . From 1972 to 1979 , he served as Coordinator of the Center for Field Biology and Conservation , which replaced the IRAB . He then served as Director of the New York Zoological Society 's International Conservation Program from 1979 to 1988 .

= = Mountain gorilla research = =

In 1959 , when Schaller was only 26 , he traveled to Central Africa to study and live with the mountain gorillas (*Gorilla beringei beringei*) of the Virunga Volcanoes . Little was known about the life of gorillas in the wild until the publication of *The Mountain Gorilla : Ecology and Behavior* in 1963 , that first conveyed to the general public just how profoundly intelligent and gentle gorillas really are , contrary to then @-@ common beliefs . Schaller also , in 1964 , recounted this epic two @-@ year study in *The Year of the Gorilla* , which also provides a broader historical perspective on the efforts to save one of humankind 's nearest relatives from the brink of extinction .

The American zoologist Dian Fossey , with assistance from the National Geographic society and Louis Leakey , followed Schaller 's ground @-@ breaking field research on mountain gorillas in the Virungas . Schaller and Fossey were instrumental in dispelling the public perception of gorillas as brutes , by demonstrably establishing the deep compassion and social intelligence evident among gorillas , and how very closely their behavior parallels that of humans .

" No one who looks into a gorilla 's eyes ? intelligent , gentle , vulnerable ? can remain unchanged , for the gap between ape and human vanishes ; we know that the gorilla still lives within us . Do gorillas also recognize this ancient connection ? "

= = Conservation career = =

In 1966 , Schaller and his wife traveled to Tanzania to live in the Serengeti , and Schaller conducted one of the first studies of social behavior and movement of Africa 's big cats .

In his 1972 work *The Tree Where Man Was Born* , author Peter Matthiessen described Schaller as " single @-@ minded , not easy to know " . Matthiessen went on to say Schaller was " a stern pragmatist " who " takes a hard @-@ eyed look at almost everything " , " lean and intent " , and in 1978 's *The Snow Leopard* Matthiessen wrote that by that time , some considered Schaller the world 's finest field biologist .

In the fall of 1973 , Schaller went to the remote Himalayan region , 250 miles (400 km) inside Dolpo , an area of Nepal occupied by people of the Tibetan culture and ethnicity . Schaller was there to study the Himalayan Bharal , (blue sheep) , and possibly glimpse the elusive snow leopard , an animal rarely spotted in the wild . Schaller is one of only two Westerners known to have seen a

snow leopard in Nepal between 1950 and 1978 . Accompanying him on the trip was Matthiessen , and as a result of the trip , Matthiessen wrote The Snow Leopard , (1978) detailing the accounts of their travels and research , which won two U.S. National Book Awards . Schaller is referred to throughout the book as " GS " .

In the late 1970s , Schaller spent time in Brazil studying the jaguar , capybara , " alligator " (caiman) , and other animals of the region .

In 1988 , Schaller and his wife traveled to China 's Chang Tang (Qian Tang) region to study the giant panda , and became the first westerners permitted to enter the remote region . Schaller sought to refute the notion that the panda population was declining due to natural bamboo die @-@ offs . Instead , Schaller found the panda 's popularity was leading to its frequent capture , and was the biggest threat to the population . Schaller also found evidence that pandas were originally carnivores , but underwent an evolutionary change to accommodate a diet of bamboo , which is difficult to digest , reducing competition with other animals for food . Since Schaller 's research , the panda population has increased in the wild by 45 percent . During his time in China , Schaller would hand out cards to wildlife hunters that read : " All beings tremble at punishment , to all , life is dear . Comparing others to oneself , one should neither kill nor cause to kill . " Schaller has spent more time in China than he has spent at his home in Connecticut .

In 1994 , Schaller and Dr. Alan Rabinowitz were the first scientists to uncover the rare saola , a forest @-@ dwelling bovine in Laos . Later that year , Schaller rediscovered the Vietnamese warty pig , once thought extinct . In 1996 , he located a herd of Tibetan red deer , also thought extinct .

In 2003 , Schaller returned to Chang Tang , and found the wildlife in the area had rebounded since his first trip to the region . Most significantly , the wild yak population , which was estimated at only 13 individuals , had grown to over 187 . " The Tibet Forestry Department has obviously made a dedicated and successful effort in protecting the wildlife . " Schaller wrote in a letter to the World Wildlife Fund 's Dawa Cering . While in Tibet , Schaller worked on researching the rare Tibetan antelope , or chiru , whose population declined due to trophy hunting for their exotic wool . Working with Tibetan authorities , and the Liz Claiborne and Art Ortenberg Foundation , Schaller helped protect the breeding and calving grounds of the chiru in the Kunlun mountains of Xinjiang Province .

In 2007 , Schaller worked with Pakistan , Afghanistan , Tajikistan , and China to develop a new " Peace Park " , that would protect 20 @,@ 000 miles (32 @,@ 000 km) of habitat for the largest wild sheep species , the Marco Polo sheep . In danger due to their impressive spiral horns , which can measure up to 6 feet (1 @.@ 8 m) in length , the sheep is sought out as a trophy by international hunters . Schaller 's research in the Pamir Mountains will play an important role in the park 's creation .

= = Conservation results = =

Schaller 's work in conservation has resulted in the protection of large stretches of area in the Amazon , Brazil , the Hindu Kush in Pakistan , and forests in Southeast Asia . Due in part to Schaller 's work , over 20 parks or preserves worldwide have been established , including Alaska 's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) , the Shey @-@ Phoksundo National Park in Nepal , and the Changtang Nature Reserve , one of the world 's most significant wildlife refuges . At over 200 @,@ 000 miles (320 @,@ 000 km) , the Chang Tang Nature Reserve is triple the size of America 's largest wildlife refuge , and was called " One of the most ambitious attempts to arrest the shrinkage of natural ecosystems , " by The New York Times .

= = Bigfoot research = =

Schaller is one of a few prominent scientists who argue that Bigfoot reports are worthy of serious study . A 2003 Los Angeles Times story described Schaller as a " Bigfoot skeptic " , but he also expressed disapproval for other scientists who do not examine evidence , yet " write [Bigfoot] off as a hoax or myth . I don 't think that 's fair . " In a 2003 Denver Post article Schaller said that he is troubled that no Bigfoot remains have ever been uncovered , and no feces samples have been

found to allow DNA testing . Schaller notes : " There have been so many sightings over the years , even if you throw out 95 percent of them , there ought to be some explanation for the rest . I think a hard @-@ eyed look is absolutely essential " .

= = Publications = =

Schaller has written more than fifteen books on African and Asian mammals , including *Serengeti Lion : A Study of Predator ? Prey Relations* , *The Last Panda* , and *Tibet 's Hidden Wilderness* , based on his own studies , and supported by long @-@ term observations of species in their natural habitats . Schaller has also written hundreds of magazine articles , and dozens of books and scientific articles about tigers , jaguars , cheetahs and leopards , as well as wild sheep and goats , rhinoceroses , and flamingos . Over more than five decades , Schaller 's field research has helped shape wildlife protection efforts around the world .

= = Awards = =

Schaller 's conservation honors include National Geographic 's Lifetime Achievement Award , a Guggenheim Fellowship , and the World Wildlife Fund 's Gold Medal for : " Contributions to the understanding and conservation of endangered species " . Schaller has also been awarded the International Cosmos Prize , the Tyler Prize for Environmental Achievement , and he was the first recipient of the Wildlife Conservation Society 's Beebe Fellowship . Schaller 's literary honors include the U.S. National Book Award in Science (for *The Serengeti Lion* in 1973) . In September 2008 , he received the Indianapolis Prize for his work in animal conservation .