



STILL VULNERABLE. An endangered snow leopard cub explores its enclosure at the Los Angeles Zoo in California. The elusive snow leopard — long considered an “endangered” species — has been upgraded to “vulnerable,” international conservationists say. But experts warn the new classification does not mean the big cats are safe. (AP Photo/Richard Vogel)

Long-endangered snow leopard upgraded to “vulnerable” status

By Katy Daigle
The Associated Press

BANGKOK — The elusive snow leopard — long considered an endangered species — has been upgraded to “vulnerable,” international conservationists say. But experts warn the new classification does not mean they are safe.

The animals still face serious challenges, including poaching and loss of prey in their high Himalayan habitat.

“The species still faces ‘a high risk of extinction in the wild’ and is likely still

declining — just not at the rate previously thought,” said Tom McCarthy, head of the snow leopard program at the big cat conservation group Panthera.

Snow leopards have been listed as endangered since 1972.

The reclassification announced by the International Union for Conservation of Nature, or IUCN, followed a three-year assessment that determined there are not fewer than 2,500 mature snow leopards in the wild, and that their numbers are not in steep decline — the two criteria for being

Continued on page 8

Angelina Jolie on her Cambodian epic and the power of family

By Jake Coyle
AP Film Writer

TORONTO — Angelina Jolie arrives for an interview with the familiar harried air of a parent who has just barely managed to withdraw from her children, all six of whom she’s left having breakfast upstairs in their Toronto hotel suite.

“The reason I was a little late is they made me change,” Jolie says, smiling. “They thought what I was wearing was too revealing.”

It’s just another example of the extreme balancing act of Jolie’s life, one which combines global celebrity with humanitarian devotion, A-list stardom with sober filmmaking, glamour, and family. “I actually went to a premiere once with pee on me,” she says. “It was when the kids were little and I just got peed on at the last minute. There was nothing to do but wear it.”

But Jolie’s latest film, the powerfully immersive Cambodian genocide drama *First They Killed My Father*, represents a kind of amalgamation of Jolie’s multifarious life. Her initial interest in Cambodia came when she arrived — in a much earlier life — to make *Lara Croft: Tomb Raider* in 2000. She became infatuated with the country and its people, began goodwill work for the U.N.’s refugee agency, and adopted her first child, Maddox, from Cambodia.

First They Killed My Father, which has hit Netflix and select theaters, is based on Loung Ung’s 2000 memoir. The film hues close to Ung’s perspective as a five-year-old girl living with her family in Phnom Penh when the Khmer Rouge march in, force the residents to flee, and then imprison Ung’s family in a labor camp, brutally indoctrinating them to a classless society. Some two million (nearly a quarter of the country) died during the Khmer Rouge’s four year reign of terror.

The film isn’t just a shattering view of war through a child’s eyes, it’s intended as a cathartic healing for Cambodia itself, and a personal journey into the past of Maddox’s countrymen. The 16-year-old, credited as an executive producer, collaborated with his mother on the production, which was shot in Cambodia with local actors, both professional and not.

“I said to my son Maddox, who’s known Loung his whole life, when you’re ready, we should tell Loung’s story. But we have to tell it together,” Jolie says. “We had this script for a few years and he came up to me and said, ‘I’m ready.’”

Jolie’s heavily watched appearance at the Toronto International Film Festival was her most public since she filed for divorce from Brad Pitt after 12 years together — two of them married. Jolie acknowledged it’s been a difficult period of transition and that her filmmaking has been put on pause. She has an acting gig lined up (*Maleficent 2*) but the yearslong work of directing has for now been tabled.

“I’ve needed to take over a year off just to be with my kids,” Jolie says. “All I’ve done is some of my humanitarian work and my teaching. I’ve done nothing else for over a year. Now that they’re all older, the decisions really have to be made together because they home school and they’ll be with me and they have a lot of opinions about what to do.”

Now that her children are getting older, Jolie hopes the other children will work with her, too. But, she assures, Maddox had to work hard, and wouldn’t have earned a credit if he didn’t.

“I asked Maddox and Pax if they’d work with me again. I think all the kids even-



WRITING PARTNERS. Angelina Jolie, left, director/co-writer of the film *First They Killed My Father*, and co-writer/human-rights activist Loung Ung, right, pose for a portrait during the Toronto International Film Festival in Toronto. (Photo by Chris Pizzello/Invision/AP)

tually want to do something. My little boy who’s nine said he wants to train me because he thinks I’m out of shape. So maybe I’ll just be working with my children,” says Jolie, joking but also delighted about the idea: a close-knit, globetrotting clan of moviemaking adventurers, schooled in classrooms in Cambodian rice fields and African plains. “Now,” she says, “where next?”

Loung Ung, 47, came to Vermont from a refugee camp in Thailand as a 10-year-old. She now is married and lives in Cleveland, but she and Jolie have long been friends. She and Jolie co-wrote the script. Jolie also enlisted Rithy Panh, the Oscar-nominated director of the Cambodian genocide documentary *The Missing Picture*, as co-producer.

“There’s probably a Hollywood version of this, but this wasn’t about that,” says Ung. “This was about honor and celebration and remembrance.”

If Panh had said no, or if she couldn’t film the movie in Cambodia, Jolie says she wouldn’t have made *First They Killed My Father*. For a county still struggling with its history of genocide, the process of remembering and re-enacting was more important than the finished work. “It’s not really the film itself,” says Jolie. “Preparing to make it was also preparing to understand and communicate with a country and help a country to speak.”

Panh likes to joke that Jolie, 42, is “a Cambodian woman reincarnated.” It’s clear that the two are bonded by a strong belief in family. Panh’s experience may represent Cambodia’s, but *First They Killed My Father* is also an indelibly heart-wrenching story about a family torn apart by war, yet unbroken.

“Even when the soldiers told us my parents were enemies of the state, I knew they loved me and I loved them. There was never a question about that,” says Panh. “After I lost them, what they said to me at a young age, their spirits continue to say to me. I continue to be raised by my parents.”

Making the film had its own emotions. Jolie had a therapist on set for those whose memories were too painfully resurrected. One man dropped to his knees when he saw the Khmer Rouge actors marching over a bridge. Despite the care taken in the process, Jolie found herself defending the film’s casting process after she was quoted in *Vanity Fair* describing an improvisation game in which money would be given and then taken from young actors. Jolie says the suggestion that it was a real scenario was “false and upsetting.”

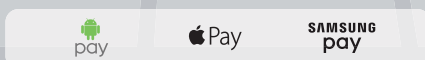
Jolie instead hopes the film brings audiences closer to the Cambodian people, as well as other countries now experiencing violent tumult. “This could be Syria,” she

Continued on page 8

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