



Foundation for the Protection of the Arabian Leopard in Yemen

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"Working to ensure a sustainably managed wild population of Arabian Leopards living in harmony with local communities in Yemen"

"Friends of the Arabian Leopard"

Nearly 200 members around the world!

Update No. 11: October 18, 2010

Dear Friends of the Arabian Leopard,

The past month has been a busy one for the foundation and several initiatives are coming to fruition. The Hawf Leopard Survey has started at a gallop, the Dhofar training is about to begin, new support for the foundation has been secured, and negotiations are underway to ensure the long-term sustainability of our effort to preserve the Arabian leopard in Yemen. While October's update is encouraging, I expect November's first anniversary edition to really justify your faith in the foundation. We shall see!

With best wishes and many thanks for your continuing interest and support,

David

1. Mohamed Bin Zayed Funded Hawf Leopard Survey gets off to a roaring start:



Above: Malini and Fadhl investigate a tributary of Wadi Fatk on the western edge of Hawf Protected Area.

Things are moving along swiftly with the Hawf Leopard Survey, major support for which comes from the Mohamed Bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund, which is based in Abu Dhabi. On September 26th, Durrell Institute of Conservation and Ecology (DICE) graduate student and foundation volunteer Malini Pittet flew to Al Ghaydhah with interpreter/assistant/trainee Fadhl Al-Eryani and executive director David Stanton. After meeting with the Governor of Al Mahrah, the team continued to Jadeb in the Hawf Protected Area where they were hosted by Mr. Saeed Ali Bakreet of the Hawf Social Society for Development. Mr. Bakreet organized a driver, found accommodation for the team, and otherwise facilitated a smooth start to this 12-month study. As Malini, who has already obtained some encouraging results, will only be available to continue working in Yemen until early December, we are currently recruiting qualified volunteers to continue this exciting survey. If you are interested in participating in pioneering predator research in a fascinating corner of the planet, please send your details and CV to contact@yemenileopard.org We thank His Excellency, Minister of Water & Environment and foundation board member Abdulrahman Fadhl Al-Eryani, for paving the way for the team and for continuing to actively support all of the foundation's activities.

2. Oman training slated to start November 1st: After almost 18 months of planning, the foundation team is preparing to set off for a week of training at Jebel Samhan Nature Reserve in Dhofar, Oman. The training is being generously supported by the Abu Dhabi chapter of the Emirates Natural History Group, and by Arabian Ecotours. However, additional donors are needed as we are currently about \$4,000 under budget. Stay tuned for November's anniversary update for a full report.



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3. Murjan Travel becomes the official travel agent of the foundation:

In an agreement made on October 10th with Haitham Alaini, President of the Griffin Group, Murjan Travel was designated as the official travel agent of the foundation. Additionally, \$6,000 worth of credits per year have been pledged by Murjan to the foundation for program-related travel. This agreement is especially helpful in light of the frequent travel necessitated by the Hawf Leopard Survey (each visit to Hawf entails a 2,000 km round-trip journey from Sana'a!). We are extremely grateful to Mr. Alaini and to Ahmed Badr, GM of Murjan for their enthusiastic support of the foundation and encourage the Friends of the Arabian Leopard to utilize the superior travel services provided by Murjan.



4. Al Jazeera plans a documentary about the foundation's efforts to save the Yemeni leopard: Al Jazeera management has approved production of a film documenting the foundation and its effort to conserve Yemen's National Animal. Filming commences in late October and follows our team to Oman. Guardian journalist Kevin Rushby, the project leader, filed the following ruminations about the project:



ALJAZEERA

"When I heard that leopard conservation efforts were underway in Yemen, I got very excited. When those efforts evolved into a training programme in leopard conservation I knew immediately that this was a unique opportunity to document a pivotal moment in the future of this wonderful animal. Al Jazeera's *Witness* series seemed perfect with its emphasis on people and culture - this story being as much about human attitudes to wildlife as the wildlife itself. As I write we are only at the beginning of the film project, but I'm very hopeful that we can make something that will establish the vital importance of the conservation work in Yemen. A further aspect of the story that fascinates me is the co-operation between Yemen and Oman: without that, the efforts to save the leopard would probably be doomed.

There are many places in the world where people are struggling to learn how to co-exist with predators: something I've seen first-hand recently in central India with tigers, and in northern Namibia with hyenas and lions. It is certainly not an easy path to take: I've met individuals who know the cost of such co-existence – relatives injured or even killed, their domestic animals taken. But I have also seen how conservation can pay off, not only with tourism but also with environmental quality and cultural pride. With the Arabian leopard, one of the Earth's most critically endangered big cats, Yemen has a unique opportunity to play a leading role." – Kevin Rushby

5. Griffin Group pledges support: Few people know the full story behind the formation of the Foundation for the Protection of the Arabian Leopard in Yemen, which started as a volunteer initiative to save one of the World's most critically endangered mammals (The Arabian leopard is at least eight times rarer than the Giant Panda and 16 times rarer than the Bengal Tiger!). When it became clear that existing efforts to conserve leopards in Yemen were inadequate to the urgency of the need, founder David Stanton left a successful teaching career in order to devote himself full-time to the cause of leopard conservation in Yemen. This decision was taken in the midst of the economic crisis and without promise of support. Balancing the need for program funding with project support, the foundation has navigated a thin line between solvency and bankruptcy. In other words, like the animal that it seeks to preserve, the foundation is itself in danger of extinction. It is therefore with deep gratitude that we thank Haitham Alaini, president of the Griffin Group, for his pledge to provide interim funding and to bring partners into the fold who can ensure the foundation's long-term sustainability, thus enabling us to concentrate on the preservation of Yemen's National Animal. *Alf shukr!*



"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." - Margaret Mead



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