



Foundation for the Protection of the Arabian Leopard in Yemen

P.O. Box 7069

Sana'a, Republic of Yemen

Tel: +967 733916928

Fax: +967 - 1 - 370193

Email: contact@yemenileopard.org

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

"Friends of the Arabian Leopard"

More than 200 members around the world!

Update No. 13: December 31, 2010

Dear Friends of the Arabian Leopard,

Sorry for the long delay since November's bumper edition, but having kept to schedule for the first year of our existence it seemed an appropriate time to institute a new date for the Foundation's monthly updates. We hope that this hasn't unduly inconvenienced anyone and that each of you finds December's update has been worth the wait.

With best wishes for a Happy, Peaceful and Prosperous New Year,

David

1. Yemeni Biologists carry the torch in Hawf:

October 28th was a bittersweet day for the foundation as Malini Pittet handed over the reins of the Hawf Leopard Survey to Yemeni biologists Mr. Waleed Ra'il and Mr. Murad Mohamed. It was our good fortune to have Malini conduct the survey for its first two months and though she did not catch an Arabian leopard with her trail cameras she did document 10 mammal species including seven carnivores and a host of other interesting wildlife in and around Hawf. Being a true professional, Malini conducted 10 days of intensive on-the-job training for Waleed and Murad who are both Ibb University graduates. We are pleased that we can continue our research in Hawf with two capable and enthusiastic Yemeni scientists.



Malini with Waleed and Murad on the jowl above Hawf

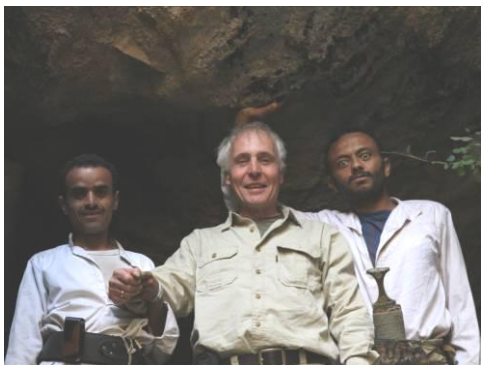
2. Marco Livadiotti Elected to the Board of Trustees: On November 29th Mr. Marco Livadiotti joined the Foundation's Board of Trustees by unanimous vote of the other board members. Marco has lived in Yemen since 1960 and his dedication and devotion to the natural and cultural heritage of this nation is unparalleled. He has been active in promoting Yemen as a tourist destination for decades and has headed many successful restoration projects of historic buildings and quarters in Yemen. Marco was also instrumental in the purchase of "Arnold" (aka "Nimrod Felix") from an entrepreneur near Bilqis Cinema, Tahrir Square and helped organize his transfer to Sharjah where he became a founder member of the captive breeding program at the Breeding Centre for Endangered Arabian Wildlife. We are proud that Marco has joined what is certainly one of the strongest and most dedicated NGO boards in Yemen.

3. Al Jazeera Execs chuffed with "Leopards in Winter": Project leader and Guardian journalist Kevin Rushby recently stated that the 'rough cut' of the film "Leopards in Winter" was shown to Al Jazeera executives who were thrilled with the results; enthused one, "You've made my day!" The executives stated that they'd be interested in producing a sequel based on follow-up activities at Jebel Milhan and Wada'a where film stars and recent trainees Nasser Aswot and Ibrahim Wada'i are based. "Leopards in Winter" will be aired by Al Jazeera English in January and features footage of captive Arabian leopards filmed at the Breeding Centre for Endangered Arabian Wildlife in Sharjah which hosted the film crew for two days in November.

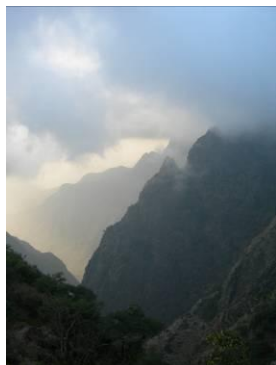


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4. Hans Schmidt returns to Yemen: Following a four-year hiatus, Mr. Hans Schmidt returned to Yemen in order to renew his ties with old friends on Jebel Milhan and to reinvigorate the trail camera survey that he initiated there in 2006. Hans added a Cuddeback Capture IR to the Trailmaster and Bolygard cameras that he currently sponsors on Milhan. He first came to Yemen in 1989 and soon discovered the charms of Jebel Milhan which he has visited repeatedly since. During an early visit some of Hans’s Milhani friends warned him to be careful of the “Nimr” when he went camping in Wadi Yuur. From this initial hint that there may be leopards at Jebel Milhan, Hans developed an interest in trying to capture images of them with trail cameras. Initial efforts ran into a political snag, but with help from the Foundation, permission was granted to continue the survey which is being conducted by Nasser Aswot, a veteran of the recent training mission to the Jebel Samhan Nature Reserve in Dhofar, Oman.



Hans and friends near Aswot



Milhan rises to 2,800 masl



“Beware of the Nimr!” – Wadi Yuur

5. Jebel Milhan declared as a protected area: Upon their return from the Nagoya Biodiversity Conference in Japan, Yemen Prime Minister HE Ali Mohamed Majuur and Foundation board member HE Minister Abdulrahman Al-Eryani led the Yemen Council of Ministers in declaring the Jebel Milhan Protected Area on November 24th. While much remains to be done to ensure that this newest protected area in Yemen is properly developed, the declaration sent a strong message to the residents of Jebel Milhan that a key to their future prosperity lies in preserving the biodiversity of this beautiful corner of Mahwit governorate.

6. The Foundation visits Milhan: In a wonderfully timed mission to Jebel Milhan, Hans Schmidt and Sharon Beatty visited the district with Foundation Executive Director David Stanton at the beginning of the month. Arriving in Aswot village on the evening of December 2nd, barely a week after the cabinet declaration naming Milhan as a protected area, the small group stressed that this was only a courtesy visit. Nevertheless, local leader Mr. Omar Aswot organized a town meeting in which residents unanimously expressed their support for the Arabian leopard, for the newly declared protected area, and for the trail camera survey currently being conducted in their neighborhood under Hans’s sponsorship. Sharon’s role as interpreter was key in ensuring that residents and visitors alike understood one another completely.



Omar and Nabil with the proclamation announcing the town meeting



Village residents show their support for the Jebel Milhan Protected Area

“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

