



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"

More than 200 members around the world!

Update No. 15: February 28, 2011

1. CAMP 2011, 12th Conservation Workshop for the Fauna of Arabia:



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Workshop organizers and participants with His Highness Sheikh Dr. Sultan bin Mohamed Al-Qassimi

Six delegates from Yemen attended the 12th Conservation Workshop for the Biodiversity of Arabia at the Breeding Centre for Endangered Arabian Wildlife (BCEAW) in Sharjah from February 7 - 9. Under the patronage of His Highness Sheikh Dr. Sultan bin Mohamed Al-Qassimi, Member of the Supreme Council and Ruler of Sharjah, the workshop was sponsored by the Environment and Protected Areas Authority (EPAA) and organized by BCEAW staff. This year the workshop consisted of two components: 1) the first formal Red List Assessment of the carnivores of Arabia in conjunction with the IUCN/Species Survival Commission Red List Office, and 2) writing Management Plans for protected areas. The group that assessed Arabia's wild cats was facilitated by IUCN Cat Specialist Group Co-chairs Drs. Urs and Christine Breitenmoser. After considering all available data the team came to the sad conclusion that "without drastic action across its range, the Arabian leopard would probably not make it." Dr. David Mallon, co-chair of the IUCN Antelope Specialist Group and a regular fixture at the workshops since their beginning facilitated the other carnivore assessment. Red List session attendees from Yemen included Dr. Masaa Al-Jumaily of Lebanese International University in Sana'a, and EPA Cites officer, Engineer Omer Baeshen.

Dr. Mike Knight, Head of the Conservation Services Section of the South African National Parks, and Dr. Phillip Seddon, Director of the Postgraduate Wildlife Management Program at Otago University in Dunedin, New Zealand, co-led the Protected Area Management Plan session which was attended by Dr. Abdul Karim Nasher of Sana'a University, Mr. Abdullah Fatooh of the EPA, Mr. Mohamed, Shamsan Director General for Environmental Policies and Programs at the Yemen Ministry of Water and Environment, and David Stanton from the Foundation. Appropriately, the Yemen team worked on a draft revision of the management plan for the Hawf Protected Area, in preparation for the World Bank/GEF "Leopards and Landscapes" project.



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2. Waleed and Murad return to Hawf, Mike and Carol go back to Britain: Following a much-deserved break, Waleed and Murad have committed to another three months of field research in Hawf. This is excellent news as they are doing cutting-edge research there. Data collected by all of our researchers in the Hawf Protected Area contributed the most up-to-the-minute information used in the first formal Red List Assessment of the carnivores of Arabia (see item 1 above). Among the species photographed in Hawf so far: Arabian leopard, Caracal, (possible) Gordon's Wildcat, Arabian Wolf, Arabian Red Fox, Striped Hyena, Honey Badger, White-tailed Mongoose, Small-spotted Genet, Rock Hyrax, Indian Crested Porcupine, and two species of as yet unidentified rodent. Among the numerous birds that our researchers have photographed have been Houbara Bustard and three species of Owl: Desert Eagle Owl, Hume's Tawny Owl, and Little Owl.

3. Ibb Leopard Survey Set to Commence: With more than 1.5 million people packed into only 5,344 km², Ibb is an unlikely candidate for harboring a leopard population. However, with funding from the governor's office, Dr. Mohamed Al-Doais will do a rapid assessment of all 20 districts in Ibb to be followed up with trail camera work in the most promising areas. This is the first Foundation project to receive funding from the government which augurs well for future cooperation with and support from authorities in other governorates. As stated in Update No. 14, a second objective for this survey is to scout locations for an Ibb "leopard safari park." Whether or not leopards are found in Ibb, this project will yield useful information about the biodiversity in the greenest of Yemen's governorates.

4. Foundation visits Sana'a Zoo – again!:

On Friday, February 18th Yemeni architect Mr. Saba Al-Suleihi visited Sana'a Zoo with David Stanton in order to examine the possibility of re-housing the zoo's leopards in an enclosure befitting Yemen's National Animal. Mr. Al-Suleihi, a graduate of MIT and one of Yemen's most highly respected architects, stated his interest in the project and affirmed his capacity to undertake it. We now seek sponsors to underwrite costs so that we can finally move these unfortunate creatures into an enclosure that contributes to the animals' welfare while communicating to the public their enormous genetic and conservation value and their relevance to Yemen's natural heritage.



5. "The Leopard in Winter" to be shown at the Royal Geographic Society on July 6th: "The Leopard in Winter," which was shot in Yemen, Oman, and Sharjah last November by independent filmmakers Think Tank Films, will be among several films screened on July 6th during a Yemen mini-film festival at the Royal Geographic Society in London. This is the second festival to have been organized by our good friend Ms. Leila Ingrams and will feature talks by director/cameraman Tom Evans and producer Kevin Rushby. Airing of "The Leopard in Winter" on Al Jazeera English is tentatively scheduled for April 19th.

6. The Foundation Gets Help from Down-Under:



Rasha Skybey, an Australian-born lawyer of Syrian descent, has joined the ranks of Foundation volunteers. Rasha, whose passion is Middle-Eastern conservation, previously volunteered with the Arabian Leopard Survey in Oman, and has done voluntary research on predators in Namibia. Time limitations prevent her from volunteering for the Hawf Leopard Survey, but Rasha is busily investigating and applying for conservation grants on behalf of the Foundation. We are grateful for this vital assistance from half-way across the world. While project funding enables us to conduct priceless field research in various places around Yemen, our biggest challenge remains finding sources of program funding.

"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

