



Foundation for the Protection of the Arabian Leopard in Yemen

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"Working to ensure an expanding population of wild Arabian leopards in Yemen"

"Friends of the Arabian Leopard"

84 members and growing quickly!

Update No. 1: December 18, 2009

Dear Friends of the Arabian Leopard,

If you have received this update it is either because you are one of the 84 current newsgroup members, or because one of them has forwarded it to you. If you are in the latter category and wish to receive subsequent updates, please write me at ylrp@yemenileopard.org and I will add your address to the list. Thank you.

As Executive Director of the *Moassassat Hemayat al Nimr al Araby fi al Yemen* (Foundation for the Protection of the Arabian Leopard in Yemen) it is my pleasure to send you this first of many regular updates.

1) New foundation, new name, and new logo: Formerly *Burnamj inqadh al Nimr fi al Yemen* (Yemeni Leopard Recovery Program) the "foundation" was officially registered with the Ministry for Social Affairs and Labor on November 18th, 2009. In our second full board meeting on December 7th board members HE Abdulrahman Al-Eryani, Dr. Abdul Karim Nasher, Dr. Masaa Al-Jumaily, Mr. Adnan Jumman, and Dr. Amal Al-Kebzi (in absentia) unanimously voted to adopt the new foundation name which we all feel better reflects the foundation's mission. Our new logo was designed by Mr. Jumman based on a photograph by Dr. Jane Edmonds-Budd from the Breeding Centre for Endangered Arabian Wildlife in Sharjah. We are all pleased with our new logo which was changed in part because the old one was interpreted by some as depicting a divided Yemen which was never our intentions and is not how we wish to represent the foundation.

2) New Office: In concert with the formation of the foundation, I have been named as "Advisor to the Ministry for Water and the Environment on the Conservation of Arabian Leopards" by His Excellency Abdulrahman Al-Eryani and provided with an office at the ministry building next to the *Majlis as Shoura* on Amran Road. I can be found in my office between the hours of 8 and 11 AM Saturday through Wednesday. Anyone is welcome to drop in for a visit, or can call 733916928 to schedule an appointment. At other times I can be found working in my home office in *Madina Sekkaniyyah Haddah*.

3) Zoo visit: On December 11th board members Abdul Karim Nasher, Dr. Masaa Al-Jumaily, Fadhl Abdulrahman Al-Eryani (representing his father), and I paid an official visit to the Sana'a Zoo where we met with Zoo engineer Mr. Azhar. We found the four leopards at the zoo to be overweight and having bad teeth, and we discussed partnering with the zoo to improve the housing and husbandry of the leopards. We further discussed opening the Dutch-funded 'Awareness Center' to the public on a regular, predictable schedule. We have decided that until we have raised sufficient funds and identified a suitable architectural/construction firm, improving the conditions, care, and educational potential of the zoo will remain long-term goals. However, as a result of our visit we have arranged for qualified exotic animal vets from the UAE to pay an official visit to Sana'a Zoo to examine and possibly vaccinate their leopards by the end of this month. The vets will be visiting Yemen anyway so this mission will not deplete the foundation's limited funds at all. It is this sort of cost-effective catalysis that forms the basis of much of the foundation's work.

4) Training and Rapid Assessment: We are currently finalizing arrangements for five Yemeni biologists and myself to undertake an official mission to the Jebel Samhan Nature Reserve in Dhofar, Oman where we are to receive training in leopard field survey techniques. Originally scheduled for January 2010, this capacity building exercise has been rescheduled for March because of the bureaucratic hurdles that we have to clear. We are grateful to have received a \$3,000 grant from the Abu Dhabi Chapter of the Emirates Natural History Group to help pay for this mission (See logo at end of page). Jebel Samhan has the largest documented population of wild Arabian leopards in the world (reliably estimated at around 50) which has been under continual study since 1997 and the staff there are world leaders in Arabian leopard field work and conservation. It is a privilege to have this opportunity which we will piggyback with rapid assessments of various locations en route to and from Dhofar. Depending on how this training goes, it is likely that we will schedule a second cohort of trainees in the future. We will organize leopard surveys in various locations based on what we learn during our rapid assessments.

5) Leopard Surveys: The foundation's work plan includes many activities within three spheres (awareness-raising, improvements at Sana'a and Taiz Zoos, and lobbying for greater protection of wild Arabian leopards throughout Yemen). In order to accomplish the latter we have an ambitious program of leopard surveys planned for the next five years. Given the current security situation and lack of capacity in Yemen, this is not going to be an easy undertaking so we are prioritizing locations based on a variety of criteria. We currently have seven infrared trail cameras ready for deployment and an eighth that was stolen in June 2008 which we believe it is still possible to get back. We are also working in very close conjunction with a private individual from Germany who is organizing and funding a camera trapping survey to the northwest of Sana'a. The foundation's role in this endeavor is to provide support for the local technician who is doing the actual fieldwork. In conjunction with this support, we will be paying an official visit to the area at the end of this month. We also have three grant applications for support of our survey activities pending, with more in the works.

6) Vanishing Spots: The Arabian Leopard: This short story by Carolyn Han is currently being illustrated by board member and foundation Artistic Director Mr. Adnan Jumman. Those of you familiar with Carolyn and Adnan's work will know that this is going to be a spectacular book which we will distribute free of charge to Yemeni school-children in a quality bi-lingual edition. Current funding allows for the printing of only a limited number of copies which we will distribute in areas where we feel they will be most effective in raising awareness and concern for Yemen's National Animal. We are aiming for a book launch in late April.

7) Partners: Since the foundation became official we have raised 12 – 15% of our estimated annual operating budget through corporate sponsorship, private donations, and organized events such as the "3rd Annual SIS Walk to Save the Arabian Leopard." A christening gift of \$185 and Christmas gifts totaling another \$55 have been received by the foundation on behalf of children in Canada and Dubai; two examples of the creative means by which some supporters contribute. In addition to cash support we also receive in-kind contributions, the most recent of which was an offer by the British Yemeni Arabic Institute for space on the institute's website (www.study-arabic.com) by institute director Emily Allardyce (See graphic at end of page). We are happy to accept this invitation and look forward to developing a broader network of partners in the near future.

8) Ways in which you can help the foundation: I am frequently asked, "What can I do to help?" As the foundation matures, we will be better able to mobilize the virtual army of volunteers who are eager to help this cause. In the mean time, please consider some of the following options:

a) Forward this update to anyone who you think would be interested in receiving it.

b) Send us reports: If you have heard that there are leopards in such and such a village, mountain, wadi or whatever let the foundation know by writing me at this address. Unfortunately, most reports prove to be false, but we must

generate a complete database of leopard reports prioritized according to our reliability protocol. Some information will prove to be true which will enable us to pursue the foundation's goal.

c) Buy foundation products: We have ten designs of quality greeting cards for sale at only YR 100 each. New products will enter the fund-raising steam as we develop them.

d) Give us your recyclables: the Yemeni Leopard Recovery Program raised more than \$100 per year simply by recycling spent toner cartridges from Sana'a International School. Aluminium, plastic water bottles, and car batteries all have cash value which adds up when recycled on a large enough scale. It would be preferable if you were to organize the recycling in your home, school, or office and donate the proceeds to the foundation, but we would be willing to do the 'dirty work' if necessary.

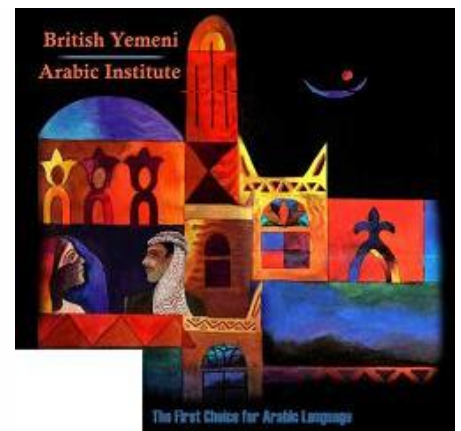
e) Donate equipment: The foundation can use GPS's, Walkie Talkies, and other electronic equipment for our field work and office equipment for networking and awareness raising. In that embassies and corporations occasionally upgrade their equipment, we would be pleased to put the obsolete equipment to good use.

f) Have archaeologists contact the foundation: We are assembling a database of "*margabah*" (stone leopard traps) from around the Arabian Peninsula. If you know an archaeologist who works in Arabia, please have them contact the foundation as these structures frequently appear on archaeological surveys. I am attaching a jpg of one from Amran.

g) Tell your friends in the corporate world about the foundation: It is in every business's best interest to portray a "green" image. Some corporations do this by "spinning" the reality of their operations and the causes they support. However, I can tell you with complete confidence that there is no better conservation/environmental initiative to support in Yemen than our foundation. We are active, focused, operate efficiently and with complete transparency and we are the only initiative in the world that is totally focused on the preservation of Yemen's National Animal. Not only does this have potential benefits for the nation, but when you consider that the Arabian leopard is a "flagship" species at the top of food chain you will understand that protecting leopards is actually a means of protecting entire ecosystems right down to the soil and microbes that inhabit it. As far as conservation initiatives go, there is no better value for money.



Yehia demonstrating a *margabah* in Amran



Thank you for your interest and may you have a happy, peaceful, and prosperous New Year,

David

"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