



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"

Hundreds of members around the world!

Update No. 20: July 31, 2011

1. Ongoing Unrest in Yemen Poses Conservation Challenges: Although the Foundation's work in Al Mahrah and Ibb continues unabated, the ongoing unrest in the Republic of Yemen does pose conservation challenges. For example, sabotage has severely restricted electricity supplies, a situation which is made worse by a shortage of fuel. Erratic electricity makes charging laptops and trail camera batteries a challenge and interrupts the reliability of the internet. The fuel shortage also contributes to high inflation, poor availability of market goods (e.g. food!), and raises the cost of public transportation. Another problem arises from the fact that the Central Bank of Yemen has frozen dollar accounts which makes moving grant money into Yemen impractical and withdrawing it from the Foundation's account impossible. As usual, we pursue innovative solutions to these problems, but we hope for the sake of Yemen and our ability to continue the work that we do on behalf of the Arabian Leopard, that the rulers and protestors can soon find a solution to the impasse that threatens to further paralyze the country.

2. Training in Dhofar Approved for Hawf Researchers:

In an email dated July 16, Engineer Salah Al-Mahthori, Senior Biologist with the Arabian Oryz project and the point person in Oman for all issues related to cooperation between the Foundation and Oman, wrote to say that the Diwan of the Royal Court has approved training for Waleed and Murad in Dhofar, Oman. According to Engineer Al-Mahthori, leopard expert Khaled Al-Hikmani has, "already tailored an intensive fieldwork training program for the Yemeni team." The training, which is scheduled for September 6 – 12 is being funded by the Abu Dhabi Chapter of the Emirates Natural History Group as part of its continuing support of the Foundation. Although Waleed and Murad have succeeded in capturing thousands of wildlife photographs including the only pictures of wild Arabian Leopards ever taken in Yemen, they have not yet had the benefit of training in optimum leopard habitat that this course will provide them with. As we intend to employ Waleed and Murad in a number of planned leopard surveys at scattered locations throughout Yemen, we expect that the knowledge and skills they gain from the training will help them improve their camera placement for higher success rates during future surveys.



3. Foundation Scientist approved for Fulbright Fellowship: Dr. Mohammed Al-Doais, Assistant Professor of Biology at Ibb University and the primary investigator of the Ibb Leopard Survey has been invited to conduct post-doctoral research as a Fulbright Fellow at the University of Rhode Island. Dr. Al-Doais is a key member of the Foundation team whose contributions are enormous. Subsequent to the training that he received in Dhofar in November 2010, Mohammed recruited former students Waleed Al-Ra'il and Murad Mohammed who continue to manage the Hawf Leopard Survey. He also recruited and trained former student Mr. Zaher Al-Maskary who assists him with the Ibb Leopard Survey (see story No. 5) for which Dr. Al-Doais wrote the proposal. The subject of Dr. Al-Doais's research will be the pharmacological properties of "Halqah" (*Cyphostemma digitatum*), a plant in the grape family which is widely used in the Western Highlands of Yemen as a food and natural remedy for a variety of ailments. In addition to making important new discoveries, we can be sure that Mohammed will use the networking opportunities in Rhode Island to strengthen his skills for future leopard work.



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4. **“Zoom” a Success:** Thanks to the initiative of FPALY friend Ms. Leila Ingrams, the Royal Geographical Society staged the first UK theatrical screening of “Saving the Leopard” at the RGS Pavilion in London on July 6th. Film producers Richard Johns and Kevin Rushby were on hand to answer questions about the film which was presented in conjunction with “Zoom” a competition for short Yemeni films sponsored by the British Council. Former British Council Yemen director Mr. Michael White introduced four shortlisted films from the competition which were viewed by Foundation volunteers Mike Jennings and Carol Qirreh among many others.

Zoom - an evening of film from Yemen

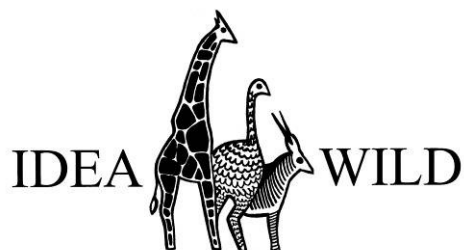
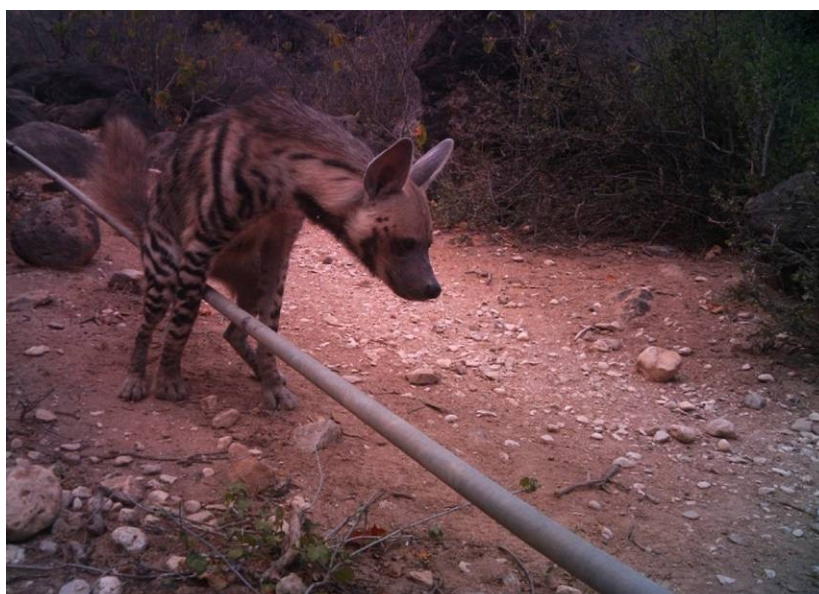
Royal
Geographical
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5. **Ibb Project Continues to Yield Promising Results:** In addition to encouraging local reports of leopard presence in the governorate, results from the Ibb Leopard Survey have led to the cancellation of a road project through Al Mahjar forest, one of the last remaining tracts of pristine wilderness in Ibb Governorate. His Excellency, Governor Ahmed Abdullah Al-Hajri agreed to halt the project after learning from Dr. Mohammed Al-Doais, primary investigator of the governorate-sponsored Ibb Leopard Survey, that the forest is irreplaceable and of national importance for its value as a key piece of Yemen’s shrinking natural heritage. Habitat fragmentation is one of many factors that contribute to the ongoing decline of Arabian Leopards throughout their diminishing range, and the cancelation of this project is a significant accomplishment in the battle to preserve Yemen’s National Animal.

6. **Foundation Enters Trail Camera Photo Contest:** The Foundation does everything it can to ensure its long-term sustainability without badgering people for donations. Most of the expensive trail cameras that we use in our studies have been purchased with grant money. Others have been donated by conservation donors such as IDEA WILD, the Colorado-based NGO that provides research equipment to conservation organizations such as the Foundation. We now have an opportunity to win a trail camera by entering the annual Trail Camera photo contest sponsored by US retailer Trailcampro. If we win the overall competition we will receive a Reconyx “ultimate package” worth over \$600. Winning the International division of the competition will net a Bushnell Black Trophy Cam “ultimate package” worth over \$300. Friends of the Arabian Leopard are encouraged to vote for the picture of their choice at: <http://www.trailcampro.com/2011internationalpictures.aspx> Members of the public are welcome to cast one vote per email address prior to the competition’s closing date on August 7th. There are admittedly lots of nice shots on Trailcampro’s website but we do, of course, hope that you will vote for Malini Pittet’s stunning picture of a Striped Hyena scent-marking a water pipe in the Hawf Protected Area last October. Whether we win or not, we hope that you enjoy the competition. Please encourage your friends, family, and colleagues to join in the fun.

Photo at right of an Arabian Striped Hyena (*Hyaena hyaena sultana*) scent marking a water pipe in the Hawf Protected Area taken with a Bushnell Trophy Cam donated to the Foundation by IDEA WILD. Photo ©Malini Pittet



“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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