

Foundation For the Protection of the Arabian Leopard in Yemen

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

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I am proud that NTMC is the leading sponsor of the *Foundation for the Protection of the Arabian Leopard in Yemen*, this country's most active and effective conservation organization.

- Sheikh Tawfik Saleh Abudullah Saleh, Executive Chairman



1. And Then There Were None; Sana'a Zoo's Arabian Leopards Dying Off:

With a population believed to number fewer than 250 adult animals, the Arabian leopard is classified by the IUCN as "Critically Endangered with extinction in the wild." Although nobody knows exactly how many Arabian leopards there really are, evidence suggests that Yemen's National Animal is considerably rarer than this, with possibly fewer than 100 wild leopards living in highly fragmented populations, chiefly in Yemen and Oman. While the *Foundation* focuses on in situ conservation, regionally, the lion's share of preservation efforts are directed towards captive breeding. Of the 80 known Arabian leopards in captivity, the greatest number are kept at the *Breeding Centre for Endangered Arabian Wildlife* in Sharjah, which maintains the *Arabian Leopard Studbook*. The rest are at scattered facilities in Saudi Arabia, Oman, the UAE, and Yemen. Given the extreme rarity of these animals every captive individual is precious, yet a variety of factors prevent many from being integrated into the regional breeding program. This is especially true of the leopards at Sana'a Zoo which have never successfully bred since first displayed there well more than ten years ago. Formerly, two males and two females were kept at the zoo, but sadly both females have recently died of "old age." Of the two males that remain, one is in very poor condition, with broken and missing teeth and a dull coat. The younger male appears to be in reasonable shape but as long as he lives at the zoo it is virtually impossible that he will ever contribute to the gene pool of the captive population or his type's potential survival.



"Shamsan," a virtually toothless old male Arabian leopard at Sana'a Zoo is unlikely to survive to the end of this year.

2. Minister of Water & Environment HE Abdusalaam Razzaz Khaled Pledges Cooperation with the *Foundation*:



Left to Right: HE Minister of Water & Environment Abdusalam Razzaz Khaled and David Stanton

On Saturday March 17th, Yemen Minister of Water & Environment HE Abdusalam Razzaz Khaled met with *Foundation* Executive Director David Stanton to discuss matters of mutual interest including a number of potential collaborative projects. His Excellency stressed his interest in the *Foundation's* activities and accomplishments and his commitment to fulfilling his Ministry's environmental mandate. He further stated his belief that cooperation between the Ministry and the *Foundation* will be crucial in achieving his goals. Among the Minister's many initiatives is the formation of an environmental working group to include high level representation from his Ministry, the *Environmental Protection Authority*, and the *Foundation*.

3. Qatar Natural History Group Reaches Out to the *Foundation*: The *Foundation* owes much of its success to an ever-expanding network of friends, mentors, muses, partners, collaborators, and service providers. Our network recently grew when *Qatar Natural History Group* (QNHG) Chairwoman Dr. April Conkey invited the *Foundation's* Executive Director to make a presentation to the group in Doha. The illustrated talk, "*Protecting Yemen's Leopards: Origins, Challenges, and Successes*,"* was well received by an audience of more than 100 which afterwards kept the presenter busy with a number of interesting questions. The QNHG committee demonstrated its commitment to helping the *Foundation* in its work by donating QR 2,000 and challenging members to equal this amount with private donations. Including the sale of original watercolors by bird artist Mike Langman and bird books, the night's take totaled a remarkable QR 10,100. During his



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extended stay in Doha, Mr. Stanton was treated to the exemplary hospitality of local luminaries Frances and David Gillespie and given an insider's view of Qatar including a visit to the magnificent Islamic Arts Museum. Among the many other activities organized by Mrs. Gillespie was a private tour by Center Director Dr. Tim Bouts of Sheikh Saoud Bin Mohamed Bin Ali Al Thani's *Al Wabra Wildlife Preservation* (<http://awwp.alwabra.com/>) near Al Shahaniya.

*http://www.gulf-times.com/site/topics/article.asp?cu_no=2&item_no=491907&version=1&template_id=36&parent_id=16

4. Nature Iraq Strengthens its Ties with the Foundation: *Nature Iraq (NI)*, the *BirdLife International* affiliate based in Sulaymaniyah, Kurdistan Region, "...was created to protect, restore, and preserve Iraq's natural environment and the rich cultural heritage that it nourishes." The *Foundation* congratulates *Friend of the Arabian Leopard* Mr. Omar Fadhil for his recent appointment as leader of *Nature Iraq's* section concerning the conservation of Mammals, Reptiles, Amphibians, and Fish. One of the *Foundation's* very first friends, Mr. Fadhil now heads *Nature Iraq's* vibrant mammal program which scored a spectacular success on October 6, 2011 when mammal researchers Hana Raza, Laith Ali, and Mariwan Qadir from *Nature Iraq* obtained the first trail camera photo of a wild Persian leopard ever taken in Iraq <http://maildogmanager.com/page.html?p=000001XDDtjL2KurMdfWs/z6ktHaRjkw==>



Recently, *Nature Iraq* strengthened its ties with the *Foundation* while honoring its Executive Director by inviting him to serve on the *Nature Iraq Wild Mammal Advisory Team (NI MAT)* with Dr. Mohammed Shobrak, Head of the Department of Biology at the University of Taif, Saudi Arabia, and Dr. David Mallon, Co-chair of the IUCN/SSC *Antelope Specialist Group*. *NI MAT* is being inaugurated, "In order to better study and research wild mammals in Iraq and update *Nature Iraq's* wild mammals' database to provide useful resources to national and international students and researchers." The *Foundation's* representation on this prestigious team embodies our commitment to and involvement in meaningful partnerships with national, regional, and global conservation organizations.

5. The Foundation Joins the Harrison Institute for Biodiversity Research Afro-Asian Taxonomic Network:



Founded last century by Dr. James Harrison in Sevenoaks, Kent, the *Harrison Institute, Centre for Taxonomic Research* has been 'promoting biodiversity conservation through taxonomic research, scientific training, and international networks' for more than 80 years. In fact, the seminal "Mammals of Arabia" was written by Dr. David L. Harrison,

Dr. Harrison senior's younger son and a retired director of the Institute. By invitation of current director Dr. Paul Bates, the *Foundation's* Executive Director has joined the Afro-Asian Taxonomic Network.* "Launched in January, 2011, the Network is intended to be a forum to facilitate and promote world-class research and training in taxonomy and the biodiversity sciences." It is expected that this affiliation will further strengthen the *Foundation's* status as a leader in cutting edge mammal research in Yemen. *http://www.harrison-institute.org/afro_asian/network_members.html

6. Sebastian Blogs about Hawf: At a time when many people were keeping their distance from Yemen, Santa Cruz-based conservation photographer Sebastian Kennerknecht elected to spend three months in Hawf in an attempt to photograph a wild Arabian leopard with his sophisticated, self-designed camera traps. Though Sebastian did not capture the image(s) that he had hoped for, he nevertheless produced a remarkable portfolio that records the essence of the people, landscapes, and animals that inhabit Hawf. He also gained an acute and sympathetic understanding of this remote and unique corner of Yemen. Read Sebastian's fresh insights and see some of his fabulous new images at: <http://blog.pumapix.com/tag/yemen/>



Sebastian checks his gear prior to going to Hawf.

7. Yemen Lawlessness Takes a Toll on the Foundation: Anyone who uses trail cameras expects to lose a few to theft, and the *Foundation* is no exception. This is to be expected when one leaves expensive equipment unguarded in remote places. However, it was a huge, unexpected loss when the *Foundation* vehicle (on permanent loan from the *National Tobacco and Matches Company*) was stolen on February 1st. More recently, a thief broke into the *Foundation* guest house and stole Waleed Al-Ra'il's laptop, external hard drive, and YR 30,000. Such thefts may be symptomatic of Yemen's slow return to normality after a difficult year, though we all hope that Yemen will soon regain its innocence.

"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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