

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”

Update No. 29: April 30, 2012

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. Malini goes to Oxford: On March 29 – 30 the *Foundation* was ably represented at the 2nd *Interdisciplinary Desert Conference* at Oxford University by Malini Pittet. Among *Friends of the Arabian Leopard*, Malini is best known for her pivotal role in starting the *Hawf Leopard Survey*. After designing the project and serving as a volunteer researcher from September 26 to November 28, 2010, Malini set the stage for the future of the project by training Waleed Al-Ra’il and Murad Mohammed in correct trail camera research methodology. Malini’s considerable legacy lives on as Murad and Waleed have subsequently trained other researchers currently working in Ibb, Jebel Milhan, Wada’a, and Hawf (see next article). In spite of her grueling schedule writing up her master’s dissertation* for the *Durrell Institute of Conservation and Ecology* at the *University of Kent*, Malini found the time to design a poster entitled, “**Assessing the Conservation Reality of the Arabian Leopard (*Panthera pardus nimr*) in Eastern Yemen,**”



Malini with Dr Troy Sternberg, an American post doctoral fellow at the School of Geography at Oxford University and one of the conference organizers

which she presented to an enthusiastic audience at the Oxford conference. The *Foundation* has always been grateful to Malini for the “leg up” that she gave us in getting our research program started, and we are very pleased that she continues to favor the *Foundation* with positive exposure such as that which her poster gave us in Oxford.

Assessing the conservation reality of the Arabian Leopard *Panthera pardus nimr* in Eastern Yemen
Malini L. Pittet¹, David B. Stanton².
¹Durrell Institute of Conservation and Ecology University of Kent CT2 7UT ²Foundation for the Protection of the Arabian Leopard in Yemen, P.O. Box 7069 Sana'a, Republic of Yemen

INTRODUCTION
The natural history of the Arabian leopard is little known due to its rarity, secretive nature and the various threats it faces in its species range. Of the four subspecies which formerly inhabited the Arabian Peninsula, *Panthera pardus nimr* is the sole survivor and occurs in restricted pockets across the peninsula. Local cultures and social values combined with a lack of education and understanding of the intrinsic value of biodiversity, threaten the survival of this species in Yemen. A ten month field survey was conducted in Hawf, Southern Yemen as an initial step to assess the status of the Arabian leopard.
A main component of this project is dedicated to training local scientists with the eventual goal of carrying out a long term monitoring project of the Arabian Leopards in all suitable habitats in Yemen.

STUDY AREA
The study was carried out in the region of Al Mukhra in South Eastern Yemen. The Hawf Protected Area covers approximately 300 km².

MATERIAL AND METHODS
The data were collected in the Hawf Protected Area between the months of October and November 2010. A set of 32 trail cameras were deployed and monitored during 56 trap nights.

RESULTS
The camera-trap survey yielded 351 useful pictures obtained in 58 trap-nights. Of these, 321 were pictures of mammals and 30 of birds. The traps recorded 30 mammal species and 8 bird species. Two young Yemeni graduates from the University of Ibb were trained in using the camera traps and collecting data and continued the project until the end of 2011.

CONCLUSIONS
The camera-trap assessment of the Hawf Protected Area was successful in documenting the existence of the Arabian Leopard as well as other predator and prey species and their distribution. The species accumulation curve does not appear to be saturating indicating that most species present in the area were not captured. One of the peculiar aspects of the area is the lack of natural springs and water holes. Wild and domestic animals share man-made water points which can lead to a bilateral transmission of diseases and human-wildlife conflicts.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
This survey was done at the initiative of the Foundation for the Protection of the Arabian Leopard in Yemen. We are grateful to the following persons for their extensive support in making this survey possible:
Abdul Bassem F. al-Frehi (Ministry of Water and Environment), local authorities- Sheik Said.

UPDATED INFORMATION
The study is now in its 16th month and has yielded more than 5,000 usable pictures including 17 mammalian species.

CEET
مركز حماية النمر العربي في اليمن
The Arabian Leopard Conservation and Education Trust

The poster that Malini designed for and presented at the 2nd Interdisciplinary Desert Conference at Oxford

*Malini’s master’s thesis is based on nine months of wildlife research in the Peruvian Amazon



TOTAL E&P YEMEN Supports the Protection of the Arabian Leopard in Yemen

FPALY, P.O. Box 7069, Sana’a, Republic of Yemen - Tel: 00967 733916928 - contact@yemenileopard.org

2. The Foundation Trains and Employs Two New Researchers for the *Hawf Leopard Survey* in Al Mahrah:



Bassam Asha checks the batteries of one of the *Foundation's* three remaining Reconyx trail cameras at Verynot in Hawf.

Hisham Abdu Al-Takry copes with the heat in Hawf forest as he checks another Reconyx

Research is central to the *Foundation's* conservation strategy as it is impossible to target conservation action without knowing exactly where it will do the most good. However, it is also central to our policy to provide as much professional development as we can for our employees. The *Foundation's* long-term vision includes creating a cohort of dedicated and skilled Yemeni conservationists who can lead this country in the preservation of its wildlife far into the future. In this respect, Waleed and Murad are now retired from research as they pursue English studies at the *Modern American Language Institute* (MALI) in Sana'a courtesy of MALI founder Mr. Mazen Luqman. Prior to leaving Hawf, however, Murad trained new recruits Bassam Ali Asha and Hisham Abdu Al-Takry to the high standards that he and Waleed have developed after 16 months in the field. We are pleased with the dedication that Bassam and Hisham are already showing in Hawf and expect them to carry the *Hawf Leopard Survey* into its third year. Such long-term monitoring of this biodiversity hotspot is crucial if the Yemen government is to make informed management decisions for the *Hawf Protected Area*. Back in Sana'a, in addition to their language studies Waleed and Murad are assuming a greater range of responsibilities as they climb the *Foundation* ladder.

3. Facebook and the *Foundation*: The *Foundation* is fortunate to have self-confessed Facebook addict Rasha Skybey as the driving force behind our increasingly popular Facebook page. Rasha works extremely hard to keep the page fresh with new content and has a keen eye for design and what makes a page exciting. Newbies and veterans should go to www.facebook.com/yemenileopard or click on the Facebook icon on www.yemenileopard.org and "like" us as a show of your support.



4. *Vanishing Spots* Goes to the Printers: The *Vanishing Spots* story is a long one that goes back four years. This magnificent book was written by American children's author Ms. Carolyn Han and illustrated with 20 original



paintings by *Foundation* board member Mr. Adnan Jumman.

Started in December 2007, the story was completed in March 2008 after which it was illustrated by a novice artist whose illustrations didn't pass inspection. Funding for printing and distribution was initially spearheaded by the editorial staff at *Wildlife Middle East News* who coordinated fundraisers at the Dubai English Speaking School, the Horizon School, and the King's School, all in Dubai. When Mr. Jumman was contracted to re-illustrate the book, Total E&P Yemen donated additional funding towards the printing of *Vanishing Spots* and when the illustrations were complete, Yemen Observer Editor in Chief Mr. Faris Sanabani agreed to publish it. Shortly afterwards, Mr. Sanibani was present during the attempt on then Presi-

dent Ali Abdullah Saleh's life and as a result lost interest in the project. Several months later after finding a new publisher, the final layout was approved and a draft sent to Lebanon for printing. We have contracted for an initial run of 2,000 copies which we will distribute at no cost to policy makers and school children in targeted areas. The *Vanishing Spots* project is crucial to our awareness campaign and we are pleased that it is nearing completion.



TOTAL E&P YEMEN Supports the Protection of the Arabian Leopard in Yemen

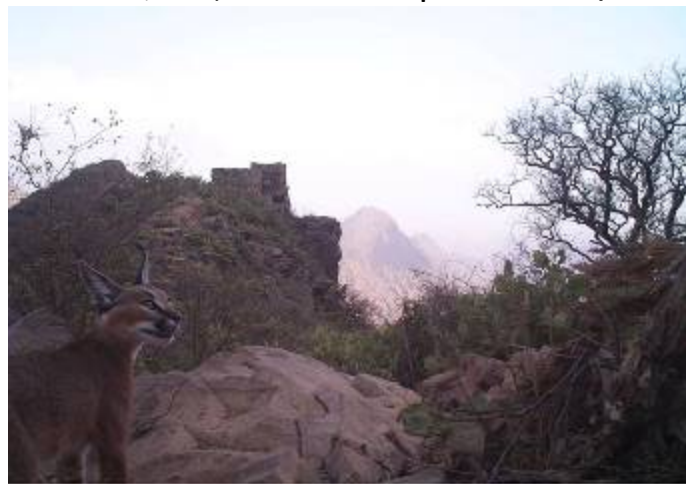
FPALY, P.O. Box 7069, Sana'a, Republic of Yemen - Tel: 00967 733916928 - contact@yemenileopard.org

5. What's in a Name? As a *Foundation* we focus on the conservation of Yemen's national animal simply because it is the most urgent conservation priority in Arabia. We have always understood that working to "ensure a sustainably managed population of wild Arabian leopards living in harmony with local communities in Yemen" necessitates preserving the leopards' herbivore prey, the vegetation on which these animals feed, and the soil and water that plant communities need to thrive. In other words, preserving an umbrella species such as the leopard requires preserving entire ecosystems. Most of the Foundation's friends understand this, but we aim to make this fact more obvious by expanding our conservation mandate to cover all taxa in the Republic of Yemen. For this reason, when we recently renewed the *Foundation's* license with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor, we applied for and were granted permission to use an alternative name: *Foundation for Endangered Wildlife* (FEW). For the time being we will continue to operate as the *Foundation for the Protection of the Arabian Leopard in Yemen* (FPALY) as we are well known by this name, but as time progresses and after we have updated our logo we will gradually transition to our new identity. There will be many benefits to this transition including our ability to serve as a platform for conservation and research projects by Yemeni conservationists from many disciplines including botanists, marine biologists, ornithologists, etc. Preventing the extinction of the Arabian leopard in Yemen may be the most urgent conservation issue here, but it certainly is not the only one and we intend to increasingly fill the gaps with conservation activities in favor of all embattled biodiversity throughout Yemen.

6. More results from Hawf, Jebel Milhan, and Ibb: Wildlife research is central to the *Foundation's* activities and our ongoing projects in Hawf, Ibb, and Milhan continue to yield interesting, and useful results. The gallery below features recent images from all three locations.



Clockwise from Upper Left: *Nycteris thebaica*, the Egyptian Slit-faced Bat, taken with a Trailmaster active infrared system at Kharobit, Hawf; Two Nubian Ibex at Hajallat, Hawf (one of the only pictures that we've yet obtained of this species); Arabian Caracal at Wadi Al Gharir, Jebel Milhan, Arabian Caracal at Shalil Qabilan, Ibb All photos © FPALY/FEW



"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



TOTAL E&P YEMEN Supports the Protection of the Arabian Leopard in Yemen

FPALY, P.O. Box 7069, Sana'a, Republic of Yemen - Tel: 00967 733916928 - contact@yemenileopard.org