

**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. Wildlife Trafficking is Driving Yemen’s National Animal to Extinction:** On April 29, 2008 the Yemen Council of Ministers (Cabinet) unanimously decreed that the Arabian leopard would henceforth be this country’s National Animal and thereafter enjoy the full projection of Yemeni law. The fact that the government has since done little to



**Left: An unidentified tribesman from Lawdar torments a tightly bound captive leopard before amused onlookers in May 2011; Right: the badly mutilated “Shabwa Leopard” was apparently captured in Lawdar in October, 2011**

protect Yemen’s National Animal has been the driving force behind the formation of FPALY/FEW, which remains steadfast in its commitment to “ensure a sustainably managed wild population of Arabian leopards living in harmony with local communities in Yemen.” Needless to say, achieving this mission is a never ending struggle. Leopards in Yemen are declining for exactly the same reasons that leopards and other predators everywhere are: merciless persecution, unregulated hunting of prey animals, and relentless habitat destruction and fragmentation. However, because of widespread poverty in Yemen, the leopards’ exceptional rarity, and a passion for private menageries among wealthy neighbors, Yemeni leopards face the additional extreme threat of illegal trapping for the wildlife trade. It is difficult to gauge the extent of this problem, but when the population is as dangerously close to extinction as it is, every individual counts. Last October, we reported a video depicting a captive Arabian leopard being tormented by tribesmen in Lawdar, Abyan that had been posted on YouTube in May 2011. A subsequent interview with the Director General of Abyan indicated that the leopard, which had been sold to a middleman in Dhamar for an undisclosed sum, soon died. We were further informed that a female leopard had been captured in Lawdar last October and sold to an individual in Shabwa governorate. Attempts to locate this leopard proved fruitless until FPALY/FEW was contacted by Dr. Luke Dollar of the National Geographic Big Cat Initiative last month. Dr. Dollar sent us an horrific picture that he had received from Mr. Abdulaziz Al-Jiffri of Shabwa. We have since communicated with Al-Jiffri’s sheikh, Bin Naji, who confirmed that the maimed leopard is in his possession. An effort to rescue this unfortunate animal involving people from several countries is underway but as one can imagine, given the current state of affairs in Yemen, the obstacles are enormous. It may be “too late” for the “Shabwa leopard,” but we are not even close to giving up the rescue attempt. The two leopards that were trapped in Lawdar possibly represent 10% or more of all the wild leopards in Yemen and it is obvious that the population of these critically endangered mammals cannot sustain such losses without crashing entirely. Should this happen, Yemen will achieve the dubious distinction of being the only country in the world that has ever allowed its National Animal to become extinct. Whether or not Yemen can bear this shame remains to be seen, though FPALY/FEW will continue to work tirelessly to prevent this from happening. Nevertheless, Yemen’s responsibility for the potential extinction of its National Animal must be shared with the countries where the market for them exists. Bin Naji has made it clear that he intends to sell the leopard for profit and claims that he has sold others. In the likely event that the rescue attempt fails, we are concurrently consulting with experts from several countries to develop a course of action that may turn this animal’s loss into a gain for her species. Though it may be too late to save this unfortunate leopard, we will do what we can to ensure that she is the last of her kind to endure such a miserable fate.



**2. Confiscated Cheetahs Find a New Home:** Update No. 27 featured an article about the wildlife trade including Yemen's role as a regional hub for the illegal traffic in Cheetah cubs from East Africa to the Gulf. See the following: [http://www.yemenileopard.org/files/cms/news\\_articles/No. 27 February 29 2012 English.pdf](http://www.yemenileopard.org/files/cms/news_articles/No. 27 February 29 2012 English.pdf)

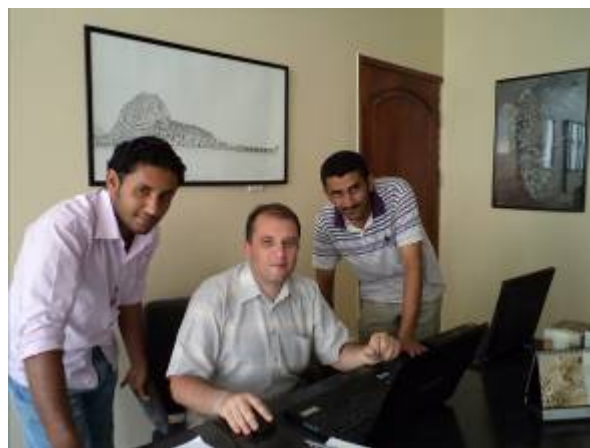


**Left to Right: Three of the four Cheetahs in Boroma shortly after they were confiscated; the shipping container containing the cubs is moved to a temporary enclosure at Born Free; all four cubs looking relaxed in their new home.**

Janice Bowdary and Guenther Wirth, who inspired the article, have finally managed to safely transfer the four confiscated Cheetah cubs for which they have been caring for months to the *Born Free Wildlife Rescue, Conservation, and Education Centre* in Ensessakotteh, Ethiopia. The Cheetahs' story is a study in determination, persistence, courage and the cooperation of many people in Somaliland and elsewhere. It involves standing down corrupt thugs armed with automatic weapons and a suspenseful, potentially dangerous road trip from Boroma to Ensessakotteh. The sacrifices that Janice, Guenther, and their many co-conspirators made and the risks that they all took to save these four Cheetahs are truly remarkable and commendable. However, while they may have won this battle, Janice and Guenther readily admit that we are losing the war. Wildlife trafficking from East Africa to Yemen has been called "the new blood diamonds of the Horn of Africa," and stopping this heinous trade completely has to start in the countries whose citizens pay high prices for intentionally orphaned Cheetah cubs and other smuggled wildlife. If these countries rigorously enforced their wildlife laws, the Yemeni middlemen who feed the market would be compelled to find other work and the wildlife thieves in East Africa who supply the trade would be forced to look for real jobs. Perhaps then we might finally reverse the dangerous decline of Cheetahs and other illegally traded species and people like Janice, Guenther, and their accomplices could go back to living "normal" lives.

**3. Dr. Igor Khorozyan Spearheads Training at FPALY/FEW:**

From May 18 – 28 FPALY/FEW was fortunate to have engaged the expertise of Armenian leopard expert Dr. Igor Khorozyan. Having authored numerous papers on leopard research in Armenia, the Caucasus, and Iran, Igor helped FPALY/FEW researchers Murad Mohammed and Walid Al-Ra'il process more than 18 months of data from the *Hawf Leopard Survey* and prepare it for statistical analysis. It may take a few months for the final paper(s) to be prepared, but both Waleed and Murad continue to be enthusiastic about the lessons that Dr. Khorozyan taught them during his ten-day visit. This exchange culminates years of cooperation between Igor and FPALY/FEW and our team looks forward to collaborating in the future with one of the World's most highly respected leopard scientists.



**Murad and Waleed look on as Dr. Igor Khorozyan trains them in the advanced use of Excel® spreadsheets.**

**4. Arwa Mineral Water Company to Print and Distribute 10,000,000 New Leopard Labels Nationally:**

معدن طبيعي تلقى الشرف على تعبئته بموجب أرقى الطرق العالمية - امن - جني - تي - هزلنا	
9.5	Mg مغنسيوم
35	SO4 كبريتات
1.5	NO3 نيتروجين
22	Cl كلورين
0.1	F فوسفور
94	Ca كالسيوم
18	Mn منغنيز
1.5	K بوتاسيوم
16.5	Ca كالسيوم
143	TDH الكالسيوم

The Arwa Mineral Water Co. will soon produce 10,000,000 of the third in their series of nationally distributed water bottles with special leopard labels that beseech Yemenis to preserve their National Animal. Photo © Damien Egan



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

FPALY/FEW, P.O. Box 7069, Sana'a, Republic of Yemen - Tel: 00967 733916928 - [contact@yemenileopard.org](mailto:contact@yemenileopard.org)

## 5. Foundation Team Travels to Muscat and Salalah for Knowledge Exchange:

From May 4 to 10, five representatives of FPALY/FEW traveled to Oman to participate in a three-way knowledge exchange with the Office for Conservation of the Environment at the Diwan of the Royal Court (OCE) and a team from South African National Parks (SANParks). Waleed Al-Ra'il, Murad Mohammed, Zaher Al-Masqary, Yousuf Mohageb, and David Stanton joined Omani colleagues Khalifa Al-Jahwari, Hadi Al-Hikmani, and Khaled Al-Hikmani in welcoming three representatives of SANParks to Arabia for a knowledge exchange funded by the South-South Experience Exchange Trust Fund. This was the second phase of a two-part project with Phase One having been completed in South Africa last year (See Update No. 24: [http://www.yemenileopard.org/files/cms/news\\_articles/No. 24 November 30 2011 English final.pdf](http://www.yemenileopard.org/files/cms/news_articles/No.24_November_30_2011_English_final.pdf))

Bringing decades of conservation experience to the table, the SANParks team included Park Manager Nick de Goede from the Ai/Ais-Richtersveld Transfrontier Park (RSA portion), Bernard van Lente, Park Manager of Namaqua National Park, and Giel de Kock, head of park expansion at Namaqua National Park. The purpose of the exchange was to share knowledge about community based protected area management and wildlife law enforcement and as the program unfolded it became clear that the issues facing the South African park managers (e.g. human/wildlife conflict, poaching, trapping for the wildlife trade, etc.) are exactly the same as those confronting conservationists in Arabia and that many of the solutions pioneered in South Africa could prove to be effective in Oman and Yemen.



Left to Right: Hadi Al-Hikmani, Khalifa Al-Jahwari, and Khaled Al-Hikmani from OCE



Community meeting with residents of Hadbin, Dhofar in a culvert under coastal Route 49



The group at Nafit Waterfall near Hasik, Dhofar - Left to Right: Khaled Al-Hikmani, Zaher Al-Masqary, Waleed Al-Ra'il, Giel de Kock, David Stanton, Hadi Al-Hikmani, Nick de Goede, Yousuf Mohageb, Khalifa Al-Jahwari, Bernard van Lente, Murad Mohammed



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

FPALY/FEW, P.O. Box 7069, Sana'a, Republic of Yemen - Tel: 00967 733916928 - [contact@yemenileopard.org](mailto:contact@yemenileopard.org)



**6. Valuable Oil Painting Donated to FPALY/FEW by Arabian Leopard Pioneer, David Willis:** The story of Arabian leopard conservation begins with David Willis, the Australian artist who has found his niche in Muscat after decades of touring the world with his easel and family. In the 1980s David decided to try and capture pictures of the then mythical Arabian leopard with camera traps of his own design. Months of preparation and arduous treks into the wilderness of Jebel Samhan paid off with pictures that are to this day the definitive images of wild Arabian leopards. David's pioneering work catalyzed the development of the Arabian Leopard Survey (later the Arabian Leopard Conservation Project) by the Office for Conservation of the Environment (OCE) at the Diwan of the Royal Court. As a staunch supporter of Arabian leopard conservation, David kindly painted the stunning portrait of a leopard in Dhofar which is pictured above. This original oil painting is being auctioned to raise funds for our conservation program. If you wish to make a bid, please send it by email to [contact@yemenileopard.org](mailto:contact@yemenileopard.org) Bidding, which is already "hot," closes on August 31, 2012.

**7. Vanishing Spots Not Yet Back from the Printers:**

The first 2,000 copies of *Vanishing Spots* have apparently been printed in Beirut, but they have not yet been shipped to Sana'a. It had been hoped that by now we might have started distributing the book, which is the flagship in FPALY/FEW's awareness program. So far we have received numerous requests for copies of *Vanishing Spots* which we believe is destined to become a classic in the annals of children's conservation literature.

**"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/FEW, P.O. Box 7069, Sana'a, Republic of Yemen - Tel: 00967 733916928 - [contact@yemenileopard.org](mailto:contact@yemenileopard.org)