

· **Foundation for Endangered Wildlife (Yemen)** ·

· **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. 34: September 30, 2012**

I am proud that NTMC is the leading sponsor of the *Foundation for Endangered Wildlife (Yemen)*, this country’s most active and effective conservation organization.

- Sheikh Tawfik Saleh Abdullah Saleh, retired Executive Chairman



**1. Dr. Mohammed Al-Doais Returns to Yemen:**

After nearly a year spent as a Fulbright Fellow at the University of Rhode Island in Kingston, Dr. Mohammed Al-Doais returned to Yemen on September 22<sup>nd</sup>. Mohammed has contributed a great deal to FEW since its inception; he was one of five Yemeni participants in the training mission to Oman in November 2010, he recruited researchers Murad Mohammed, Waleed Al-Ra'il, Gallal Al-Suraihi, and Zaher Al-Masqari, and he has been the driving force behind the *Ibb Mammal Survey* which is funded by Governor Ahmed Al-Hajri. In Rhode Island, Dr. Al-Doais investigated the constituents of *Halqah (Cyphostemma digitatum)*, a traditional Yemeni medicine. Now that he is back in Yemen we are looking forward to him taking a more influential role at the *Foundation for Endangered Wildlife*.



Dr. Mohammed Al-Doais with Northern Arizona University Professor, Dr. Andrew Gregory during the latter’s trip to the University of Rhode Island in order to discuss a possible collaborative project in Al Mahjar forest, Ibb.

**2. FEW’s Caracal Study Featured in Panthera’s September Newsletter:**

FEW is proud to have the sponsorship of one of the world’s foremost felid conservation organizations, the *Panthera Foundation*. Funding from Panthera’s Small Cat Action Fund (SCAF) continues to support Caracal research in Mahwit and Ibb. We are equally proud to be featured in Panthera’s online newsletter this September. The full article which Panthera posted in mid-September can be viewed at:

<http://www.panthera.org/september-2012-newsletter#tiger>



**3. From Bush to Suq – the Death of a Leopard:** Although leopards have the greatest range and the most robust population of any of the large cats, they are also the most heavily persecuted and rapidly declining cat species. Several subspecies are on the very brink of extinction due to the relentless hunting pressure that continues across their range. This pressure is driven in part by the market for wildlife products and leads to a steady flow of illegal skins through Sana’a *suq*. The following pictures, taken by wildlife activist Guenther Wirth on August 25<sup>th</sup>, record the end of one of Somaliland’s few remaining leopards. They show the ugliest side of a trade that converts these beautiful creatures to rotting corpses and pathetic pelts that may eventually be sold in Yemen for a paltry US\$125 - 150.



Left to Right: The decapitated carcass is left to rot; after flaying the animal, the skin is stretched; the distorted face of the slaughtered leopard.



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

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**4. The Travels and Travails of a Trail Camera:** Keeping FEW’s researchers equipped requires serious financial support *and* resourcefulness. Trail cameras are essential to our work but they can be rather expensive; over the years we have experimented with various models ranging in price from \$145 to over \$600 each. These have all been donated, purchased with funds budgeted for in project proposals, and/or bought with contributions from *Friends of the Arabian Leopard* who have raised funds specifically for this purpose. By far the most reliable cameras that we have deployed so far have been the four that we purchased from Malini Pittet in November 2010 when she returned to the *Durrell Institute for Conservation and Ecology* after initiating the *Hawf Leopard Survey* the previous September. These cameras incorporate circuitry designed by Malini’s father, Dr. Andre Pittet, who works at the *Centre for Electronic Design and Technology* (CEDT) at the *Indian Institute of Science* (IIS) in Bangalore. Andre’s circuits activate Olympus digital cameras with standard white flash (Most trail cameras on the market today use infrared flash which produce washed out grey-tone images which make identification of individual animals – and sometimes even species - difficult). All of our most dramatic and our most useful images have been captured with CEDT equipment.



**L to R: Smile! the thief is caught by the camera trap; Hisham with the new and Waleed with the broken one; a CEDT picture of an Arabian Wolf**

Unfortunately, trail cameras eventually wear out, are sometimes stolen or vandalized, are ruined by inclement weather or high humidity, malfunction, and on at least one occasion have been chewed to pieces by an inquisitive hyena. Until this year, however, all four of our CEDT cameras have continued to function perfectly. The following story is not typical of our procurement procedures, but it gives a fair indication of how reliant we sometimes are on our friends: On February 16, Waleed noticed an Olympus camera from one of our CEDT traps for sale at a telecom center in Hawf. Waleed investigated and discovered that the camera had just been purchased from a refugee who had stated to the vendor that he was about to cross into Oman. Thinking quickly, Waleed alerted our driver Sa’ad Ali Sohail Saeed who informed the border at Sarfeit where government officials apprehended the thief with the camera’s memory card still in his pocket. Unfortunately, the thief had destroyed the delicate circuitry that activates the camera so this CEDT unit had to be decommissioned. Hoping to reactivate the camera, FEW’s Executive Director David Stanton wrote to Dr. Pittet in mid-March and explained what had happened. Together they hatched a plan to resurrect the broken trap. Andre would give Malini new circuitry in Switzerland when they rendezvoused there in early April. Malini would subsequently return to the UK where she would hand the circuit box to David’s daughter Melissa in London. In July, Melissa would deliver the box to her father in Tennessee, USA where they planned to converge for a family wedding. David would then return to Yemen and send the unit to Hawf. Due to a miscommunication, however, Melissa received and brought to the States a spare camera rather than the circuitry that activates it. OK, over to plan B. Shortly thereafter, Melissa’s brother Max traveled to Geneva from Dubai on business. Malini’s brother Sebastian, who had an extra circuit box, lives in Lausanne. If the two could engineer a rendezvous, Max would bring the circuit back to his home and David could pick it up during one of his periodic visits to the UAE. Unfortunately, there simply wasn’t enough time in the busy schedules of these two young men to make the connection. Time to activate Plan C. Although it would be cutting things close, Andre’s sister Anne-Marie had scheduled a visit to Sebastian in Lausanne where she picked up the circuit box from her nephew. Flying back to her home in Bethesda, Maryland on August 7<sup>th</sup>, Anne-Marie sent the circuit by priority mail to Cook, Minnesota where it arrived just in time for David to pick it up before driving south to Minneapolis. David flew back to Yemen on August 18<sup>th</sup> with the circuitry secure in his luggage. On August 22<sup>nd</sup> he handed the new box to Hisham Al-Takry who was on his way back to Al Mahrah after spending Eid with his family in Ibb. Hisham flew out to Al Ghaydhah the next day and a few days later, the refurbished unit was back in the forest and doing what it was built to do. In the words of the late Sir Winston Churchill, “Never, never, never, give up!”

**“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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