

· **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. 35: October 31, 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-Duais Appointed as FEW's Associate Director: FEW/FPALY took a crucial step in the direction of full Yemeni ownership this month when our Board of Trustees appointed Dr. Mohammed Al-Duais as the *Foundation's* Associate Director. Dr. Al-Duais is passionate about conservation and brings unbridled enthusiasm, boundless energy, and superb qualifications to the position of Associate Director. In 1996 he earned his B.Sc. in Applied Biology from the *Jordan University of Science and Technology* and, in 2003, his M.Sc. in Biology from *Al Bayt University* (also in Jordan). *Friedrich Schiller University* in Jena, Germany awarded Mohammed his Ph.D. in Biology in 2009. In Jena he was supervised by Professor Dr. Gottfried Jetschke, Head of the *Theoretical Ecology Group* at the *Institute of Ecology*. Mohammed's additional qualifications, awards, affiliations, and publications are too numerous to list here, but it is clear that his scientific expertise, broad conservation interests, strategic thinking, communications and networking skills, coupled with his proactive and persuasive manner is calculated to quickly transform the *Foundation* during its fourth year of existence. Needless to say, FEW/FPALY is extremely fortunate, at this pivotal moment in its history, to have procured the services of a professional of Dr. Al-Duais's caliber to guide us into the new era. Mohammed has taken readily to his new role in the *Foundation* and has established himself as a goal-oriented leader who gets rapid results. While committed to his career as an Assistant Professor of Biology at Ibb University, Dr. Al-Duais manages to find the time and energy to engage himself fully in our conservation work. He is writing two of five sectoral analyses for *BirdLife International* (FEW/FPALY's partner in the *Migratory Soaring Birds Project*), getting the *Prince Bernhard Nature Fund*-supported project off to a strong start, and meeting with community leaders in several strategic locations among many other tasks. As a respected member of Yemen's academic community, Mohammed continues to strengthen our ties with academia in this country, and this will certainly help FEW/FPALY achieve its ambition of serving as a platform from which Yemeni scientists in many disciplines can launch conservation projects.



New Blood Invigorates the Foundation:

Left: FEW/FPALY's Associate Director, Dr. Mohammed Al-Duais, enjoys some fresh camel milk in Oman as Yousuf Mohageb looks on.

Right: FEW/FPALY's Foreign Adviser, Mr. Richard Porter, is a well-known and highly respected tour-de-force in Middle East conservation with decades of experience.



2. FEW Welcomes Richard Porter as the Foundation's Foreign Adviser: This month FEW/FPALY's Board of Trustees also approved the appointment of Mr. Richard Porter as an official adviser to the *Foundation*. Mr. Porter, a veteran of scores of conservation missions to Yemen and the Middle East, volunteered his services as adviser early this month, and the Board of Trustees eagerly accepted his offer. Richard has decades of professional experience having launched *BirdLife International's Middle East Program* and spent many years as a senior officer in the *Royal Society for the Protection of Birds* (BirdLife in the UK) where he was head of species protection. He has also been actively involved with many regional conservation NGOs including the *Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature* (RSCN) in Jordan, the *Society for the Protection of Nature in Lebanon* (SPNL), the Socotra Governance and Biodiversity Program (SGBP) and *Nature Iraq* (NI), for whom he is the bird and conservation adviser. Mr. Porter could not come with better credentials. One of the World's foremost experts on the birds of the Middle East, Richard has numerous book titles to his credit including the seminal *Field Guide to the Birds of the Middle East* which he co-authored with the late Simon Aspinall. We are privileged and honored to welcome Mr. Porter to the FEW team and anticipate that he will be instrumental in ensuring the ongoing success of the organization in achieving its conservation mission.



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

FEW, P.O. Box 7069, Sana'a, Republic of Yemen - Tel: 00967 733916928 – fewyemen@gmail.com

3. Congratulations Riaz and Sarah: On October 20th, Riaz Ingar and Sarah Oakley of Ontario, Canada became bonded in holy matrimony. While FEW/FPALY does not normally maintain a “society page” in its monthly newsletter, Riaz and Sarah’s wedding is noteworthy due to the innovative and thoughtful way in which they chose to celebrate their marriage; in lieu of traditional wedding presents such as linens and crockery, the young couple requested that their guests donate to the Yemen Fruit Tree Initiative (FTI). The concept of FTI grew following extensive discussions between Riaz, Save Yemen Flora and Fauna’s (SYFF) CEO Dr. Jameel Al-Zindani, and FEW/FPALY Executive Director David Stanton. Building on the recent success of SYFF’s annual Yemen Arbor Day (YAD) during which fruit trees were planted in urban areas throughout Yemen, the three collaborators decided to give back to the communities where FEW/FPALY is active by planting fruit trees in an effort to link conservation with lasting benefits for all community members. Donations for this unique initiative are being handled through the SYFF website at: http://syff.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=64&Itemid=92 The opportunity to donate is still open, anyone can contribute, and *Friends of the Arabian Leopard* are encouraged to do so. The more money that we raise, the more trees we will be able to plant. The project will be jointly managed by SYFF and FEW/FPALY as in-kind contributions. Thank you, Riaz and Sarah, for your generous and thoughtful gift to the people of Yemen. May you experience many years of happiness together!

4. Prince Bernhard Nature Fund Project Slowly Takes Off: Last June, with the help of Dutch partner *The Rewilding Foundation* (formerly the *Anatolian Leopard Foundation*), FEW was awarded a major grant from the *Prince Bernhard Nature Fund* for a research and conservation project in two of the most crucial locations for leopard conservation in Yemen: Wadi Sharis in Hajjah and Lawdar in Abyan. In August we published an article highlighting all of the equipment purchased for the project so far with the PBNF grant. Although the project was scheduled to launch in September, security concerns, especially in Abyan, have caused inevitable delays. Based on extensive enquiries, Associate Director Dr. Mohammed Al-Duais concluded, “Abyan is hopeless. Our task will be impossible under the current circumstances.” While this is unfortunate due to the importance of Abyan as a place where leopards are known still to exist and local attitudes towards them are obviously hostile, FEW/FPALY is nothing if not resourceful. There are numerous other crucial locations in Yemen on which to focus and in the end, the *Prince Bernhard Nature Fund* will get more “bang for its buck.” Rather than the two locations originally prioritized for this project, we will now focus on three including Wadi Sharis; Jebel Bura’ and Jebel Raymah will each benefit from the intractability of Abyan. Residents of Jebel Bura’ claim that leo-



The metamorphic foothills of Jebel Bura’ contain plentiful prey and may yet harbor a population of wild Arabian leopards. Photo © Estate of Simon Aspinall

pards vacated the area when construction of the road into the “protected area” began early this century. However, we know from previous experience that the Arabian leopard is a cryptic beast that can inhabit an area without the knowledge of local people. Studies have proven that a strong prey base still exists at Bura’, which, in the words of the late Simon Aspinall, “... is perfect leopard habitat.” Jebel Raymah is probably too overbuilt to harbor leopards, except perhaps transiently, but farmers in the surrounding foothills regularly report livestock losses from “leopards” and other predators. Contact has been established with stakeholders in all three locations and a curriculum for inception workshops has been developed. These workshops are slated to commence now that the holy celebrations of Eid al Adha are behind us. Once the workshops have been held, and suitable researchers from the local communities have been recruited and trained, FEW/FPALY will engage in trail camera research at all three locations with concurrent, ongoing conservation work until the end of 2013.

“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

FEW, P.O. Box 7069, Sana’a, Republic of Yemen - Tel: 00967 733916928 – fewyemen@gmail.com