



Foundation for the Protection of the Arabian Leopard in Yemen

P.O. Box 7069

Sana'a, Republic of Yemen

Tel: +967 733916928

Fax: +967 - 1 - 370193

Email: contact@yemenileopard.org

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

"Friends of the Arabian Leopard"

168 members around the world!

Update No. 6: May 18, 2010

Dear Friends of the Arabian Leopard,

As we conclude the first half-year of operation, we have to take a long objective look at our successes and failures. While much of our work is aimed at ensuring the long-term sustainability of the foundation, we can't ignore the fact that we have not yet had a measureable impact on the leopard population in Yemen. The key word here is "measureable," as we have no real data against which to gauge our progress. As you will see from this update, not all of our news this month is good news. On the other hand, I hope that you will also see that while things move slowly and we experience the inevitable setbacks, the foundation is by no means stagnant.

Thank you for your interest and support,

David

1. Farewell to valued board members: This has been a sad month for the foundation since we have had to say "goodbye" to three of our precious board members. Dr. Abdul Karim Nasher and Dr. Masaa Al-Jumaily submitted their



resignations on April 13th. After working tirelessly to help establish the foundation they were not satisfied with the foundation's achievements. They also expressed frustration at the foundation's slow progress and felt that we were not devoting enough energy or resources to achieve our mission. We are pleased, however, that Dr. Nasher and Dr. Al-Jumaily remain friends of the foundation who will, we hope, be able to contribute their expertise to future field research. A second blow came on the 3rd of May when Dr. Amal Al-Kebisi informed us that having enrolled in continuing dental studies she was forced to resign from her position as CEO of Save Yemen Flora and Fauna (SYFF) and as a member of the foundation's board. While we lament the loss of so much talent, we are deeply appreciative of the sacrifices that Amal, Masaa, and Abdul Karim all made to help the foundation get established.

2. Total E&P Yemen (TEPY) Generously Supports the Foundation:

On April 13th Total E&P Yemen (TEPY) pledged \$15,000 to the foundation. Two thirds of the donation has been allocated to partially offset the publication and distribution costs of "Vanishing Spots" and one third is designated as general support. We are extremely grateful to the management at TEPY for its generous contribution in support of the foundation and its activities.

TOTAL E&P YEMEN **توتال يمن للاستكشاف والإنتاج**

3. National Tobacco and Matches Corporation Keeps the Foundation Going Strong:

On April 25th, Sheikh Tawfik S. Abdullah Saleh, Executive Chairman of the National Tobacco and Matches Corp., donated YR 4,000,000 (about US\$ 17,700) to the foundation in support of our general running costs and activities. The continuing generous support of Sheikh Saleh is instrumental in the foundation's long-term viability, sustainability, and effectiveness and is greatly appreciated.



4. Trip to Wada'a: On Wednesday, April 28th a team from the foundation, the Ministry of Water & Environment, and the Amran Office of the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) paid a visit to Adh Dhil'ain in Wada'a Sub-district near Khamr. Wada'a is of great interest to our cause because it is the probable origin of *all* the wild leopards captured in Yemen over the years. This was followed up a week later by a visit from the Sana'a office of the EPA who discovered scats and tracks which *they* believe to be leopard; their report is pending. Nevertheless, much work still needs to be done at this crucial site. To request a report of the foundation's visit write to contact@yemenileopard.org

5. Mohamed Bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund Grant Approved:



We were delighted when Mr. Nicolas Heard, Fund Manager for the Mohamed Bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund (www.mbzspeciesconservation.org), informed us on April 29th that the Fund's board has approved our application for a \$25,000 grant to conduct Arabian leopard research at Hawf Protected Area in Al Mahrah. This award is especially timely in light of the fact that on April 22nd Yemen and

Oman signed an MoU regarding the cooperative administration of Hawf Protected Area and Jebel Samhan Nature Reserve in Oman. The foundation will continue to work towards helping the two nations achieve the first functional Trans Boundary Conservation Area (TBCA) in the Arabian Peninsula, and the Mohamed Bin Zayed research grant will enable us to obtain data that can help leverage this highly desirable outcome.

6. Wildlife Middle East News Continues to Help the Foundation: Since the formation of the foundation's predecessor (*The Yemeni Leopard Recovery Program*) we have had no more active supporters than the editorial team at Wildlife Middle East News. Raising funds for the *Vanishing Spots* project, providing publicity, distributing brochures, publishing articles, and suggesting strategy are just a few of the many ways in which Tom and Theri Bailey, Declan O'Donovan, and Chris Lloyd have helped us over the years. To subscribe to Wildlife Middle East News or to download a PDF of the most recent article about the foundation (Vol. 4 Iss. 4) log onto www.wmenews.com



Wildlife Middle East

7. Foundation Guest House: The foundation now has a two-bedroom furnished guesthouse in the Haddah section of Sana'a. The facility serves as a satellite office and accommodation for visiting researchers. Whenever the guest house is available, *Friends of the Arabian Leopard* are welcome to use it for short visits to Sana'a at no cost, although contributions towards rent, utilities, and upkeep will be greatly appreciated. To book the guesthouse, please call 733916928. Advanced booking is recommended.

8. New Trail Camera for Milhan: Mr. Hans Joachim-Schmidt of Hamburg has purchased a Dörr Bolyguard 5.0 MB trail camera for his survey at Jebel Milhan. The equipment was FedExed to Sana'a from Germany courtesy of the Griffin Group, though the timing of the shipment was affected by the *Eyjafjallajökull* volcano in Iceland. We are pleased to be able to assist Hans and his researcher on Jebel Milhan, Mr. Nasser Ahmed Qassim.

9. Midyear Evaluation: May 18th marks six months since the foundation was officially registered with the Ministry for Social Affairs and Labor. This is therefore a good time for some honest reflection on how we're doing. Since achieving our mission is dependent upon activities within three spheres: A) Raising Awareness, B) Improving Breeding Success of captive leopards in Yemen, and C) Lobbying for protection of wild leopards – let's examine these three areas independently.

A) Raising Awareness:

Activity	+/-	Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cover article about the foundation published in Yemen Today January 2010 Follow-up Article about Arabian leopards published in April Edition 	+	Published distribution of 15,000 copies, with a web edition. Potential impact on decision makers, though little direct impact on a majority of the local population because YT is published in English. Copies of the January issue distributed at Biodiversity conference in Sharjah.
Monthly foundation updates published and distributed to small (currently 168) but highly targeted and potentially influential audience.	+	Limited distribution though downloadable from the Wildlife Middle East News Website* (see below); in English and Arabic
Article about the foundation published in March (Vol. 4, Iss. 4) Wildlife Middle East News	+	Distributed to highly targeted audience (1,000 copies printed); web edition with email mailing list of more than 7,500* (see above); published in English and Arabic
Shamlan Label agreement – At least 6 million leopard labels in Arabic slated for nationwide distribution	+	Not on store shelves yet
Slow progress with foundation website www.yemenileopard.org	+/-	Content under development – English version scheduled for late June launch (could be delayed); Arabic version planned (some translated content already developed)
Slow progress with <i>Vanishing Spots: The Arabian Leopard</i>	+/-	About 25% of the illustrations completed to a very high standard; \$15,000 of support for publication safely in hand; we are way behind schedule on this project

Ongoing Activities: In the mean time, numerous awareness-raising initiatives are currently underway. Materials have been developed for a workshop in Mahwit which is scheduled for June 7. These materials have been designed to be transferrable to other venues such as Amran, Shabwah, Jebel Bura', etc. Television news programs about the foundation and the conservation of Arabian leopards in Yemen are currently under discussion and/or development in two countries. Publicity on a major Arabic website is also being discussed as is coverage in a major national Arabic newspaper. The specifics of these initiatives are not finalized and therefore it is premature to discuss them. Nevertheless, the foundation is actively developing the means of bringing this issue to the attention of a wider audience.

Conclusions: Although the foundation continues to publicize this issue and its mission there is much, much more that we could and should be doing, especially in reaching Yemenis who only speak Arabic.

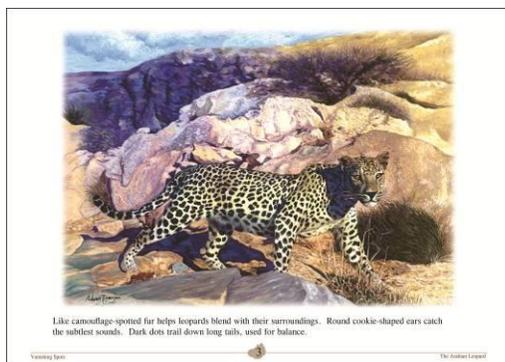


Fig. 1: Sample page from *Vanishing Spots*



Fig. 2: Illustration by Adnan Jumman for *Vanishing Spots*

B) Increasing Breeding Success of Captive Leopards in Yemen:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Official foundation visit to Sana’a Zoo on Dec. 11 • Unofficial visit to Sana’a Zoo with officials from Al Ain Dec. 28 • Meeting with zoo volunteer group on March 29 	-	No progress has been made at the Sana’a Zoo, nor will any be made until we have the time, staff, and resources to drive this complex and potentially expensive project past the pitfalls to completion.
Unofficial foundation visit to Taiz Zoo on Dec. 29	-	Little progress has been made at the Taiz Zoo
<p>Ongoing Activities: All of our activities at the Sana’a and Taiz Zoos are currently on the back burner. These include facilitating the opening of the Sana’a Zoo “Awareness Centre” to present quality conservation programming to the public, expansion of the leopard enclosures, capacity building of zoo staff, improvement of leopard husbandry, etc.</p>		
<p>Conclusions: The foundation is currently spread too thin to have a meaningful impact at either of the zoos in Yemen. However, the 28 leopards in total that are housed at both zoos, and the potential of the zoos to educate the public are too important to sideline indefinitely.</p>		

C) Lobbying for Protection:

Rapid Assessment at Jebel Milhan, Dec. 30 – Jan. 3	+	Promising results, two trail cameras in place
Field Visit to Hajjah, February 25	+/-	Failed to result in trail camera placement as hoped
Field Visit to Wada’a, April 28	+/-	Provided us with insight into the current situation, but final outcome uncertain
Successful grant Application to IDEA WILD	+	Equipment for field survey in Jebel Bura’ in transit
Successful grant application to Mohamed Bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund	+	First major project funding pledged to the foundation
Capacity building for seven Yemeni field researchers and foundation executive director at Jebel Samhan Nature Reserve in Dhofar, Oman	+/-	All of the preparatory work has been done to ensure this essential exercise takes place. Our Omani colleagues are supportive, and we have received a \$3,000 donation towards expenses from the Abu Dhabi Chapter of the Emirates Natural History Group. However, the timing of this exercise is frustratingly slow.
<p>Ongoing Activities: The foundation has two major grant applications under review, with two more pending and others under development. Applications should never be considered “birds in the hand,” but preliminary feedback for a major proposal is highly positive.</p>		
<p>Conclusions: This is by far the most important component of what we are trying to accomplish. It is an enormously complex undertaking that can only be achieved if we; a) convince the public and the policy makers that the foundation goal is desirable, b) induce policy makers to expand the protected area network in Yemen, c) halt hunting of leopards and their prey, d) put a stop to illegal trafficking of leopards and their prey, e) build the capacity of a virtual army of dedicated local researchers, game wardens, and conservationists, f) conduct a comprehensive suite of detailed surveys across the country, and g) obtain sufficient funding to sustainably support these and other activities. Although we are a long way from achieving the foundation’s mission, I believe that the results of our first six months of operation indicate that we are on the right track and making reasonable progress.</p>		

10. A Note about Money: Since the last update, the foundation has received and been pledged almost \$60,000 worth of support. Is this enough? No. Successfully achieving the foundation’s mission is going to take decades, dozens of workers, and millions of dollars. We are working in as intelligent a manner as we possibly can, and we are making progress. We have what we need to make a good start now, but if this is going to be sustainable, we can’t rest. In the mean time, for the many individuals who have contributed or who intend to contribute, please rest assured that your donations are spent efficiently and responsibly on much-needed equipment. We depend on corporate sponsors to cover administrative costs and on research and conservation grants for project funds. **“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**