


- 
- Calling the deer, but not to hunt it this time!
  - The role of eco-lodges in conservation of environment
  - Mugger crocodile in the mythological land of Baluchistan
  - Red deer population estimation in Golestan National Park using the droppings decay method
  - Persian Wildlife Heritage Foundation's achievements in 2012
  - Environmental events
    - The UN will not leave cheetahs alone
    - Waterholes improve conditions for wildlife in Geno Protected Area





Email: masi.safaei@yahoo.com

## Editorial

### Green or Red

In September 2012, the last Congress of the IUCN hosting around 10,000 experts and environmental activists from around the world was held in South Korea.

In this Congress the protection of wildlife habitats took the center stage. Since habitat destruction is the prime cause of depletion of wildlife all over the world, the final declaration of the Congress emphasized the preparatory work that is underway for the official launch of IUCN's Green List of Well-Managed Protected Areas in its next Congress in Australia. This project seeks to motivate effective and optimum management of wildlife habitats by member countries. It is worth noting that in the September Congress a great deal of attention was also paid to the proposed Red List of Existing Ecosystems, which may be more pertinent to us these days than trying to achieve a ranking in the aforementioned Green List.

In the published report of the IUCN we read that in the period 1990 to 2012 the terrestrial protected areas of the world have increased from 8.8 to 12.8 percent of the earth's total landmass, and the marine protected areas have increased from 0.9 to 4 percent of the ocean surfaces globally. In other words, in 1981 there were around 40,000 protected areas with an area of around 7 million sq. kilometers in the world. This figure reached 200,000 protected areas covering more than 25 million sq. kilometers; i.e., almost 15.7 percent of the earth's surface. It is also believed that by 2020 at least 17 percent of terrestrial and

10 percent of coastal and marine areas of the earth will have been included in the protected areas network of the world.

Iran too has not fallen much behind in this regard. The latest figures announced by the official body in charge of protecting the country's natural environments state that the total area under management of the Department of Environment is 17,147,316 hectares, a little over 10 percent of the country's area and more than the level to which the member countries in Rio Convention on Biodiversity had committed themselves.

It is true that one of the important international criteria for ranking a country in terms of natural environments is the percentage of a country's area that is placed under the management of the country's specialized body in charge of environmental protection, but mere numbers fall short of telling the whole story about the condition of what is left of our country's nature. Real evaluation of our protected areas on the basis of the IUCN's standards may reveal that only 3 or 4 percent of the country's landmass may truly be regarded as effectively protected. We now have protected areas that no longer

meet international standards for protection and have minimal conservation value and yet considerable resources are allocated to them as protected areas, thus depriving other valuable habitats from much needed scarce financial resources and manpower.

Hoping for better days ahead in the coming year, we congratulate the New Year and wish you all a happy Nowruz.



**Masoumeh Safaei**

#### Objectives of Persian Wildlife Newsletter:

- Reporting on conservation activities and conservation-related studies of the PWHF and other affiliated NGOs and environmental groups
- Providing information on major conservation activities in Iran and in the world
- Increasing environmental awareness with regard to wildlife conservation
- Dissemination of information for improving the management of protected areas and of wildlife of Iran
- Providing space and a forum for researchers and practitioners in the field of natural environment to present their scientific achievements and to discuss their field experiences



PWHF was established in 2008 to help protect biodiversity in Iran. It is active in wildlife research, conservation, and educational programs designed to raise public awareness about the state of the wildlife and environment in Iran. It is a non-governmental, not-for-profit organization. All PWHF activities are supervised by a Board of Trustees. Projects are coordinated with the Islamic Republic of Iran's Department of Environment. All funds for projects are raised from individuals concerned about the state of wildlife in Iran and socially responsible corporations. The Board of Trustees sets and ratifies goals and helps to find necessary financial resources for successful accomplishment of goals. Projects and day-to-day affairs of the Foundation are run by a Board of Directors composed of wildlife managers, academics and experienced conservationists.

#### NEWSLETTER EDITORIAL TEAM

Director in charge: **Afshin Zarei**

Email: afel67@yahoo.com

Editor in Chief: **Masoumeh Safaei**

Email: masi.safaei@yahoo.com

Scientific-expert council:

**Mahindokht Dehdashtian**

**Houman Jowkar , Kavous Seyed-Emami**

Art Director: **Mohammadreza Mohammadi**

Email: mohamadi5530@yahoo.com

Executive Manager & English Translation:

**Abnous Sadeghi**

Graphics: **Reza Asadi**

Copy Editor: **Sahar Khaleghian**

Postal Address: No. 34, Shahriar Alley.,

North Shiraz St., Molla Sadra Ave., Tehran, Iran.

Postal Code: 19916-43543

Tel: 00982188047841/ 00982188047843

Fax: 00982188049834

Email: info@Persianwildlife.org

Site: www.Persianwildlife.org

Mugger crocodile in Bahookalat river,  
may 2011,  
Photo: Hadi Fahimi

# Calling the deer, but not to hunt it this time!

► Sheyda Ashayeri<sup>1</sup>, Amirhossein Khaleghi<sup>1</sup>  
Turkmen Ecolodge

<sup>1</sup> Persian Wildlife Heritage Foundation



Calling deers (Gowkali), Photo: Turkmen Ecolodge

## Deer call

Male deer calling females in  
Golestan National Park./

Photo: Houman Jowkar



The participatory approach in wildlife conservation and national park management has been practiced for the last three decades in some countries. The main reason for the rising prominence of this approach was the poor performance of traditional conservation methods in sustainably protecting natural reserves and rare and endangered species. Traditional methods of wildlife conservation viewed local communities living in and around national parks as threats to the ecological balance of the parks, despite the fact that these communities often have close ties to the parks and are directly exposed to any benefits or damages that may incur from conservation measures. These communities are also best positioned to have valuable practical knowledge about all kinds of issues pertaining to the national parks. Hence, the sustainability of conservation programs implemented by experts and managers cannot be guaranteed without considering different dimensions of the mutual impact of local communities and parks. In the transition from old-style conservation methods to the new participatory approach, ecotourism can serve as a good start for involving local communities in conservation and furthering the sustainability of any program. By providing a relatively sustainable alternative income for local communities, ecotourism can expose and familiarize them with the economic, cultural, recreational, educational and aesthetic values of the national parks. At the same time, ecotourism can benefit from local knowledge and practices.

The rut season is a particularly dangerous period for the red deer in the Golestan National Park. Due to the covered nature of the habitat, it is very hard to observe this animal. To get the stags out of cover and make an easier kill, the poachers use a locally crafted deer call that is called 'gowkal' in the local dialect. Game wardens on their part camp out in different parts of the park and try to control poaching more effectively. Last year, the park's manager and the Department of Environment of Golestan Province adopted a participatory approach and solicited help from local hunters during rut season. This year, in the course of implementing the second phase of its Persian

leopard project in Golestan National Park, the PWHF collaborated with the Turkmen Ecolodge in an initiative that sought to use ecotourism as a tool for the education of interested visitors, while turning ex-poachers into tour guides during the perilous rut season. Turkmen Ecolodge is a local ecotourism facility that conducts responsible ecotourism, while raising environmental awareness and empowering local communities. It actively participates in conservation efforts in the Golestan National Park.

In September and October 2012, a special package was introduced by the Ecolodge which enabled nature lovers to camp in designated sites in the Park and take guided trekking tours in the woods to see the red deer. Each group was accompanied by a local hunter (ex-poacher) who skillfully used his hand-made deer call to attract the stags. The animals that were summoned this time only faced the clicks of cameras rather than clicks of rifle triggers. This program enjoyed the full support of the Department of Environment of Golestan Province. Former intruders into the Park took on an entirely different role during this year's rut and served as ecotourism guides. The alternative income gained from ecotourism and the fact that they are viewed as partners rather than adversaries have turned poachers into guardians of wildlife, at least for the time being.

By practicing the participatory approach, this program has demonstrated the immense potential that exists in a style of conservation management that values local participation and takes an inclusive approach to local communities. It is only through such participatory means that long-term conservation of the national parks can be guaranteed.

## ■ A acknowledgments

Special thanks are due to Mr. Ramezan-Ali Rostaqi, Director of the GNP, whose help and genuine support was essential in this project. We also thank Mr. Mamashli and Mr. Mohajer Avarsaji, General Director and Natural Environment Deputy of the Department of Environment of the Golestan Province.



# The role of eco-lodges in conservation of environment



◀ **Atashuni Eco-lodge**  
situated in Garmeh Village, Isfahan Province, this eco-lodge has hosted desert lovers for many years./Photo: Afsaneh Ehsani

▼ **Fattahi Eco-lodge**  
This rural house in Qeshm Island's Shib-Deraz Village hosts eco-tourists visiting for observing turtles./Photo: Nima Azari



▶ **Afsaneh Ehsani**

Graduate in Geography and Tourism planning, Avaye Tabiate Paydar Institution

This research aims to study the role of eco-lodges in improving and promoting the livelihoods of local communities by focusing on two specific cases: "Garmeh" Village in Central Desert and "Shib-Deraz" Village in Qeshm Island. In this study 14 eco-lodge activists working in different regions of the country were interviewed and 200 questionnaires were completed by local inhabitants of the two villages. Results of both qualitative and quantitative studies indicate that the presence of eco-lodges in the studied rural areas has led to the improvement of the respondents' livelihoods, confirming one of the main objectives of ecotourism.

More than 50% of the world population lives in the cities whereas in Iran this figure reaches 68.4 % of the whole population (Statistics Center of Iran, 2007). The growing distance between urban and rural lifestyles has led to a number of social and personal dilemmas, which in turn impel some to opt for a return to traditional and more natural lifestyles. Nowadays with the growing interest in traveling, the tourism industry has found a variety of branches, of which ecotourism seems to have become very popular.

Having adequate lodges for eco-tourists in the outreach of the natural sceneries and attractions have always been a great concern of those who are involved in ecotourism industry. Since helping the local communities to improve their livelihoods is an important objective of ecotourism, and as the owners of these eco-lodges are often the local people, supporting and expanding such eco-lodges will be a step forward in fulfilling ecotourism and conservation objectives.

This study will focus on the likely contributions that these eco-lodges can make to the employment and improvement of the livelihood of the local communities. Supporting and promoting the idea of eco-lodges, in addition to its economic benefits for local communities, can be conducive to the restoration of old houses and heritage sites and provide a good opportunity for both

eco-tourists and local people to communicate and interact with each other. Such interactions will help raise environmental awareness among local communities and strengthen their self-confidence, and thus encourage them to act as better custodians of their natural and cultural assets.

"Atashuni" eco-lodge, located in Garmeh Village in Isfahan Province, has been hosting desert lovers for years. Atashuni is a renovated old house and is managed and operated by a family as an eco-lodge. Maziar Al-e-David, who came up with the idea of renovating his father's house with the purpose of hosting national and international tourists, has spread this idea to other parts of the country. He has also provided the local community of this village with new job opportunities related to hospitality and tourism.

"Fattahi" eco-lodge in Shib-Deraz village has been hosting eco-tourists since 2007. Although this second case has not been an old house and thus short of historical attraction, eco-tourists are in general very pleased to have resided there. The main difference between these two cases is that the Fattahi eco-lodge is a by-product of some small projects that were launched with the help of the Small Grants Programme (SGP) of the UNDP, involving Qeshm Free Zone Organization and some NGOs. Projects like "Protecting the Hawksbill turtle" and "Improving the Livelihoods of Local Communities through Ecotourism and Handicrafts" paved the way for local families to turn their houses into lodges and host growing numbers of eco-tourists.

Tourists who are keen to see the turtles laying and burying their eggs in the sand reside in the Fattahi family eco-lodges and other rural houses in the area. This is a great opportunity for them to interact with local communities in their houses and exchange ideas and culture. Among stories that are often recited by the locals to the tourists is the popular story of how the turtles' eggs were collected and eaten by locals before saving the turtle project was initiated and how the locals

themselves have become active participants in the project and the main guardians of turtles. Hosts enjoy the simple but warm reception offered by the hospitable mother of the family along with warm and friendly attitude of the father and the children in this eco-lodge.

A variety of jobs result or benefit from ecotourism in the area: boat operators, lodge owners, caterers of local food, producers of handicrafts, local guides and participants in conservation and ecotourism projects. Hence, most respondents to our questionnaires believed that tourism had contributed to their family incomes. Since the mentioned jobs, especially those related to conservation and ecotourism projects, are seasonal or temporary, contributions they make to the locals' incomes are relatively low.

Based on the analysis of the data collected by means of the questionnaires, local people believe that the tourists have provided them with incentives to produce more handicrafts. This incentive for making handicrafts seems to be more effective on the production of the baskets woven from palm leaves in Garmeh in comparison with embroideries sewn in Qeshm.

The reason for this difference may be attributed to the fact that the high season in Garmeh Village is longer than in Qeshm Island and the former has a relatively closer distance to Tehran and traveling there is cheaper compared to the latter which is much further away and usually requires air travel; hence there is a more steady tourist traffic to Garmeh. An additional factor causing the difference may be that the spawning period for turtles is short and also Shib-Deraz village has lost some of its rural charm due to alterations in the native and traditional texture of the village.

The findings of the research also point out that currently the local communities of these two villages are satisfied with ecotourism activities in their villages. Therefore if ecotourism in these villages grow smoothly and follow sustainable development patterns, local communities will continue benefitting from it and supporting it.



# Mugger crocodile in the mythological land of Baluchistan



Mugger crocodile in sarbaz river, Photo: Asghar mobarak

► **Hadi Fahimi, Barbod Safaei Mahrou, Hanieh Ghaffari**

Pars Herpetology Institution

The Mugger crocodile (*Crocodylus palustris*), locally called *gando*, is one of Iran's endangered species and is facing harsh conditions. An ancient belief among local people that this crocodile keeps the water clean and healthy is undoubtedly the main reason for its survival until today. Yet conserving this species requires more education and public awareness and as in other forms of wildlife conservation, such education is essential to the establishment of science-based principles. To achieve this goal, an educational project has been defined and implemented in Dargas and Bahu-Kalat villages neighboring the Sarbaz River, the animal's main habitat. The project seeks to encourage active participation on the part of local people in the protection of this species. Target groups for this project include students, teachers and farmers. This educational program will be part of the Pars Herpetology Institution's plan to involve the local communities in the conservation of the Mugger crocodile.

In local language *gando* signifies an animal that crouches on its belly. This crocodile, the largest reptile of Iran, inhabits the south-eastern part of the country in Sistan and Baluchistan Province. Its distribution range spreads from India to Iran, with Iran being its western-most distribution limit in Asia. Even though the population of this species in Kaju, Sarbaz and Nahang Rivers is low, the animal is reputedly held sacred among the locals and known as a symbol of blessing. Yet, conflicts with local people, mainly in the form

of loss of livestock, occur from time to time. Part of the species' immunity to poaching, trafficking and other threats therefore stems from the cultural value people attach to this animal.

Many factors threaten Mugger crocodile populations. According to recent studies, consecutive droughts, dam construction, the expansion of farmlands, water resource over-exploitation, habitat conflagration, water intoxication due to farming, the recent contamination of rivers, especially in the Nahang River bordering Pakistan (with petroleum products) and climate change are some of the main threats facing this species. In recent years, the Department of Environment has paid more attention to the management and conservation of the Mugger crocodile, leading to relative improvements in the conditions of the animal compared to previous decades. But the species' survival is still at stake considering the dispersion of its habitats in Baluchistan and a more ardent involvement of local communities in conservation efforts is required.

The Pars Herpetology Institution, with the aid of the Global Environmental Fund (GEF), United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and Sistan and Baluchistan Province DoE, has organized an educational program for the local communities aiming to help them appreciate the necessity of protecting this rare crocodile and to get them more actively involved in its conservation. We are hopeful that this project will help us protect one of Iran's most valuable wildlife species.



▲ **Locals get involved in conservation**  
baluch people consider  
mugger crocodiles as  
symbols of blessing./Photo:

Elham Abtin



# Red deer population estimation in Golestan National Park using the droppings decay method



Author examining droppings, Photo: Jalil Hassanzadeh

► **Mahmoud Soufi<sup>1</sup>, Benyamin Ghassemi<sup>2</sup>, Ana-Johanna Voinopol Sassu<sup>3</sup>, Arash Ghoddoussi<sup>4</sup>, Amir-Hossein Khaleghi<sup>5</sup>**  
 1.Georg August University, Göttingen, Germany, 2. Plan4Land Society, 3. Student in Masters of International nature conservation- Georg August University, Göttingen, Germany, 4.Department of Conservation Biology, Georg August University, Göttingen, Germany, 5.Persian Wildlife Heritage Foundation (PWHF)

Most wildlife researchers in Iran are familiar with the half-century history of conservation in Golestan National Park (GNP). The variety of habitats, presence of around 19% of the country's flora, and the incredible diversity of invertebrate and vertebrate species has turned the Golestan National Park into an exceptional place. In our world today, many large mammals, herbivores as well as carnivores, are threatened with extinction locally or in their broader habitats and the GNP is no exception. Although the red deer (*Cervus elaphus*) is ranked under "least concern" in the IUCN's Red List, new scientific observations relying on fuzzy logic (many-valued logic or probabilistic logic) point to a sharp population decline in this species, suggesting that its continued existence is critically threatened. A study of the red deer droppings decay rate in the GNP is currently being carried out using the financial support of the Environment and Water Resource Protection Sector (National Parks Conservation) of Austria's Carinthia Province and the Persian Wildlife Heritage Foundation, in collaboration with the Georg August University of Göttingen, Germany.

## Objectives of the Study

The red deer, being a large and selective herbivore in the forest ecosystem, plays an important yet delicate co-evolutionary role vis-à-vis its main endangered predator, the Persian leopard. The future of this ecological cycle is cast in many uncertainties due to human interference (especially poaching) in the entire hyrcanian forests of Northern Iran, and notably in the GNP. Selective hunting of bigger stags with larger antlers potentially impacts the deer populations' genetic composition and severely reduces the

species' fitness and sustenance in this type of ecosystem. These factors, in addition to illness, road kills, and indirect effects of human activity along the park, impact the populations of this species.

Determining the population size of each species plays an important role in the management and conservation of that species. Proper conservation and management of the red deer and species which depend on it require reliable population estimates. Therefore, this study seeks to estimate the red deer population in the GNP and to identify existing threats to its survival, in order to enhance conservation efforts for this species and its main predator, the Persian leopard.

## Methodology

Determining the population of herbivores in dense forest ecosystems has always been controversial as it is rather difficult and prone to high probabilities of bias. Various direct methods have been used to estimate herbivore populations, but all these methods are highly biased compared to indirect methods. Therefore, indirect methods like counting of pellets are increasingly used to estimate the size and density of herbivore populations. In order to achieve a correct estimation of the red deer population density using dropping counts, a reliable measurement of the average decay time of pellets during the study period is needed. This average decay time should be separately obtained for each habitat. Three different types of habitats based on vegetation type are included in the study area: (1) dense forest, (2) shrub land and (3) forest patches.

## Findings

In this stage of the study, 80 specimens of fresh droppings were found in the study

areas. Then, in regular monthly intervals, pellets decayed by such factors as fungus activity, dung beetles, trampling by other animals, rainfall and snowfall and reduced to less than 6 counts were eliminated. The data were recorded based on their absence and presence ( $Y=0$  for nonexistence and  $Y=1$  for existence of pellets), followed by modeling with logarithmic regression. Then, using the Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) for measuring the goodness of fit, the best model for the decay rate was chosen. According to the chosen model, decay rates were lowest in forest patches and highest in dense forest areas. This data will be used for estimating the population.

## Population estimation for conservation planning

Arriving at a reliable estimate of the red deer population is the next step in this study. Such an estimate will remove any ambiguity regarding the prey-predator relationship and determine appropriate habitats for the reintroduction of red deer in its principal habitats. This, in addition to general conservation measures and involvement of local communities in conservation efforts, will benefit wildlife management in the Park.

The execution of this research would not have been possible without the sincere support and collaboration of GNP Director, Mr. Ramezan-Ali Rostaqi, and his experienced environmental guards, Mr. Jalil Hassanzadeh, Mr. Aneh Dordi, Mr. Abdolreza Ghorbanpour, Mr. Qasem Sadizadeh and Mr. Mohammad Eydouzei. We must also thank the Office of the Natural Environment Deputy and the Head Office of the Department of Environment in the Golestan Province.



# Persian Wildlife Heritage Foundation's achievements in 2012

Dear Friends of the Persian Wildlife Heritage Foundation,  
During this past year, despite the challenging economic conditions, we have achieved remarkable success with the funds we raised at our Nov. 2011 Reception and Auction fundraiser. We were able to cover most of our expenses for 2012 and continued to raise more donations in May 2012 by holding another fundraiser for our members and loyal donors. These funds helped us invest in the publication of literature as well as field and research projects. For example, we ended the first phase of the Golestan Persian Leopard Project and published the report. We also gathered other funds from donors and from different companies like Barez Industrial Group, a tire producer in Iran, which supports our Asiatic black bear project and has announced further commitments in sponsoring other programs like the Asiatic cheetah project. We also enjoyed financial support from PWF (the Persian Wildlife Foundation), our American partner, for the grants allocated to the Laristan sheep project. Our Dolphin project in Hengam Island, situated in the middle of the Persian Gulf, has been supported by funds granted by the SGP/GEF offices of the UNDP in Tehran. Pars Online Group of Companies is also one of our sponsors, supporting the foundation and our projects in different ways. We also thank Tadvin Co., an accountancy firm, for their voluntary book keeping, accounting, as well as sincere contributions to PWHF in other administrative tasks.

## **The Dolphin conservation program in Hengam Island**

The Dolphin conservation program in Hengam Island began in 2010. It was funded and monitored by the SGP/GEF offices of UNDP in Iran and implemented in the field by the PWHF. It consisted of training





the local boatmen in order to reduce accidents with the Dolphins of Hengam Island during peak tourism seasons. This training made use of workshops and the publication of awareness material both for boatmen and tourists. Following these activities, the Boating Development Cooperative was created by the locals and continued to monitor the activities of boatmen in the Persian Gulf. The first phase of this project ended in early 2012 and the development cooperative is now under the supervision of the government of Hormozgan Province. SGP/GEF has committed funds to the second phase of the project in a joint account with the Qeshm Island Geopark project. We are preparing a proposal to determine the best means of splitting these funds. Mr. Mani Mirsadeghi, a renowned wildlife cinematographer, also donated a documentary that he had produced about the dolphins of Hengam Island.

#### **The Golestan Persian Leopard Project**

The first phase of the Golestan Persian Leopard Project also ended in early 2012. Similar to other projects, the PWHF outsourced the fieldwork to another NGO but funded, managed and monitored the project itself. This detailed survey was the first of its kind ever done in Iran. The main achievement was a census of the leopard population in the Golestan National Park (GNP). The results showed that approximately 23 to 42 leopards live in this National Park. The study also helped identify the main threats to the leopard's survival. The final report of the first phase was published in spring 2012. The second phase of this project has started and will identify and assess the local communities' impact on the existing populations of wildlife in the National Park, in order to solicit the local people's cooperation and participation in conservation efforts. Mr. Reza Tavakoli of Pars Glass Co. has made a generous donation to this project, and Minoudasht Olive Oil Company will play an important financial role in supporting its second phase. Mr. Parham Dibadj, a wildlife documentary producer, is shooting a film on the status of the Persian leopard in the GNP.

#### **The Laristan wild sheep survey**

In another first of its kind survey, the Laristan sheep, the smallest wild sheep in the world, was studied in its habitat. This habitat, a region consisting of 4,967,780 hectares includes southern Fars Province, eastern Hormozgan and parts of Bushehr. According to the results of the study, approximately 700 head of sheep were identified in non-protected areas and 500 in protected areas. The conclusions of this study also suggest that the future of this diminutive wild sheep is in danger and seriously requires conservation action. The fieldwork for this survey was conducted by three separate sub-contractors, Plan for the Land Society, Mohitban Society, and Mr. Bijan Dareshuri. The overall project was managed by the Persian Wildlife Heritage Foundation and entirely funded by the Persian Wildlife Foundation (PWF), based in the United States.

#### **Asiatic black bear project**

Our Asiatic black bear project focuses on the Baluchi sub-species *Ursus thibetanus gedrosianus*, living in Iran and Pakistan. This animal ekes out an existence in the harsh environment typical of the study area. Severe drought in Kerman, Hormozgan, and Sistan and Baluchistan provinces threatens the existence of this unique mammal. The project has drawn attention to the long term survival needs of this endangered sub-species. The first phase of the project consisted of performing a head count of the black bears living in these areas using camera traps. Previously, no specific protected area designated as Asiatic black bear habitat existed, but thanks to this project, Bahraseman, Kuh-e Shir and Sang-e Mes protected areas and Zaryab wildlife refuge are now registered as Asiatic black bear protected habitats. Barez Industrial Group, the project's corporate sponsor has agreed to provide a sum of 8,000,000 Rials (approximately \$320) per month for the operation of the project. A book in the series "Iran's Endangered Animals" written by Ali Golshan will be published on the Asiatic black bear, as an awareness tool for



**Dolphins in Hengam Island, Photo: Houman Jowkar**



**Laristan wild sheep, photo: Hassan Moghimi**



**Asiatic black bear, Photo: Hadi Fahimi**



the project. A film depicting the Asiatic black bear in its natural habitat will be produced by Mr. Mehdi Chalani. We are negotiating with Barez Industrial Group to persuade them to support the production of these awareness materials. PWHF is also planning to start an awareness campaign in the advertisement venues of Mahan Airlines together with Kerman Development Company, its main stakeholder.

The first volume of the series **"Iran's endangered species"** called "Cry of the Cheetah" was published in the summer of 2012. The book, written by Mr. Ali Golshan, was entirely funded by PWHF. It is written in Persian with an abstract in English. Three thousand copies have been printed in this edition. The book is about the status of the Asiatic cheetah, the most endangered species living in Iran. Its target audience includes children and adolescents as well as donors and sponsors for fundraising. One thousand copies of the book were bought by Aftab Azarin bilingual school and have been distributed to its students. Barez Industrial Group and UNDP SGP/GEF have expressed interest in sponsoring the second edition of this book, which is to be distributed among communities living around Cheetah habitats, as well as participants in related workshops. We also undertook some projects that required immediate attention. They included the digging of a well and the construction of several waterholes in Geno Protected Area to mitigate the effects of drought and unnecessary grazing of ungulates in lower areas, where they are more susceptible to poaching. We also provided food for a nursing bear in Pardisan Park in Tehran.

PWHF also undertakes conservation-related research projects. This kind of research provides a basis on which sound conservation projects can be identified and implemented. It is critical in the execution of field projects and/or for the planning of long-term programs. This past March PWHF organized a scientific exchange program between Iran and the National Academy of Sciences in the United States of America. In the first exchange trip of this program a group of 13 Iranian scientists and conservationists visited prominent centers active in conservation science in the United States, including the Smithsonian Institution, University of California at Irvine (Department of Environment), State University of New Mexico and different national parks and wildlife refuges.

Together with other organizations and foundations, we also try to exchange knowledge and information by organizing workshops and participating in conservation forums. Last year we collaborated with the Omid-e-Mehr Foundation whose mission is the well-being of young women living in difficult economic and social conditions. We organized 5 workshops for these girls and arranged visits to Khojir National Park close to Tehran. We also participated in Ecotourism forums and other events related to the environment.

This year, we have printed 3 issues of our newsletter. Our newsletter provides current conservation news for those interested in Iranian wildlife and conservation issues. It contains articles and current news on conservation activities that are taking place in Iran, including our own projects. Also, our new website, containing new features, will be launched by the end of 2012. This website will be more interactive and can be accessed using the same website address as before.

We hope to start two major new projects in the coming year. The first is a research project that will analyze the relationship between conservation and hunting and will re-examine current laws and practices. The objective will be to recommend guidelines for the Department of Environment to help them maximize conservation objectives. We have already started the data gathering process. The project is slated for completion by mid-2013. Our second project is the undertaking of a novel method for the management of one of the protected areas. This project will take the form of a co-management program with the Department of Environment aimed at developing a "best practice" management methodology for the national parks and protected areas of Iran.

We appreciate your support and ongoing interest.

The Persian Wildlife Heritage Foundation





# The UN will not leave cheetahs alone



Mr. Murali checking on the Asiatic cheetah's habitat. Photo: Ziyouni

The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) will continue its collaboration with Iran's Department of Environment (DoE) to protect Asiatic cheetahs. Not so long ago, the Asiatic cheetah could be seen across south-western Asia, but today it has gone extinct in most of these areas. Currently, the last remnant population of this beautiful feline only remains on the borders of the Kavir Desert in central Iran and is gravely endangered. The UNDP and the DoE have made joint efforts in the last 10 years to save this species. This collaboration was meant to end by March 2012, but persistent attempts were made to secure continued UNDP partnership. Considering the fact that protecting this animal and its habitats is a never ending task, after visiting the cheetah's habitats and surveying the measures that had been taken to protect the species, Mr. Balasubramaniam Murali, UNDP Resident Representative in Iran, deemed it necessary to continue their collaboration. This cooperation will hence go on until 2015. In this new phase of collaborative work, new conservation methods geared toward participation of local communities will be introduced for a better protection of the Asiatic cheetah and its habitats.



Geno Protected Area's wildlife. Photo: captured camera trap

## Waterholes improve conditions for wildlife in Geno Protected Area

Geno Protected Area, covering 44,000 hectares, is situated in Hormozgan Province and is one of Laristan wild sheep's main habitats. An important part of this area is mountainous, being mainly the continuation of the Zagros Mountain Range which extends from North-western and Western Iran to South-eastern Iran, fading on the borders of the Persian Gulf. Geno Mountains are Hormozgan Province's most elevated area. The Laristan sheep exist on the slopes of low-lying mountains and hills, and even on

elevations up to 2000 meters. The main concerns in the conservation of this species in this area are the proximity of the habitats to human communities and lack of water resources. The Persian Wildlife Heritage Foundation has constructed some waterholes in the highlands of this area in order to protect the sheep and other wildlife in Geno. The main threat to this valuable species is poaching. The wild sheep that descend to lower ground to drink water move out of sight of game guards and often become easy prey

for poachers.

Waterhole construction in highlands has reduced the risk of poaching and helped keep the animals within a range that can easily be monitored. According to Mohammad Salmanpour, Geno Protected Area's manager, the project to construct waterholes has significantly improved protection of the Laristan sheep herds in the region. Currently, herds of up to 30 or 40 can be seen around the waterholes. Other species such as Persian leopards have also been recorded while using waterholes.