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## Editorial

# A nature that withers away

Based on official statistics (and not on informal or unpublished reports) we lost one leopard per month in the last year alone because of direct or indirect encroachment of humans into nature. Twelve leopards killed in one year and, again based on documented data, killing of 58 leopards in the past 6 years. Let's reflect a bit on these figures. How many leopards are now left in the wild?

But let's not forget that this loss is not just about leopards. Leopards and cheetahs attract public attention more, but we are losing thousands of other wildlife and sacrificing the very foundations of our life at the foot of a mindless development that has already had adverse consequences for us and will jeopardize our and other living creatures' habitats. We are burying our trees, pastures and wildlife under heavy bulldozers and tons of cement and tar and asphalt hoping to achieve better days in a developed country. Yet we are overlooking the fact that each step in this unsustainable direction and each stage in this runaway development pattern weaken our very life supporting systems.

Last year, particularly last days of it, were indeed dark days of loss and sorrow for the lovers of our nature and our nation. Those days marked massive destruction of valuable living resources of our country, no matter if this loss involved leopard, gazelle, hyena, partridge, goat's thorn, eagle, salamander or turtle. What gets lost is part of our age-old natural heritage that vanishes forever because of human neglect and wrong decisions. Extinction happens as quickly and conveniently as one can imagine. Nobody thought the tiger that a colonel hunted for pleasure would happen to be the last surviving tiger of Iran. Indeed it gets too late too soon!

Now nobody can tell how long such killings will let our wildlife to survive? One day it is guns, the other day road kills and then epidemics caused by imported species. Nature can so easily finish off. When habitats got destroyed and Urmiya, Hamoun and Bakhtegan lakes dried up and forests were all clear cut and roads crisscrossed habitats, then no place for the living would remain. Life itself will gradually wither away and all that will remain will be desolate land and us humans!

We wish that the coming year will be different and promise better days for us and for all living creatures of our land. We wish a happy Nowruz for us all.

Masoumeh Safaei



Leopard in Touran National Park, Photo by Farmanaz Estandiari

### 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.

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**Saker Falcon cluck (*Falco cherrug*) in Sorkheh-hesar National Park, Photo by Mohamad Tohidifar**



# A study to save hawksbill turtles in the coastal areas of Hengam Island

► **Maryam Eghbali, Nasrin Tayari, Sareh Masoudi, Amir-Hossein Khorgoui, Monireh Ahmdai**

New Idea Institute

In a project to save hawksbill turtles of Hengam Island, after holding some meetings with the members of Ide-ye No (New Idea) Institute and drawing up the preliminary work plan, we began initial studies and mapping of the island. In three days of field trip, we took pictures of the sites, talked with local people and visited the old nesting places across various beaches of the Island. Our field researchers concluded that "Aramesh", "Dardur", and "Old Hengam" beaches are the main egg laying spots for this species.

As a next step, a workshop was organized with the assistance of Hormozgan Department of Environment in the conference hall of the Provincial Office of the Hormozgan DoE on March 3rd 2011 in which consulting engineer presented necessary instructions on recognition, study and conservation of turtles to our project team.

Given the adverse effects of litter on spawning process of the turtles, we organized a campaign to remove garbage from Old Hengam, Dardur and Aramesh beaches with the help of Hormozgan DoE, Environmental Bureau of Qeshm Free Zone, volunteers, and local people of Hengam Island on March 4th 2011. Members of New Idea Institute also used student volunteers to clean up garbage from the beaches of Old Hengam on March 16th 2012.

Field research revealed that rockiness of the coastline, small depth of the shore and presence of man-made mounds make it difficult for turtles to lay eggs. Therefore, in the next phase of the project we built a site for displacement of the

eggs. Our team members had to camp in the area to perform their duties.

The main activity in this project consisted of tagging spawning turtles, counting, measuring and weighing of the eggs that were laid, and displacing the eggs to a safe hatchery. With help from the Environmental Bureau of Qeshm Free Zone, tags were provided for marking of turtles for the period 2010- 2012.

This part of the project officially began on March 12th 2012. In this stage 46 turtles were tagged. Turtles began nesting in the beaches of Old Hengam on March 22nd 2013 and the last nest was made on May 22nd 2013. Turtle eggs began to hatch on May 24th 2013, and the last eggs hatched belonged to nests 29 and 30.

## Threats to the survival of sea turtles of Hengam Island:

- Direct egg harvesting by local people
- Rockiness of the beaches in same areas
- Habitat degradation
- Pollution of the sea
- Existence of garbage in spawning beaches
- Collision with boats

## Rationale for the continuation of the project:

In addition to the aforementioned reasons for displacement of the nests and the fact that this species is seriously endangered, there are other reasons that justify the continuation of this project, including the turtles' importance in recycling of materials, regeneration of the ecosystem, and the aesthetic, cultural, and economic values of the presence of turtles.



Tagging spawning turtles in beaches of Old Hengam./ Photo by Amir hossein Khourguei ▲

▼ Students cleaning up Old Hengam Shore on March 16th 2012./ Photo by Ali Karimi



# Measuring the correlation between distribution and abundance of birds with environmental variables in Sorkheh-Hesar National Park



Little Owl in Sorkheh-Hesar National Park, Photo by mohamad Tohidifar

► Hamid Nahidifar

Many researchers have studied correlations between the distribution and abundance of birds with environmental variables in dry and semi-dry meadows. Some have concluded that distribution of birds in particular areas depend either on climatic patterns or on the morphology of the terrain. Some have introduced elevation as the main factor affecting birds' distribution. It also seems that soil condition affect birds of an area indirectly, as it lets particular vegetation to grow. On the other hand, elevation has been confirmed as an important factor by many experts, to the point that a considerable correlation has been established between rock protrusions in mountainous areas and a rich diversity of species and density in breeding populations. Also, characteristics of vegetation, including the structure of vegetation, impact and control bird populations. Therefore, vegetation is often considered as an important predicting variable for bird distribution in steppes and dry lands. In a research to determine possible correlation between distribution and frequency of birds with environmental variables, we studied the distribution of birds in Sorkheh-Hesar National Park in 1 km<sup>2</sup> cells. This scale has been largely used in landscape ecology studies (Breckle, 1983) and seems to be appropriate for semi-desert areas where bird population densities are low and landscape units are rather large.

Differences in height of a terrain have been the best predictor of diversity, abundance and species combination in the central plateau of Iran. In the studies carried out in Sorkheh Hesar National Park, none of the chosen models showed a meaningful relation with the average elevation or height differences, except for the rival model for predicting the abundance of birds. This result can be attributed to the relative homogeneity of the topography or the relatively small area of Sorkheh-Hesar National

Park which downgrade the role of elevation as an explanatory variable.

The study emphasizes the importance of vegetation for the presence of birds. Birds were less seen in areas where human activity had destroyed the vegetation. This phenomenon can be evidently seen in the northern parts of the Park due to housing constructions and in the southern parts of the Park caused by illegal over-grazing, both of which have resulted in a great decrease in bird populations. If this trend continues, not only bird populations will be affected but also richness of bird diversity will be severely reduced. Although Sorkheh-Hesar National Park faces many issues and problems, it still has a good potential due to its 200-year history as a private game reserve since Qajar period to the present.

Recording 59 observations of different birds in less than 2 months of sampling demonstrates the importance of the National Park for breeding birds and migratory birds that use this spot as feeding and resting grounds during their migration (the importance of the presence of wintering birds has been mentioned in previous studies.) Situated south of the Alborz Range and proximity to diverse habitats such as the Mamlu Dam and Khojir Mountains to the east and Qale-no wetland to the south, Sorkheh-Hesar presents us with a high diversity of habitats in a rather small area of only 40 000 hectares. We therefore urge Park management, eco-tourists and others to make an effort in protecting these sites. In this research, the prominent presence of raptors (birds of prey) shows the Park's richness regarding other animals. Raptors are situated at the top of the food chain and need a full spectrum of prey to feed upon. Therefore, breeding and wintering of raptors in an area is an indicator of the abundance of prey animals and in a way reflects relative security of that area.

# Cohabiting with cheetah

► **Hamed Abolghasemi**  
Persian Wildlife Heritage Foundation (PWHF)

Two years have passed since the Persian Wildlife Heritage Foundation took its lead on the Conservation of the Asiatic Cheetah Project in Turan Biosphere Reserve (TBR). Gladly, the first phase of this project provided us with valuable information on the population of the Asiatic cheetah in this area. Nevertheless, population count of cheetah in an area as vast as Turan is far from being satisfactory. Further studies and more population counts are still in process while expanded studies on other species in current and future phases of the project are planned. Like most other ecological studies employing camera-trapping method, we inevitably come across information and observations on other species cohabiting with the target species of the research. This kind of so-called "fringe information" can be of great help in conservation decision-making. As one cannot ignore mutual relations between components of a habitat and multifaceted management in conservation and ecological sciences, the present report is also based on fringe information collected on a species that frequently shares habitat with the Asiatic cheetah in TBR and elsewhere- the striped hyena.

TBR provides a suitable habitat for hyena as it

nearly matches hyena's needed environment. This claim is more or less confirmed by observing pictures captured from the species by camera traps that were primarily placed to study the Asiatic cheetah in TBR. During this one-year study, species other than the Asiatic cheetah were also observed. Compared with findings of the past studies, the striped hyena appeared more frequently than expected in the pictures. This motivated us to further study the information obtained from this species. Determining population size and density is an important tool in measuring the adaptability of different species with their habitats, and plays an important role in guiding conservation initiatives that attempt to have a positive impact on the survival of the species. Wildlife population estimation is of utmost importance to ecologists and wildlife managers and, as a result, various methods have been developed to estimate population of species. Considering known and unknown relations between different species, estimating the striped hyena population in TBR was chosen as the subject of a research undertaken for an undergraduate thesis in Tehran University. Collecting information from 8958 night-effort camera traps and using

statistical modeling methods for population estimation, around 33 to 45 hyenas were identified in TBR.

As a carcass eater, hyenas play a vital role in preventing the spread of diseases among wildlife in different ecosystems and habitats. This guarantees the health of habitats and their inhabitants including that of the Asiatic cheetah, hyena's most threatened cohabitant in TBR. Therefore, protecting hyenas will evidently play an important role in the survival of Asiatic cheetahs.

The striped hyena "*Hyaena hyeana*" is completely different from the African spotted hyena "*Crocota crocuta*," and shares habitat with the Asiatic cheetah in Turan. As a carcass eater and for no sound scientific reason, this animal is not popular among the general public and sometimes falls victim to human cruelty. Such cruelty is often based on false and superstitious beliefs about some body parts of the animal, providing a motive to kill this animal. Hunting, conflicts with local communities, road accidents and feeding on poisoned prey usually take a toll on hyenas every year. As a result, hyena populations have dwindled in recent years.

Striped hyena, Turan National Park, Photo by Camera trap

Persian Wildlife Heritage Foundation Newsletter / Autumn 2013&Winter 2014

# A nature-lover and honorable man from Southern Khorasan deserts and plains



Pallas's warbler, Naybandan Wildlife Refuge



## ► Arash Moody

Iran's nature lost one of its researchers and supporters on the first day of 2014. Amir Talebi was on a trip in Northern Lut Desert when his car, his everlasting companion, went on a land mine. He lost his life for the sake of what he cherished most, Iran's nature. He had spent most of his years exploring and protecting the nature of his birthplace, the reclusive Southern Khorasan Province. He was a founder or co-founder of several organizations active in eco-tourism and conservation.

Environmental activities and trips had made of him an experienced explorer. His wide-ranging expeditions for nature photography and research on flora and fauna found reflection in several articles and photos in different magazines, books and websites. In one of his last trips to Northern Lut Desert, he recorded the presence of a new bird, never seen before in Iran, the "Pallas's warbler." An article related to this observation is to be published in an internationally renowned magazine. Talebi also photographed Pleske's Ground Jay and recorded the bird's presence for the first time in Southern Khorasan.

After having recorded the sand cat, he continued his research on this endangered species. The photos he took during his research can be found in Ali Golshan's *Cats of Iran*. Participating in photography projects and printing a valuable photography collection on "Southern Khorasan," printing and distribution of posters on "Asiatic cheetah" and "birds of Southern Khorasan" and taking pictures of 189 bird species of this Province, participating in a photography project on the birds of Iran and initiating a bilingual website with Ali Sadr on the same topic, holding workshops to introduce school children with Asiatic cheetah in the schools of Southern Khorasan, collaborating with the Iranian Cheetah Society (ICS) in the first phase of the Asiatic cheetah population estimation project and installation of camera traps in Naybandan Wildlife Refuge, holding various educational workshops on environment and eco-tourism in Southern Khorasan, production of the documentary "Khur Reed Bed," production of documentaries on the deserts neighboring Birjand, collaboration in holding 3 conferences on desert-hiking in Iran's central desert with Aftab Society and the support of UNESCO, exploration of several caves in Southern Khorasan, identification of "Rig-e Lut" trails, and the publication of several articles in national and foreign magazines, are among his achievements during his lifetime. Birds of Southern Khorasan and Insects and Arachnids, as spoils of many years of research, are two books left from him that are ready for publication.

A ceremony was held in the memory of this invaluable researcher with the presence of Her Excellency Dr. Ebtekar, Head of the Department of Environment of Iran, on the last days of the Persian Calendar. "Roteyl (Tarantula) Canyon" was renamed "Amir Canyon" after this accident.

## A BRIEF PRESENTATION OF HIS ACTIVITIES

1997- 2003: "Hamiyan-e Kavir" (Supporters of the Desert) Society, winter ascent to Alamkuh's German Ridge, Sabalan, Molkuh, Laleh Zar, Jupar, Binalud, Shirkuh, as well as Damavand, Taftan and a number of other Iranian summits, co-founding "Mehr-e Birjand" Mountaineering Group, first survey of Northern Lut Desert with a team from Sharif University of Technology, participating in the Damavand Marathon for 15 days

A number of adventure trips to Iran's deserts.

2003- 2005: Production of "Khur Reed Bed" documentary, production of documentaries on deserts close to Birjand, technical assistance in organizing Aftab Society's desert hiking conventions in the Central Desert of Iran which were supported by the UNESCO, exploring and surveying several caves in Southern Khorasan Province, especially the technical "Batun" Cave near Sarayan Township, exploring a route to traverse the sand dunes of the Lut Desert, active participation in NGOs dedicated to fight drug abuse, photography and recording of the presence of the Pleske's Ground Jay in Southern Khorasan, crossing the central desert of Iran (from Abbas Abad to Halvan) on foot, a 120-kilometer trip that took 5-days, collaboration in the production and publication of "Eco-tourism in Southern Khorasan" ordered by Southern Khorasan Department of Environment, co-founder and Chair of the Board of Directors of Hamiyan-e Kavir (Supporters of Kavir) Society, several field trips to the center of the Lut Desert, 2 individual wildlife photography exhibitions, organizing workshops on eco-tourism and environment in Southern Khorasan, publication and distribution of posters on the Pleske's Ground Jay, kaji Saltmarsh, and Southern Khorasan's biodiversity.

2009: Monitoring and recording of the sand cat in Southern Khorasan, and printing related photos Ali Golshan's book "Cats of Iran", published by the Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults, publication of several articles in renowned national and foreign journals

2012: Participating in a photography project and publication of a picture book on Southern Khorasan (Khavaran), ordered by the Province's Art Department, co-founder and Managing Director of "Part Wildlife Discovery Institute", production of posters on the Asiatic cheetah, and 189 different birds of Southern Khorasan.

2012-2013: Collaborating with the Iranian Cheetah Society (ICS) in the first phase of the Asiatic cheetah population estimation project (camera trap installation) in Naybandan Wildlife Refuge with ICS for 1 year, organizing workshops to introduce the Asiatic cheetah to school children in Southern Khorasan, recording a new species of bird, the Pallas's warbler, for the first time in Iran during his trips to Northern Lut Desert, completion of two books, birds of Southern Khorasan and Insects and Arachnids, as the spoils of many years of his research, ready to be published.

# Activities and achievements of the Persian Wildlife Heritage Foundation in 2013– 2014



Javid Elementary School's students in "Cheetah and Soccer" event, Photo by Rosita Fakhr Vaezi

► Arranged by: Sepideh Kashani (PWHF), Abnous Sadeghi (PWHF)

Past year was an eventful year full of different activities for our NGO: execution of various national conservation projects and collaboration in others, including in the international project to save the Asiatic Cheetah, educational and awareness raising programs, participation in conferences and seminars, collaboration with other NGOs, fundraising drives, and moving to a new office space.

## ○ National and International Conservation Projects

As the first Iranian NGO, we became a partner in the second phase of the Conservation of the Asiatic Cheetah Project (CACP), along with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and Department of Environment (DoE). We committed to contribute US\$100,000 to the CACP in a 3-years period, providing them expertise in cheetah habitats and contributing in projects related to the Program.

As a first step in performing the CACP contract, the first phase of the cheetah population



Simultaneous observation of 5 cheetahs in TBR (1 mother and 4 cubs)- Photo by Amirhossein Khaleghi

estimation project in Turan Biosphere Reserve (TBR) was completed. The second phase of the project started in February 2014 with new camera traps installed to monitor cheetahs identified in the first phase of the project. New camera trapping points will be added to the previous ones. We also contributed to the summer census of herbivores (cheetah preys) in TBR. The main objective of this collaboration, in which we benefited from the assistance and advice of international experts in the field, was to find efficient methods for the head count of herbivores. A collaborative workshop on the indigenization of the methods aiming to reduce livestock-wildlife conflict was held in the TBR. As a step to fulfill our obligation to the CACP contract, several ranchers who graze livestock in the area participated in this workshop. In addition to the research we have been doing on the methods of reducing wildlife-livestock conflict, we undertook 3 other studies in the TBR in the form of student projects: a project on striped hyena population estimation, Persian leopard population estimation, and Persian leopard habitat evaluation. An experimental research on the carrying capacity of the TBR for livestock and wild herbivores was agreed with university researchers. This project will get operational next year and will mainly focus on onager populations in the biosphere reserve in its initial phase.

Following a proposal to enter into a co-management scheme in Parvar Protected Area, we have already formed our work groups and defined our 1-year and 5-year plans. Although we are still in the process of negotiating this scheme with the DoE, all preliminary planning has been taken and we are fully prepared to go ahead with this program.

Based on the findings of a study we previously did on the conditions of Laristan sheep and as a follow up project, we have determined a suitable conservation zone for this species and begun negotiating with local groups and individuals to submit a proposal to the DoE for a private reserve. If an agreement is reached with the DoE and other parties, the PWHF will act as a consultant and render its professional services.

After the end of the first phase of the Persian Leopard Conservation Project in Golestan National Park (GNP), we supported two research projects that were implemented as requirements for PhD dissertations at Göttingen University in Germany. These projects, by Mr. Mahmoud Soufi, aim a population count of the red deer and roe deer as leopard's preys. On the same path, Mr. Arash Ghodoussi, also a PhD student in Germany's Göttingen University started a population count on wild sheep and wild boar (also leopard's preys) in the GNP in which innovative methods are being used for the first time. PWHF has collaborated in this study by providing pertinent expertise. Data collection for a social study in GNP, undertaken by PWHF's field researchers and entitled "GNP local community's points of view on the environment and DoE's conservation activities" has ended and a report will be published after data analysis. We hope that the findings of this study will help us in the second phase of our GNP Project in which we would like to come up with measures to decrease poaching of leopard preys, as the main threat to the survival of the Park's leopard population. From the beginning of this project, PWHF has attempted to create a



Experts and volunteers of Conservation of the Asiatic Cheetah in TBR, checking different methods for determining herbivores' carrying capacity in TBR, Photo by Delaram Ashayeri



"Mam, the baluchi black bear" Festival- Photo by Mehdi Chalanai

An example of information panels installed in Eram Sabz Zoo



base to involve local communities and the ways they can share in the benefits of the GNP thus reducing pressures such as poaching on the Park. Hence, a number of meetings were held with hunters. In such meetings hunters were the main participants. In one particular meeting, which was held as a workshop to create an atmosphere of mutual understanding among the Park's stakeholders, aside from 30 hunters from the North and West of GNP, local clergymen, and a number of interested nature-lovers and the National Park's Director of the time, Mr. Rostaghi, took part.

The Asiatic Black bear Conservation Project is operating in Sistan and Baluchistan and Kerman Provinces with the collaboration of Mohitban Society. Barez Industrial Group financially supports the project in Kerman. "Mam, the Baluchi black bear" Festival, organized by Mr. Mehdi Chalani and supported by the PWHF, was held in Sistan and Baluchistan to raise awareness and familiarize local communities with this species.

The second phase of the Bottlenose dolphin Conservation project in the Persian Gulf started. In this phase, based on the expertise and knowledge gained from the earlier phase and with the help of PWHF experts, local groups continued their work. A graduate university project has begun social studies on the area. With the aim of empowerment of local communities, we provided financial support for the construction of Shibderaz Village's handicrafts shop.

Mr. Kourosh Behzadi, a friend of PWHF, voluntarily pedaled from Tehran to Qeshm (Persian Gulf) conveying the message of protecting dolphins. He also pedaled from the western-most point to the eastern-most point of the Caspian Sea coastline, conveying the message of protecting the coastline, its natural environment and its species.

#### ○ Awareness raising and education

The Foundation's new website started to run both in Persian and English. We also published 2 issues of the Persian Wildlife Newsletter. As a public awareness raising material, we provided financial support for the publication of the cave salamander poster and brochure, and two books, Field Guide to the Reptiles and Amphibians of Iran and Animal Tracks and Signs, both printed and published by Iranshenasi Publications. We also collaborated with Eram Sabz Zoo in designing and providing new information panels on several species.

In-line with our public awareness raising goals, we sought the collaboration of Tehran's Municipality to install 10 banners illustrating the conservation status of the Asiatic Cheetah on the National Cheetah Day. On the same occasion a teaser with the same subject was screened inside all trains of Tehran Metro and, Parsian Bank branches and Karafarin Bank's main branch for 10 days.

The book "Iran, Crossroads of Wildlife", featuring wildlife pictures of Iranian species taken by a number of renowned Iranian wildlife photographers and sponsored by one of our Board of Trustee members, is in the final stages of its production. The proceeds from the sale of this book will go to the PWHF's activities.

The Persian Wildlife Heritage Foundation's managers and experts believe that environmental education must start from early age, when the child's brain is capable of receiving lots of information. Therefore, we started to work with Aftab Azarine, Javid, Soudeh, and Takrim schools and held various educational workshops on simple environmental subjects. We also continued our collaboration with Omid-e-Mehr Foundation.

Based on our partnership policy with other NGOs involved in environmental activities, we decided to lend some camera traps to Iran Environmental Monitoring Society (PAMA), for a population study on the Persian leopard in Taleqan area.

Sabz Press News Agency<sup>1</sup> collaborated with PWHF to organize a workshop on reporting skills for NGOs active in wildlife conservation to upgrade reporting capacities on wildlife facts and news. Different NGOs were invited to participate in this workshop, at the end of which each participant received a certificate.

#### ○ Seminars, Conferences and exhibitions

The Persian Wildlife Heritage Foundation participated in various seminars and conferences to exchange knowledge and experience. The Second National Student's Conference on Conservation Ecology held in Shahid Beheshti University was one of these programs. PWHF participated in this Conference by presenting a paper on the "Conservation of the Bottlenose dolphin project" in the form of a poster and a paper entitled "A glance at the Asiatic cheetah records in Turan Biosphere Reserve during different seasons."

Amirhossein Khaleghi, one of our experts, participated in the Arabian leopard Conference in Oman and presented the findings and research methodology of the "Persian leopard Conservation Project in GNP" as



a successful model.

PWHF also collaborated with Iran Heritage Foundation (IHF) and Persian Wildlife Foundation (PWF) in organizing a symposium in London, "Iran's Natural Heritage: A catalyst symposium to spark measurable change," in January 2014. In this symposium, environmental researchers and critics discussed environmental issues of Iran and proposed solutions for the country's most drastic environmental problems. The necessity to collaborate with Iranian NGOs and the DoE was emphasized during this event.

#### ○ Fundraising

Parviz Tanavoli, prominent painter and sculptor, in an unprecedented move for an environmental NGO, donated 5 of his valuable artworks to the cause of protection of our nation's wildlife and nature. These works were auctioned in Sam Center, Tehran, in October 2013. The auction was sponsored by Fratelli Rossetti. During this event, PWHF had the pleasure of hosting many nature-lovers and admirers of fine arts.

The Foundation also became a member of 1% for the Planet and now benefits from 1% of Khoshkmana (Mivita) Company's annual sale. With increasing awareness about social responsibilities on the part of Iranian corporations, we succeeded in drawing the attention of several construction companies and businesses to help us as corporate sponsors. Mr. Firouz Firouz, and Mrs. Farideh Momtahn, both good friends of PWHF, helped us generously in this drive. We now benefit from such sponsors as "Poobor (Roja)," "Keyson," "Iranshahr Civil Engineering Group" and "Hi-printer" companies.

Dr. Rohani the CEO of Persit Company, a manufacturer of fiber cement construction material, is one of our main sponsors. Dr. Rohani has provided our new office space and part of our office furniture free of charge. For the interior modifications of the new office Meysam Forudineh, interior designer, provided valuable consultation. Unfortunately he lost his life in an accident. We are thankful to him and keep his memory alive.

Past year was a turning point in the Foundation's history. We reviewed our general policies and prepared strategic plans for our future activities and operations on the basis of experiences gained in the last three years and experiences of other NGOs in the world. We think by implementing these plans we will be able to enhance our organizational capacities.

1. www.isdle.ir



## "Animal Tracks and Signs" book published

The book **Animal Tracks and Signs** by Saeedeh Bani-Asadi and Shahab Cheraghi, and supervised by Dr. Afshin Alizadeh is now available in book stores.

Many of those who take nature trips are curious to know about their surroundings. These travelers are eagerly looking for signs of living creatures in nature.

Some animals are nocturnal or too spooky and as such it is difficult to spot them. Yet, if we can recognize their tracks and signs, we can be assured of their existence in the area. Wildlife specialists too need to have a field guide to better recognize and differentiate marks left by various species.

In response to this need, particularly among wildlife specialists and nature-lovers, **Animal tracks and signs** was published. The photos and illustrations in this book help nature goers during their outdoor activities to recognize signs left by various animals. Animals' signs include remains of feeding, feces, urine, regurgitated material, and tracks, categorized in this book in different chapters.

The initial idea of this book goes back to when the main author translated a book by the same name published by Oxford Publications and presented it as a discussion topic during his undergraduate studies. Part of the present book is a translation of the original book, but due to discrepancies between the information presented in that reference book and species found in Iran, the authors decided to revise parts of the original English edition and add sections after consulting with field specialists.

This book is published by Iranshenasi Publications. PWHF and some of its donors have provided financial assistance to the publication of this book.

Painting workshop in Soudeh School, Photo by Abnous Sadeghi



## Environmental education in Soudeh Elementary School

An educational art program on the Asiatic cheetah was organized in Soudeh Elementary School, in Tehran's 2nd district. Conservation of the Asiatic Cheetah Project (CACP), the Persian Wildlife Heritage Foundation (PWHF), collaborated with M.Sahar Ziaie and Mrs. Zahra Abdus following this creative idea they had this 6-week project. After learning about the environment and endangered species, particularly the Asiatic cheetah, students drew beautiful paintings depicting their wishes for the future of this animal. Each painting reflected the children's sweet dreams and hopes for the cheetah: celebrating birthdays of the beautiful cheetah cubs, preventing construction of roads in the animal's habitat, and the dream of having a vast and clean land for Iranian cheetahs in their last refuge, Iran.

## Qeshm's recreational wharfs get regulated

Mohammad Dakhteh, Head of the Environment Office of Qeshm Free Zone Organization, has reported that 4 recreational wharfs that are used as launching points for boats that take tourists to visit dolphins are in the process of being regulated. In response to negotiations and perseverance of that office, the Qeshm Free Zone Organization has consented to allocate 2 billion IRR to the wharfs of Shibderaz, Kandalu, Soheili and Salakh Port. This fund has been granted in accordance with the need to promote ecotourism sites linked with the local communities' activities situated at the very heart of the protected area. The Conservation of the bottlenose dolphin project, which has been operating for 2 years and is financially supported by UNDP/GEF/SGP, the Persian Wildlife Heritage Foundation (PWHF) and Qeshm Free Zone Organization in Shibderaz Village and Qeshm Island, had previously, made a similar request to regulate the wharfs.

The regulation of the wharfs began shortly after the allocation of the

fund. Shibderaz wharf, situated in a recreational zone for visitors who come to see the spawning of hawksbill turtles, needed physical reconstruction, installing electricity, construction of management booths, restrooms and parking space. Kandalu recreational wharf situated on the dolphin's bay zone also needed physical reconstruction, construction of management booths, restrooms and parking space.

The hawksbill turtle is an important and endangered species and protection of its habitat and safety is essential for its conservation. Shibderaz's coastline is one of the main spawning areas for this animal. Many newborns hatch from eggs laid on this shore every year. In the past few years, influx of tourists to Qeshm- Hengam area has put pressure on the dolphins living in the surrounding waters and has put the species' survival in peril. Regulating wharfs at dolphin's bay will result in more effective control and monitoring of visiting patterns and the number of visitors.



Landscaping on Shibderaz wharf range, Photo by M. Dakhteh