

- Community participation in protecting Laristan wild sheep
- Community-based conservation projects with SGP
- Reviving the habitats of Aliabad-e Chehelgazi area
- Participation of Local Communities in Wildlife Conservation
- Community-based Conservation in Kalmorz Mountain
- Human-carnivore conflicts in Hormozgan Province
- Environmental events

- PWHF Participates in Cheetah National Day
- Bazi Yافت: Recycle Games
- Collaboration of PWHF and Hermes Records



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Editorial

Participatory management: Our superior choice

Any time there is talk of private sector entering "participation in conservation", whether in the areas managed by the Department of Environment (DoE) or in free (non-managed) areas, the Department erects impermeable barriers. This happens because the predominant attitude in the minds of most decision makers in the government sector is infused with threats and challenges, and hence all courses and detours that may possibly lead to a risk and means of preventing them gets studied and investigated in thousands of man-hour work, and at the end the best outcome of all this pondering and investigation is to brush off the original issue altogether. This is similar to the story of a man who went to a tailor to get a suit sewn, kept on cautioning the tailor to make sure he would not cut the sleeves too short or get the length too long or the collar too wide. He went on and on, while his tone was getting louder, and in the end left the tailor altogether without any order!

Now, the story of private sector bringing capital and manpower into the realm of conservation of nature and sustainable utilization of areas under jurisdiction of the DoE has more or less met a similar fate. Suspicious about motives behind private sector initiatives go from likelihood of usurping or changing the zoning of the lands contracted all the way to smuggling of rare species. Unfortunately, there is little trust in the people who are the true proprietors and custodians of this land and little regard to the fact that without the people's help and participation the downward trend toward lost opportunities will continue unabated.

We all know that the DoE with its current capacity, both in terms of personal as well as in its physical capabilities, is not capable of protecting even 30 percent of the areas that fall under its management, let alone the vast expanses of non-protected areas. It is interesting to note that currently around 17 million hectares of the country's lands are managed by the DoE, for which it only has 2300 game wardens. Even if we lower the protection standards to 2000 hectares per game warden, instead of 1000 hectares per game warden that is common practice around the world, only 4.6 million hectares of the managed areas are patrolled by the wardens. In other words, only 27 percent of the managed areas are under control, and to reach an accepted standard we need another 6200 game wardens. Clearly, current conditions do not allow recruitment of more manpower and further improvement in the protection capacity of the areas. Given such deficiencies on the one hand, and the continuing degradation of the country's habitats and decrease of wildlife on the other, are we not justified to ask why there is such negligence on the part of the authorities toward the existing potential of the private sector merely because of untested fears about future consequences?

Yet, with new management and changing attitudes among authorities there is new talk of involving local communities and private initiatives in wildlife habitats, particularly in "free" or unmanaged areas. This may indicate an eventual opening up to the participatory projects, which seem to be the most effective means of improving conditions of wildlife habitats in Iran.

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.

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Aqil Chaman para- from Janah

Village, surrounding Laristan wild sheep habitat.

Photo by Sepideh Kashani

Community participation in protecting Laristan wild sheep

► **Sam Radjabi**
Persian Wildlife Heritage Foundation

Water scarcity during warm seasons, along with poaching, is an important threat to the survival of Laristan sheep in its main habitats. Lingering drought in the past few years has exacerbated the problem. Local people in the villages surrounding Laristan sheep habitats have followed a tradition to build and maintain watering troughs for the wildlife. Presence of these nature lovers in and around habitats helps to enhance security for the wildlife. Some of the local people have maintained close ties and cooperated with the local bureaus of the Department of Environment and, in many occasions, have informed the officials of the entry of illegal hunters to the area, and have even endangered their lives to stop poachers.

Unfortunately, various financial and social problems continue to diminish interest in and prioritization for such good deeds on the part of local advocates of conservation. As a consequence of lower involvement of the local conservationists in protecting wildlife, we may witness more cases of wildlife falling prey to poachers because of going outside safe areas in search of water or more frequent entry of poachers into wildlife habitats. Still, there are some people in the area who continue to help wildlife. There are even signs of newer forms of environmental activities.

For instance, at the request of the people of Kukherd and Herang villages, a workshop on environment and wildlife was held recently. Besides, some influential people of the surrounding communities are showing support for the cause of protecting the wildlife of the area. More than anything else, local parties interested in the environmental issues need the support and cooperation of environmental groups.

The local groups can have most impact in any environmental initiative, but they lack access to latest scientific information and know little of modern conservation techniques. In some cases, they need outside financial assistance for projects such as building and maintaining watering troughs and patrolling of the wildlife habitats. In all such matters, they can benefit immensely from environmental NGOs that are willing to join hand with local activists.

We are hoping that, in addition to earlier social activities and conservation efforts that we have made in the area, our joint venture with Hormozgan Wildlife Fund along with active participation of local groups and individuals will usher into steady steps in the preservation of Laristan wild sheep and conservation of other species and habitats of this region.

After dredging a spring in Lavaredin Area. Photo by Hassan Pishvaei



A decade of work experience with community – based conservation projects:

An interview with Laleh Daraie, SGP Iran National Coordinator

► **Sheyda Ashayeri**
Persian Wildlife Heritage Foundation

Since the current issue of the Persian Wildlife Newsletter is dedicated to the participatory approach in conservation, and since many Iranian NGOs were introduced to such projects through SGP, we arranged an interview with Ms. Laleh Daraie, SGP/GEF/UNDP's National Coordinator. Iran is the 54th country among more than 120 countries to have the SGP actively running programs in its soil.

This interview took place on Wednesday, July 2, 2014, in SGP headquarters, Tehran.

How did SGP start working in Iran and how did it define the earliest conservation projects that entailed participatory approach?

As a matter of fact, when SGP started working in Iran back in 2001, there was no literature on participatory approaches to conservation.

Apart from a couple of projects carried out with a similar approach, we had no base to learn from or to use as a model. This means that we did not have enough knowledge and qualified staff to do the job in the beginning and had to gain more experience and learn more over time to gradually take shape. Evidently, for SGP to become what it is and how it works today on various subjects and areas, we had to overcome many problems and hurdles. Perhaps it is interesting to know that in many countries SGP works only in one area, for instance a specific lake, but in Iran we work on 3 main project areas: Persian Gulf, the Caspian and Zagros. We have also managed to add Turan Biosphere Reserve to our list. Looking back at SGP's history in Iran, we notice that SGP itself started to work as a participatory project, has self-modified, and has taken the shape that it is today.

How do you (SGP) define participation and participatory approach?

Today, there are many schemes that fit this concept: local preserves and private sector management to local community involvement and even joint projects with the public. To give a succinct definition, participatory approach is one that lets local communities get involved in the management of resources in their area. From our point of view, local communities should be a part of the management of the area where they live. What we basically need to do is to empower them and equip them if needed.

Education and empowerment are important pillars of participatory approach projects. According to your experience, which points should be taken into account in order to render such activities more effective and sustainable?

Speaking about education for instance, I think education by itself is not as effective and efficient. Education should be done in groups and should be promotional. Education should lead to the emergence of groups that are willing to continue the work and to take it beyond what they have learnt. Educating and empowering local communities need flexibility. Enough knowledge on local communities is needed in order to plan appropriate educational and empowerment programs, and only then can we expect educated and empowered local groups to carry out what has been carefully planned. It is often the case that after we have planned a program, the local community reveals, to our dismay, its real educational and empowerment needs. In such cases we need to have enough flexibility to change the program and/or how it is implemented to make sure



Photo by SGP

it accords with their actual needs. We often see in participatory programs a list of skills such as accounting or marketing that is assumed to be required to empower a given community; whereas such skills may not be their real needs at all. This way of thinking and working will put resources to waste and prevent us from hearing and understanding the real needs of local communities. Flexibility in educational and empowerment programs means that after we have determined the real needs of the community and began the work, we should still have readiness to identify and provide the missing pieces which we had not taken into account earlier and which may give a boost to our community.

It is important to note that in participatory projects what is written on the paper may be different from what may actually be the case and that empowerment can take place in many possible ways. For instance, reviving fabric weaving by hand in Qale-bala, an important village neighboring Turan Biosphere Reserve in which a major cheetah conservation project is being carried out, had not been previously thought of as a means of empowerment for local women. But the idea emerged from the community itself and provided some measure of identity and unity for the local community. There was no sound loom in the village and bits and pieces had to be collected from different homes. The last piece was of course someone that knew how to weave with this traditional loom and she had to be invited from Shahrud to come and to teach the village women. As a last work I should say that education and empowerment should always be fitted to the culture and the needs of the target community.

Are SGP projects assessed once they are finished to measure their success and to ensure sustainability?

As mentioned earlier, participatory projects is different from other projects, and this explains why monitoring and assessment of conservation projects which incorporate participatory approach cannot be done by an outside persons or groups who come and spend a few hours in the area. In such projects, those in charge and the facilitators have to constantly observe, monitor, and record all that takes place. They should constantly learn from changes and modify activities accordingly. We

interactions that we can detect the best course of action and, if needed, move to rectify the original plan. The entire process needs to be recorded so that we can learn and benefit from our experiences in the course of the program as well as in future programs.

We speak of the participatory approach in many conservation and development projects, while many of the activities carried out depart from the definition of participation. What are the things that you do not define as participation? Participation does not mean

As the conventional top-down management methods have failed to tackle environmental problems and have often led to more problems, some remedial methods have been suggested, including joint problem identification, participatory action planning, participatory project formulation, community-based action, documentation and analysis, participant observation, and monitoring.



Related products to the Hawksbill turtle conservation project, Shibderaz Village, Qeshm Island. Photo by SGP

that in any project we need to enlist participation of an NGO. Neither does it mean to attach photos of the locals to our report. These are only means by which we can draw attention to our activities to raise more funds in the larger society. If our activities in the area succeed in creating a sense of belonging toward the project in the local community, then we will be reassured that we can use collected funds properly. Awareness raising and fundraising activities should not be detached from the main work in the field; such detachment will cause loss of trust and sense of ownership (of the project) among local people. Violations, conflicts, and other problems in the area mainly have to do with the local people themselves and therefore they need to participate even in the planning of the projects. In some reports made of the participatory projects the name and identity of the local community hardly get mentioned. See, it is not just their name or logo that is of any importance: rather, it is the way in which we maintain our ties with the local community throughout the whole process. The sense of ownership and trust, both as principles of participatory approach, should be cultivated among local community during

have principles in each project which may lead to changes or events when transferred to the community through our activities and presence in the area. We need to constantly monitor such interactions and likely changes. The monitoring should be done on a participatory and team-work basis. Different groups have to perpetually meet and interact in the course of our activities. It is through such

work; otherwise, our efforts will seem as mere publicity.

When discussing participation we should also consider the issue of power. In participatory projects, concentration of power is not helpful; power has to rotate and shared. If a project has been going on for 5 years and its work plan is still being decided and written in Tehran, it has not been a successful participatory program. Participatory projects have to make room for all empowered layers of the community to take turn in decision making. In the early stages of a project there may not be suitable or empowered persons or layers in the community to participate meaningfully in the program. We often experience this in our projects, but we need to be patient. What matters is that all of those involved in a project to view themselves as partners in a horizontal arrangement side by side, and learn from each other and build a network that is so tightly woven that with minor disruptions things would not fall apart.

Some of the projects that have been carried out with a participatory approach to protect and conserve habitats or species are the following: Hawksbill turtle, Asiatic cheetah, Asiatic black bear, Persian leopard, Brown bear, Houbara bustard, Euphrates turtle, Emperor newt, Mugger crocodile, Caspian seal, White-headed duck, Dolphin, Brown trout, Caucasian squirrel and some migratory birds.



Participatory management: A method to revive the habitats of Aliabad-e Chehelgazi area

► **Mohsen Ramezani, Azadeh Jafari**

The idea of protecting Aliabad-e Chehelgazi's habitats took hold about 4 years ago. Consent and support of the local community and support of local and regional officials was of utmost importance to the planning team of the project. Fortunately the project was warmly received by the local community which led to a growing interest in investing in the project. So far, the following steps have been taken in the implementation of the project:

- Preliminary studies for a complete knowledge of area have been done with the help of DoE experts, game wardens, local knowledge holders and veteran hunters.
- Preparing a proposal and rational for the reserve containing technical information, goals, executive programs and various area maps, and exact geographical coordinates of the area with a view on private game reserve models from other countries such as England.
- Negotiating with local officials, such as Tangchenar village council, precinct officials of Mehriz and governorship, Yazd Provincial officials and Yazd Deputy to gain their support for the private game reserve and participation of the local community in the conservation of the area.
- Holding several meetings with the inhabitants of local villages and recruiting four active and well-reputed youth as reserve guards, who have so far discovered several cases of poaching and arrested nearly 10 poachers and confiscated some unauthorized weapons with the help of game wardens.
- Posting signs that serve to describe and

define the parameters of the proposed reserve in Aliabad area under the supervision of the provincial office of Yazd Department of Environment.

- Installing 3 water tanks and constructing 2 water reservoirs and a number of watering troughs for wildlife and regular carrying of water by tankers.

Installing 10 camera traps at various sites including next to watering troughs to record different species in the area. (One of the camera traps recorded a leopard in 2013).

- Obtaining, reconstructing and provisioning a building in Tangchenar to serve as the private game reserve office and a resting place for the employees and game guards.

- Purchasing 4 motorcycles, 5 binoculars and 3 cameras for the reserve guards to record events and take pictures of wildlife and to patrol the area.

During past 4 years, nearly 250 million Tomans (equivalent to USD 85000) have been spent, without any governmental contribution. The outstanding participation of the local community has greatly helped in reaching the expected goals. We hope that continued conservation efforts in Aliabad-e Chehelgazi that borders Kalmand Protected Area will serve as a shield to protect this valuable habitat of the Asiatic cheetah.

The designated area is one of the non-protected areas of Yazd Province and is situated 35 kilometers south-east of Mehriz, bordering the villages of Tangchenar and Aliabad-e Chehelgazi. It offers very good

natural conditions for various animal and plant species. Some of the important animal species in this habitat are: leopard, gazelle, wild goat, wild sheep, hyena, caracal, Houbara bustard, Pleske's ground jay, Caspian snowcock, chukar partridge, see-see partridge, and different types of hunting birds. 120 hectares of this area has been approved for a private reserve by the Province Natural Resources office, Department of Tourism, Ministry of industry and mines, and other organs in charge. Currently, the dossier of the reserve is in the process of being sent to the Supreme Council of the Environment for final approval.

Leopard caught on camera trap bought by local people in chehelgazi area



Participation of Local Communities in Wildlife Conservation



Mahmoud Zagh, local environmental guardian in Lavaredin's Kuh-Sefid area (Laristan wild sheep habitat), Photo by Taher Ghadrian

► **Sheyda Ashayeri**
Persian Wildlife Heritage Foundation

The number and extent of protected areas in the world is a common criterion for measuring success in the protection of biodiversity. In traditional conservation method, also called “exclusionary conservation,” it was believed that we need to exclude all type of human activity from pristine nature in order to preserve it. From 1900 to 1960s, about 1000 zones across the earth were designated and recorded as protected areas. During these years and until the 1980s, thousands of locals were forced to leave their villages. Not only they lost the right to use natural resources for their livelihoods, but they also started to see their unique culture and tradition, a result of centuries of interaction and coexistence with nature, in danger. The exile of the locals from pristine areas created thousands of “conservation refugees.” This line of action on the part of the protectors of biodiversity was severely criticized by the activists and policymakers in the field of development and empowerment of the poor, as they started to face a flow of refugees who were detached from the environment on which their survival depended and had been relegated to extreme poverty. Critics charged that the protectors of biodiversity had neglected the human dimensions and went to the extent of calling this a new type of colonialism: “environmental colonialism.”

Gradually, conservationists realized that although the benefits of protecting national parks and protected areas are global, local communities are the ones who bear the costs. Exclusionary conservation, advocating “fences and fines”, not only fared poorly in terms of development and human needs but also failed to meet the demands of effective conservation. This is because most of the local populations exiled from parameters of the parks had to live close to them and continued to eke out a living by illegally using natural resources of the protected areas by way of grazing their livestock, farming or even poaching.

The failure of the “fences and fines” method and the increasing international emphasis on raising local people’s welfare led to a new concept of conservation called community-based conservation (CBC). CBC aims to re-combine welfare of the local communities with protection of biodiversity, compensating for the losses caused by the gap between conservation and local communities’ welfare. In this approach, the goals of conservationists and community welfarists converge and protecting biodiversity finds congruence with fighting against poverty and promoting sustainable development.

This approach is founded on the hypothesis that local communities are more interested in and motivated to sustainable use of their surrounding natural resources than the government and non-local private organizations. The approach also assumes that local communities are more capable of managing their natural resources more efficiently using traditional and indigenous methods or new and modern methods that gain insight from traditional knowledge. In this approach, bottom-up management, utilizing indigenous knowledge and experience, involvement of local people in conservation activities, and sharing with them the benefits of protecting pristine nature that surrounds them, are highly valued. Partnership in conservation and sharing benefits thereof can take different shapes and be done in different ways. This kind of partnership, for instance, can be done in the form of direct payment of certain benefits to local communities, implementing managed use of natural resources, and allocating hunting quotas to be sold for the benefit of the entire community. Building schools, water wells and other social infrastructure and creation of jobs are often examples of how community-based conservation can serve rural development in communities that live in the peripheries of national parks and other protected areas.

Today, there is a growing understanding among conservationists that efficient management of resources requires fair access to natural resources, providing sustainable livelihoods for local communities, and reduction of poverty through participatory and empowering processes. They have come to realize that success of conservation projects is intertwined with a real concern for the economic, social, and cultural needs of the people who live inside or in the peripheries of the protected areas.

Participatory approach is an outcome derived from research and experience in the two fields of development and conservation, and has become the main cause of action in conservation in the world today. Yet, this does not mean that the CBC will necessarily lead to success in both mentioned fields. Success in CBC projects depends on constant monitoring of activities, adapting them to the needs and capacities of the local people and then social structures, observing changes, incorporating enough flexibility in designing and implementing projects, in a way that the goals of either conservation or sustainable development, are not lost at the expense of the other.

Community-Based Conservation in Kalmorz Mountain

► **Sam Radjabi**

Persian Wildlife Heritage Foundation (PWHF)

Kalmorz Mountain extends from Kahnuj to Faryab in Kerman Province. Unfortunately this habitat has been severely damaged during the past decade. There have been no traces of Asiatic black bear or leopard for the past 40 years, and ungulate populations have also severely diminished.

Kalmorzi brothers founded "Kalmorz Nature-Lovers Society" a few years ago. They have worked hard to educate people and thus to protect a valuable habitat in their region, which is today one of the safest habitats outside the officially protected areas of the Kerman Province. Their success can be gauged by the fact that the Asiatic black bear has returned since spring of 2014. The greatest wish of Adel Salari Kalmorzi, one of the brothers who had filmed bears in the area, is that leopards also return. According to him, "leopard marks true majesty of our area."

The Persian Wildlife Heritage Foundation in collaboration with Mohitban Society and with financial support from Barez Industrial Group, held 5 workshops in Kahnuj to promote environmental culture. On the side, we interviewed Mansour Kalmorzi, one of the brothers.

How did you come to think of protecting the area?

For various reasons, mainly urban expansion, poaching and over-killing of wildlife had increased in Kahnuj area, and if it had continued unabated, we would have been left with a bleak picture of nature and plant and animal life to show to our future generations.

Where did you start from?

Back in 2003 and 2004, we presented our plan to Kahnuj DoE several times, but did not get their approval. In 2012, with a group of friends, God willing, we started serious work in mosques surrounding Kalmorz Mountain area. We held various meetings in different places to speak of the benefits of protecting wildlife, and to promote environmental culture among people. The elderly local esteemed individuals helped us greatly in this matter.

What feedbacks did you get?

Only a few people agreed with our plan in the beginning, but perseverance and incessant meetings changed their attitudes towards our goals.

How did you cope with those who seemed reluctant to accept you? In what way and to what extend did they disagree with you?

Since we were locals and had comprehensive knowledge of the area's people, we talked face-to-face with those who disagreed. We invited most of them to our homes and conveyed to them the Society's pious and benevolent objectives. Some changed their minds, joined the group, and began to support and promote it. Those who were more vigorous in their disapproval of us at least ceased to oppose us openly once they saw our enthusiasm.

How did the supporters help you?

Many people gave us moral support and encouraged us to go ahead with them, but hardly anyone came up with financial assistance and we had to cover all expenses ourselves.

How and when did your relationship with Kahnuj DoE start?

As previously mentioned, we had some relations with Kahnuj DoE since 2003. But we started to work more closely and seriously with them since 2012. We would like to thank the officials of the local office for their collaboration and support.

How do you obtain people's consent?

By involving them, transparently communicating the Society's goals, and explaining the importance of protecting the environment. There are still a few who disagree with us for personal reasons and interest.

What are your future plans?

Based on the promising potentials of the area, one of the main programs of our Society is to create a safe zone for wildlife and conduct research on rare species.

What do you need to continue working?

We need to act not just talk so that we can convince the officials and those aware of the importance of the environment and natural resources in our daily lives to give us resolute support.

What is your most important achievement?

From a cultural standpoint, people of the area have come to learn more and more about the importance of the environment, and many people are already helping us. From a physical and regional standpoint, Kalmorz Mountain today is one of the safest areas for animal species, and this can be defended by the fact that the Asiatic black bear, a rare and endangered species, has returned to the area. Today, we see several herds of wild sheep and wild goat roaming the mountain.

What is your ultimate wish for the area?

That everyone would know of the role and importance of conservation and would try to compensate for the losses we incurred before, and finally that we would be able to create a Protected Area for the wildlife in Kahnuj.



A preliminary study on the status of human-carnivore conflicts in Hormozgan Province



Leopard put down in Bastak after attacking livestock

► **Hassan Pishvaei**
Hormozgan Wildlife Fund

Human-wildlife conflict is any interaction between humans and wildlife that could have harmful effects on humans and wildlife. Such conflicts could lead to damage and loss for either humans or wildlife or for both. Our observations indicate that there is a high level of conflict between humans with bears and leopards, especially in eastern Hormozgan. The main cause of these conflicts is also the decrease or local extinction of the carnivores' natural preys, such as wild goat and wild sheep due to poaching, and inadequate methods of livestock management (free-roaming livestock unguarded by shepherds or dogs).

Poaching has disrupted the life cycle in the area and severe decrease in prey populations has forced carnivores, especially leopards, to come close to villages to hunt livestock. Livestock has an important financial value for local people, and instead of rectifying livestock management methods, they opt for simplest method available; i.e., to eliminate carnivores by using leg-hold traps or poisoned bait. Livestock insurance policies have not been effective due to some problems, including the requirement of producing evidence such as the dead animal's identification plaque (which often disappears after carnivore attack) and various abuses that have been made of the insurance policies, leading to a distrust of government insurance schemes.

According to studies that have been carried out and based on international experiences, two sets of solutions have been suggested to reduce human-bear conflict: increasing public awareness and educating local populations, paying direct indemnities as human-oriented solutions; and creating physical barriers, electrical fences and habitat management (planting nutritious plants for bears such as the ziziphus and reviving abandoned palm groves), as species-oriented solutions. In the case of human-leopard conflicts again two sets of solutions suggested are the following: awareness raising and education, paying direct compensations and rectifying livestock management as human-oriented solutions; and habitat management while increasing the number of

prey as species-oriented solutions.

To reduce human-carnivore conflicts in Hormozgan Province, which has the highest priority in terms of protecting these species, Hormozgan Wildlife Fund, with the support of Hormozgan Province DoE has come up with the idea of establishing a community-based livestock insurance system to help with the conservation of this endangered species. This fund will operate as a cooperative with all livestock and palm grove owners as its members. It will pay indemnities according to the fund's charter and procedures, and will attempt to establish trust between local communities and departments and organizations involved in protection of nature. Reducing conflicts by paying indemnities, changing negative attitudes towards carnivores, collecting information on the magnitude of the conflict and identifying critical zones are among our short-term goals. Increasing the number of natural prey for carnivores, rectifying livestock management methods, and increasing likelihood of coexistence between human and carnivores are long term goals of this fund.

Hormozgan Province covers an area of 71000 km² (4% of Iran's surface,) and is considered as the world's western-most distribution limit of the Asiatic black bear. This Province is also home to the Persian leopard. However, conflicts between humans and these two carnivores have led to a decline of their population and in some areas to their local extinction.



Asiatic black bear dead in a road accident in Rudan township, Photo by Hassan Pishvaei

Results from preliminary studies show that human-bear conflict exists in the entire distribution range of black bear in Hormozgan Province, but is more acute in Rudan Township. Human-leopard conflicts have been reported across mountainous areas of the Province, but cases of conflicts have been observed more frequently in the eastern townships of the Province such as Jask and Bashagard, than in the western regions. Poaching and overhunting has led to a severe decline of prey populations for carnivores. This, along with habitat destruction and primitive methods of herding and farming, are the main reasons for such conflicts.



Bazi Yaft' Recycle Games

On June 13th 2014, Mohsen Gallery hosted young artists, whom with the help of their teacher and curator, Tala Porbaha, had built their idealistic town using waste from their houses. The project was called "Bazi Yaft'" or "Recycle Games," and took a whole year and supervision of the project manager "Amin Davaie" to materialize. Bazi Yaft' aimed to educate how we can reduce garbage production from the source by consuming less. As the children were learning and working, a documentary with the same name was being produced by Reza Tofighjou, from which a short version was screened at the exhibition. The exhibition lasted for one week, with each evening hosting an environment-related event: Mr. Gary Lewis, UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative, was Bazi Yaft's first guest. He spoke of his concerns about Iran's environmental problems and held a friendly conversation with the young artists present. Arian Ghousi spoke about children's interactions with environment, and Sara Kamalvand expressed her concerns about the loss of Tehran's groundwater. Nafas Group held the last event by organizing a panel on Tehran's air pollution. The children had built a town with boxes, bottles, and spare newspapers, as large as their imagination, to address waste producers. According to Sohrab Mahdavi, the project consultant, "the children converted our hasty consumption to their own playful production."



**We are... So
that they
remain**

Diversity of life is manifested in nature, living creatures, cultures, and ethnicities. This diversity has always been a source of inspiration for artists. Music, influenced by natural and social diversities, has taken different forms in time and space, and thus has created the auditory history of each nation. Some segments of Persian music created throughout history are being forgotten. Considering that auditory heritage reflects nations' cultural traditions, safeguarding it befalls on all of us. Similarities in diversity, archaism, values and danger of extinction have led to common responsibilities for Hermes Records and the Persian Wildlife Heritage Foundation. Since July 2014, we have strived together to pool our resources and capabilities to better familiarize our audiences with our goals of protecting nature and music. We hope that this collaboration paves the way for protecting our natural and cultural treasures, and leads to mutual creations.

PWHF Participates in Cheetah National Day

Sunday August 31, 2014, was the Asiatic Cheetah National Day. To celebrate that occasion and to show gratitude to game guards and activists in the field of cheetah conservation, an event was jointly organized by the UNDP office in Tehran, Department of Environment, and the Conservation of Asiatic Cheetah Project (CACP). Eqtesad-e Novin Bank, Parker, Vijeh Visual Arts Institute, Sepehr Parvaz Travel Agency, and the PWHF sponsored this event.

Early in the program a clip on biodiversity produced by Mani Mirsadeghi and another clip on Asiatic cheetah produced by Nilufar-e Aabi group were shown. Dr. Masumeh Ebtekar, Vice-President and the Head of Department of Environment, and Mr. Gary Lewis, the Resident Coordinator of the United Nations in Iran, spoke of the necessity of saving the critically endangered species. Then it was time to acknowledge the eminent work done by game guards active in Cheetah habitats and present awards

to the following five game guards for their special contributions to cheetah conservation in Iran: Ali-Akbar Qorbanlu of Turan Biosphere Reserve, Assadollah Hatami of Naybandan Wildlife Refuge in Tabas, Morteza Azizi of Siyahkuh National Park in Ardakan, Seyed-Jalal Moussavi of Bafq Protected Area, and Hossein Harati of Miandasht Wildlife Refuge. Separate clips on the five game guards and their works were also shown.

During this event, Dr. Bahram Hassan-Zadeh Kiabi of Shahid Beheshti University and Dr. Irannejad Parizi of Yazd University were also presented awards in recognition of their valuable contributions in cheetah research. Two of the active NGOs in cheetah conservation, i.e., the Asiatic Cheetah Society and Tabas-based Kanun-e Hamandishan-e Sabzgostar, were also praised and awarded. Mani Rahnama, the famous pianist and singer, ended the program with pieces of his music.



Presenting awards to game guards. DoE