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Editorial

An illicit trade worth billions of dollars

It is a shameful truth that income from illegal wildlife trade ranks very high in the list of illegal trade worldwide. It is said to be the fourth largest illegal trade in the world along with trafficking of drugs, humans, and arms (or counterfeit products, according to other estimates). The annual illicit trade in wildlife is estimated to be \$50 to \$100 billion. The incredibly high figures in wildlife trade is an alarming sign that this trade is quite attractive, and all evidence point out to the fact that it is on the rise.

Population growth, economic crises, poverty, growing demand for rare and exotic species, and lure of high profits have led to an increase in this trade and, as a result, to illegal hunting, trapping, and smuggling of various wildlife species. Illegal wildlife trade not only causes extinction of species and ecological imbalances, but also leads to some serious distortions in the economies of the sending or receiving countries.

Unfortunately, fines for this type of crime and for keeping of live wild animals are too low to deter smugglers and other parties involved in wildlife trade, and a growing number of local communities are turning from other types of trade to wildlife trade. In parts of Eastern Iran, for example, trapping and smuggling of houbara bustard has replaced other forms of smuggling and has brought handsome profits to trappers and smugglers.

Illegal wildlife trade has become so widespread that even armed gangs and terrorist organizations such as Boko Haram have joined in. In 2011 alone, trade in ivory reached its peak in the last 16 years. The high volume of this trade, in spite of all restrictions, and perhaps most other forms of wildlife trafficking points to its organized nature. Every year around 1,000 rhinoceroses and 20-25 thousand elephants are slaughtered for their horns or tusks.

It is apparent by now that a concerted effort on all fronts is needed to stop this type of organized criminal activity. We need to enhance international cooperation, enact proper laws that are binding internationally, strengthen law enforcement on a global scale, enhance exchange of information across borders, enlist cooperation and active participation of governmental and non-governmental organizations, and implement regular concurrent programs in the countries of origin, transit, and destination.

Masoumeh Safaei
Editor



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



حیات وحش میراث پارسیان
PERSIAN WILDLIFE
HERITAGE FOUNDATION

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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Erratum: PWN issue.No.9,"Participation of local Communities in wildlife Conservation". References:

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Cover Photo: **Onager, Turan Biosphere**

Reserve, Semnan,Iran.Photo by **Javad Najafi**

Standard-setting for Ungulate Population Survey Methods in Iran

► **Sepideh Kashani¹, Amirhossein Khaleghi¹, Taher Ghadirian¹, Hamed Abolghassemi¹, Mahmood Soofi¹, Arash Ghoddousi², Lukas Egli³**

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Pastures, plains and mountains are typical habitats for most ungulates in Asia. Iran, being at the intersection of Europe and Asia, is home to valuable species due to habitat diversity (desert, semi-arid, elevated mountains, scattered bushes, and dense woodlands.) Distance, elevations, difficult climatic conditions during different seasons, and lack of scientific population monitoring methods according to habitat physiology have left us with little or perhaps wrong information on the population and ecology of large herbivores such as wild goat, wild sheep, gazelle, chinkara, red deer and roe deer. Negligence in using up to date, standard and effective methods, and incompatibility of applied methods with species and habitats as well as lack of appropriate study designs and reluctance to use advanced statistical analysis create much ambiguity in studying wildlife populations, especially herbivore populations. It is also evident that effective wildlife management requires sufficient population information and appropriate monitoring. We also have to keep in mind that population survey methods have to be compatible

with habitat conditions that may change over time. The project "Standard-setting for Ungulate Population Survey Methods in Iran" seeks to briefly study population estimation and monitoring methods in order to obtain appropriate answers to ways and means of improving existing methods or adopting new ones.

This project is undertaken jointly by the Persian Wildlife Heritage Foundation and the Department of Environment. Georg-August University of Göttingen also contributes with expert advice. We also benefit from the knowledge and experience of international experts. In order to have a global view of the situation of ungulate habitats and to get familiarized with the difficulties that we face in population surveys, plans have been made for these experts to visit different wildlife habitats. Two PhD students and a Masters student from Georg-August University of Göttingen have joined the project as part of their required research toward their degrees.

This research aims to identify and assess various population estimation methods for wild sheep, wild goat, red deer, roe deer,

gazelle and chinkara in different habitat types: forests, plains and mountains. After having gained knowledge on the existing census methods for species in diverse ecosystems, appropriate methods for population survey and monitoring of each species will be designed and implemented according to habitat. In order to achieve our goal, we will benefit from similar national and international experiences.

These methods are being studied and applied in 4 sites, as follows:

- ① Golestan National Park for red deer, roe deer, wild goat and wild sheep
- ② Golestanak in Central Alborz Protected Area for red deer and wild goat
- ③ Kavir National Park for wild sheep, wild goat and chinkara
- ④ Ghamishlou Protected Area for wild sheep and gazelle

After assessing the effectiveness of existing methods and new methods in several trials, comparing them with other methods and with expert advice and past experiences, appropriate methods for population survey of the above-named species will be designed.



Local art at the service of natural resources

Sustainable handicraft trade

► **Afsaneh Ehsani**

Avay-e Tabiat-e Paydar

Introduction

The project "Launching of sustainable handicraft trade" with a view to protect natural resources, seeks to create jobs for the local community and especially for women, and to improve their livelihoods with complementary sources of income. It is hoped that this mode of earning livelihood will lower the dependence of local communities on natural resources, which are currently being exploited in a non-sustainable manner.

History and Goal

Following the successful implementation of the project "Art for conservation" (the improvement of local communities' livelihoods by relying on ecotourism and local handicrafts) that was supported by the UNDP's Small Grants Program in Qeshm Island, similar projects were proposed to Avay-e Tabiat-e Paydar Institution. The new project is one such project that is run with support from the United Nations Development Program and the Forest, Rangeland, and Watershed Organization of Iran. This project is a part of the International Carbon Sequestration Program, which has been operating since 2005 in Dasht-e Hossein Abad area, seeks to restore natural resources through participation of rural development groups. The International Carbon Sequestration Program has been designed to develop participatory management models in order to fight desertification and to restore damaged natural resources in arid and semi-arid areas and make them economically viable. It also aims to promote rural sustainable development and to increase the absorption of the atmosphere's carbon to fight against global warming. Those in charge of the project believe that introducing local handicrafts to the market will decrease dependence on natural resources in the long run and will reduce the number of livestock that enter the area. Moreover, interactions between project facilitators, local women and handicraft buyers can help safeguard natural and cultural values of the area.

This project focuses on identifying local potentials from each village and emphasizes the role of facilitators in the process. Participatory projects encourage reliance on local knowledge and its use in problem solving. Therefore, this project does not seek to bring in new knowledge and instead attempts to provide an opportunity for local producers to exercise their free will to recognize and revive their own crafts and skills and to offer them in the market.



Photos by Sudabe Azizi

Project's main plans

- To study how local handicrafts could be produced and presented in the market in a sustainable manner.
- To identify talented individuals, motivate and create the primary core group.
- Holding educational workshops
- Codifying criteria for the production and sale of handicrafts
- Designing products suitable for the market that can practically be produced
- Advertising activities, presentation of the project and its goals (through conferences, exhibitions and media)
- Designing eco- friendly packaging
- Introducing handicraft producers to the public and private sectors

Some impacts of the project

- Spirit of teamwork has been strengthened
- Five different kinds of local handicrafts with the following characteristics have been produced: relatively small and transportable, appropriate quality/ price ratio, inspired by local characteristics, produced using local material, and presentable in the market
- Almost 25 women in villages bordering the project area have been educated and empowered (some of these women are acting as teachers)
- The number of producers and new members has increased and resulted to more social justice
- Self-confidence, passion and enthusiasm on the part of producers have been strengthened
- The products have been presented in the market
- A sense of honor for having local values has been created
- An atmosphere has been created for the women of different villages to interact
- The culture and cultural values of the area have been exported to other areas through handicrafts
- The puppets have been recorded as "Intangible Heritage" by the Department of Cultural Heritage and Tourism
- Holding a local puppet festival in Tajmir Village, close to the border with Afghanistan, is one of the effective activities undertaken by the Carbon Sequestration Project team. 150 people from different villages participated in the festival, creating a high level of passion and motivation among puppet- makers.
- As a result, today 100 puppets a month are sent from the villages for sale.



Payment for ecosystem services projects for the first time in Iran

► **Sara Torabi**

Environmental economist at MENARID Project

The Middle East and North Africa Regional Program for Integrated Sustainable Development (MENARID) in collaboration with Iranian partners has initiated a 5-year program in Iran since 2010. This program, Institutional Strengthening and Coherence for Integrated Natural Resources Management, enjoys the financial support of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the UNDP, and the Global Environmental Fund (GEF). The Forest, Rangeland, and Watershed Organization of Iran is in charge of running this program. The program seeks to identify and remove various legal and structural barriers to integrated natural resources management and to enhance required measures to adapt management practices to the impacts of climate change in Iran.

Activities related to integrated natural resources management have been participatory and based on serious attention to the active role that men and women can play. The program is implemented in three sites encompassing a total area of 49,230 hectares as well as in Hableh Rud basin with an area of 1.2 million hectares. These sites represent diverse conditions in arid environments that are subject to a variety of land uses, hence requiring inter-sector coordination.

Introduction of projects that adhere to 'payment for ecosystem services' (PES) in pilot sites or areas close to them, if the accrued benefits will belong to the same site, will be one of the main outputs of the program and is being carried out for the first time in Iran in all 4 sites

in accordance with the conditions prevailing in each site. Payment for ecosystem services is a practice in which incentives are provided to farmers and land owners in return for their management of the land in such a way as to derive various ecosystem services from their lands. Such programs promote natural resources conservation according to market principles.

In 2013, Dr. Alexander Board, an international advisor of the MENARID program, along with the author as the national counselor of the program, designed the operational mechanisms of payment for ecosystem services which have been implemented since 2014 in the four sites of the program in Iran. These projects are being carried out in Yazd, Kermanshah, Sistan and Baluchestan, and Semnan Provinces under the following names respectively:

- conservation of biodiversity project (rangeland management to conserve plant diversity in Behabad site in Yazd Province)
- payment for carbon sequestration (implementation of regulating line, planting trees and water management in Razin site in Kermanshah Province)
- payment for countering land degradation (planting of tamarisk, in degraded agricultural lands in order to counter the encroachment of moving sand in Hamoun site in Sistan and Baluchestan Province)
- payment for increasing water use efficiency (repair and restoration of qanat in Amidabad village in Semnan Province).

As an illustration of what these projects are, the one in Behabad, Yazd Province, has been carried out in collaboration with the General Office of Natural Resources in Yazd Province, University of Yazd, and the Local Development Office Kamkuye village, a local organization made up of the villagers to participate in rural development projects. As a first step in this project, more than 100 hectares of rangeland in Behabad site was managed by 24 members of the local development office through such activities as sowing, pile planting, land reserves, and apiculture.

Based on these results the average combined social, economic, and ecosystem benefits amount to 18,500,000 Tomans. Total operational and managerial cost in the first three years of the project was 36,790,000 Tomans (12,263,000 Tomans per year). Cost-benefit analysis considering 12% rate of interest shows that the project has a profit-cost ratio of 1.1 (without considering social and ecosystem benefits) and 2.2 (considering social and ecosystem benefits) and, hence, the project is economical. The arrangement into which the parties entered was based on an agreement between those whose main objective was to conserve the environment (MENARID, the Natural Resources General Office) on the one hand, and those providing ecosystem services (local people) for the purpose of conservation and utilization of plant species. Both parties are hoping that these arrangements are beneficial to the region's rangelands as well as to the conservation of plant diversity.



Sowing in Jamnat basin, Bahabad, Yazd, Photo by M.J. Fayazbakhsh

A study on the distribution and abundance of birds in Caspian Forests

► Mitra Shariati Najaf Abadi, Mohammad Kaboli, Afshin Alizadeh Shabani, Mahmud Karami, Vahid Etemad

Description and explanation of the patterns of species diversity is an important stage in the conservation of biodiversity and an important research subject in biogeography. In this regard, birds are particularly suitable for studying relations between wildlife populations and vegetation, due to their mobility and their vast territorial range during their life span. On the other hand, bird abundance and distribution can be a good index of habitat quality. Birds are very important to forest managers, as they play an important role in seed transportation, energy rotation and the control of insect populations. The composition of bird colonies might become limited due to certain elements such as elevation, temperature, light and other biological factors. It seems that additionally, the composition of tree species is a determining factor for the composition of bird colonies. Also, factors like diversity in the combination of highlands and lowlands; along with diversity in forest structure have an important impact on the abundance of bird species. Caspian forests support considerable bird diversity. Yet, there is an evident lack of comprehensive studies to determine factors responsible for the abundance and distribution of birds in this environment.

In a study in the educational and research forest of Kheyroud, located 10 kilometers east of Nowshahr, Mazandaran Province, we attempted to identify factors that impinge on distribution, richness of species, and abundance of birds. These factors included vegetation, forest structure and tree species, elevation, climate and geomorphological conditions. The results of this study revealed that species richness and bird abundance significantly changed depending on elevation

and temperature levels. The highest richness and abundance were observed in areas with an elevation of 1500 to 1800 meters, and temperatures between 8 and 10 degrees centigrade. On the other hand, the number and abundance of bird species decreased with the increasing number of high and low bushes. Another finding was that factors related to forest structure (wood mass, tree height, number of snags, and the presence of trees with diameters between 30 and 59 centimeters) play an important and direct role in increasing the richness and abundance of birds in forest environments.

Great tits and white-headed tits showed a lower distribution in parts of the forest that had dense crown and higher levels of branches and peat on the forest floor. Syrian woodpeckers and wrens were observed more frequently in areas with dense wood mass, and presence of trees with base diameters exceeding 60 centimeters. The presence of species such as European goldfinch, white-headed tit and common wood pigeon correlated with the presence of such tree as common hornbeam and beech. Common linnets and European goldfinch seemed to be more dependent on such trees as Persian ironwood, date-plum and lime tree.

To sum up, we can say that richness of species, abundance and species composition of birds in forest environments significantly correlate with vegetation and climate variables. Hence, we recommend that these important factors that play a vital role in creating suitable habitats for birds should be taken into consideration in managing and exploiting Caspian forests.



- ▲ Common chiffchaff
- ◀ Common chaffinch

Photos by Mohamad Tohidifar



Activities and Achievements of the Persian Wildlife Heritage Foundation by Esfand 1393 (March 2015)

► Sepideh Kashani, Abnous Sadeghi

Persian Wildlife Heritage Foundation

The year 1393 saw a variety of activities at the Persian Wildlife Heritage Foundation, ranging from cooperation in national and international conservation projects, education and awareness raising, participation at symposia and national and international conferences, holding gatherings and meetings on environmental subjects, to the preparation and publishing of educational matter, holding training and education courses on various subjects for employees, as well as helping other environmental NGOs, CBOs and activists, fundraising drives and lastly cooperation on environmental public awareness raising.

National and International Conservation Projects

Standard-setting for Ungulate Population Survey Methods in Iran
Upon request by the Department of Environment and per signed agreement, we at the PWHF are the first Iranian NGO to take on the project "*Standard-setting for Ungulate Population Survey Methods in Iran*." This project is co-funded and undertaken by the Department of Environment and PWHF. In this project we are intent on studying the population survey methods for Persian gazelles, chinkara, red deer, roe deer, wild sheep and mountain goats as used around the world and comparing these to the methods commonly used in Iranian habitats and finally proposing best methods and practices for these habitats. The Georg-August University of Göttingen, Germany, stands by our side with professional scientific professional consultation. We also employ the help of several other experts from around the world. Among these is Prof. Raul Valdez of New Mexico State University, who has travelled to Iran in order to provide guidance. Two PhD students and an MSc internee studying ecology and environmental sciences at Georg-August-University are working closely with PWHF on this project and will incorporate this project into their PhD Theses.

Larestan Wild Sheep Conservation Project

The second phase of this project has begun with the preparation of a strategic plan document and problem tree as proposed by

of the project.

Ongoing studies on the population and identifying the best methods for the yearly monitoring of the Larestan wild sheep populations, are not only preliminary management tools, but are also an index to assess the project.

A socio-economic survey of settlements² around or near Larestan wild sheep habitat also began in the new phase. The goal of this survey is to gather information on the livelihood of communities, reasons and motivations for poaching, and measuring willingness for participation in the creation of a community-based and -managed conservancy. As a part of this socio-economic survey, the PWHF experts employed the help of local guides in order to interview herdsmen, poachers and environmental activists. Our experts tried to paint a complete picture of the socio-economic status and population of settlements in order to prepare a good basis for future conservation activities.

Due to severe drought, the PWHF has also supported locals in the provision of water tanks and construction of watering troughs for wildlife.

Alireza Farhadzadeh is producing a documentary film, depicting the project activities and its progress.

Signing the Project Agreement and Active Participation in the Second Phase of the Conservation of the Asiatic Cheetah Project (CACP)

The long term monitoring of the Asiatic Cheetah in Turan Biosphere Reserve that had begun in 2012 continued in a focused manner in 2014, with the aim of protecting the Asiatic Cheetah in this habitat. During trips made to Turan, our experts had three direct sightings of Cheetah. These sightings included a single animal, a family of



Interviewing Kukherdis for our socio- economic survey, Photo by S. Vaghayenagar



Teaching the rangers of Turan Biosphere Reserve how to use camera traps

the IUCN conservation guidelines. A rapid survey of this unique and threatened species had been previously undertaken by Kanun-e MohitBan, Plan4Land, and Mr. Dareshouri upon request by the PWHF. This rapid survey proposed an area for focused conservation measures and is the basis for the current activities

four and another family of three. Two members of the four-head family have since been killed in road accidents. Camera trap photos recorded an individual male on two separate occasions as well as two previously unknown individuals, one male and one of uncertain sex. Also present in the photos were the three-head family. The PWHF has also installed camera traps in Kavir National Park and there again caught on camera the sole known cheetah living there, first identified in 2009/10. Further, after two sightings of cheetah in Sarakhs in Khorasan Razavi Province and in Golestan National Park our experts have visited these areas and offered the PWHF's assistance to the CACP and local Departments of Environment. To the end of achieving the goals of the livestock co-management program in Turan and Miandasht and in order to further identify and

1. Community-Based Organization

2. Janah, Kukherd, Herang, Lavaredin, Champeh, Garostaneh, Chah- Mossalam, Armak and Maragh Villages in Hormozgan Province

mitigate livestock-wildlife conflict we at the PWHF have prepared a booklet, containing globally used conflict mitigating methods and tools that have been adapted for use in Iran. The booklet will be distributed and its contents are explained in depth at workshops with livestock owners, herders and wildlife experts in Turan and other cheetah habitats where livestock grazing is done in traditional ways. Moreover, we have helped with a survey to determine currently used and of surplus rangelands in Turan Biosphere Reserve. During this work 12 tracts of rangeland were audited and surplus rangelands were declared. Also, as a consequence of the ongoing drought, the number of grazing permits was reduced to a minimum. A panel controlling the entry and exit of herds was set up in cooperation with CACP, DoE Semnan Province, Semnan and Shahroud Governorships, local administration offices, Departments of Natural Resources and Watershed and the Semnan Office for Nomads as a measure for livestock co-management.

The PWHF participated in and co-financed along with the UNDP the fifth session of educational and recreational trips for rangers of cheetah habitat in Iran and the celebrations for the National Cheetah Day, where the best rangers and cheetah activists were honored for their work. Also, a number of educational workshops were held in various cheetah habitats with the goal of motivating rangers working there.

Other joint activities with the CACP include preparing educational packages for the administrative councils of provinces inhabiting the Asiatic cheetah and aiming to steer industrial development programs in these provinces in line with conservation, starting a socio-economic survey in Turan Biosphere Reserve, continuing our work on estimating the carrying capacity of Turan and Miandasht, and finally investigating population survey methods for cheetah prey.

For the goal of public awareness raising, the PWHF has joined meetings discussing the use of the Cheetah as a symbol on the clothes of the National Football Team during the FIFA World Cup 2014 in Brazil, and actively helped in realizing these plans. We have also helped hold an awareness raising football game of Iranian Celebrities with the team of Bafq City, where the Cheetah-Shirt of the National football team was first revealed to the public.

Persian Leopard Conservation Project in Golestan National Park
PWHF experts have been working since 1389 (2010/11) on the conservation status of the Persian Leopard in Golestan National



Gazelle possibly having been hunted by Asiatic cheetah in Golestan National Park, Photo by A.h.Khaleghi

Park. Last year, based on the confirmed threats to this species, our experts surveyed the prey animals for the leopard and continued monitoring the populations of these animals.

In a related activity Igor Khorozian of Georg-August-University, Göttingen, signed a memorandum of understanding with the PWHF and undertook a project to minimize Leopard-Livestock conflicts in areas neighboring the Golestan National Park. In this project metal collars were fitted on several cows and sheep in order to protect them from leopard attacks. We at the PWHF have tried since the beginning of this project to set the stage for good cooperation with local communities and sharing the benefits of the National Park with them as a measure to lessen threats such as poaching.

With the social research of the project drawing to a close, a report titled "Views of Local Communities around Golestan National Park regarding the Department of Environment and Conservation Practices" has been published. Through analysis of the data obtained during this research are we trying to find ways to minimize poaching, one of the main threats to leopard prey animals.

Furthermore, after the head of the Mane and Solmaghan DoE Office sighted a cheetah in the Golestan National Park, our experts at the PWHF and our colleagues at the Conservation of the Asiatic Cheetah Project (CACP) set out to the Mirzabailou Plain in Golestan National Park. The last verified sighting of a cheetah in Golestan goes back some forty years. Therefore, this sighting is a rarity and worth investigating. Should our camera traps in Golestan prove the cheetah's presence there, the National Park and Biosphere Reserve will be added to the list of Asiatic cheetah habitats.

Asiatic Black Bear Project

Our Asiatic Black Bear Project in Kerman province, which started



Fatemeha Library football team, Photo by F. Mirshekari

jointly with Mohitban Society with the financial help of Barez Industrial Group, is continuing. The first phase of research showed that the main threat to the Asiatic black bear in Iran is the conflict of this animal with local communities. The Asiatic black bear frequently raids orchards, especially date plantations, and sometimes preys on livestock. In order to mitigate such conflicts education and awareness raising as well as scientifically proven ways of reducing conflict are the most useful tools. We at PWHF have therefore set the stage for widespread awareness raising programs in Kerman Province. The Persian Heritage Football Team has thus been founded, a Futsal team has been sponsored, and numerous meetings with cultural focal people of mosques have been held. A local "champion" is engaging the community in conservation talks on behalf of the PWHF.

At the same time, we are holding talks with Dana Insurance Group to create the basis for insuring people who have been adversely affected by human-bear conflicts.

Bottle-nose Dolphin Conservation Program in the Persian Gulf

The second phase of this project was financed by the SGP and conducted with the help of the Office for Environment of Qeshm Free Zone Organization. In order to reduce pressure on Bottle-nose Dolphins caused by unorganized tourism activities, the PWHF and Gomash Qeshm, a local NGO, held several workshops with boat drivers, teaching best dolphin watching practices. The workshops were held in five villages: Soheili, Tabl, Deirestan, Hengam and Shibderaz. Educational material and the dolphin watching protocol were provided, after summarizing past experiences and with the valuable input of Dr. Koen Van Waerebeek, Head of the Peruvian Centre for Cetacean Research (CEPEC), who visited Qeshm Island on a research and advisory mission.

This phase concluded the SGP-funded work of the PWHF on Bottle-nose Dolphins in Qeshm.

Education and Awareness Raising

PWHF worked on many different aspects of education and awareness raising and focused on different groups. Some of these activities are listed here:

●Hermes Records and the PWHF started working together in order to celebrate the aural and natural heritage of our land. This cooperation focused on sharing audiences of the two organizations, so that public awareness on the importance of protecting both the aural and the natural heritage might be raised. This cooperation is purely moral and non-profitable in nature.

●Cooperation with Godakhtar Co. a company working in the Petrochemical sector. The Activists of this sector came forward to express their concern for and the importance of conservation of wildlife and particularly of the Asiatic cheetah. This company used the 19th International Oil, Gas and Petrochemical Expo as a platform to express their concerns, and to morally support PWHF's activities.

●The PWHF joined the Department of Environment in the celebrations for Biodiversity Day, May 22, and helped Mr Farhadzadeh produce a clip for public awareness raising concerning the importance of wildlife conservation.

●The PWHF and Pardis Gholhak Cinema Complex have started showing popular documentaries on wildlife. The aim of these screenings is to raise public sensitivity towards issues of wildlife conservation. Part of the proceeds of these screenings are spent on specific conservation measures, such as buying cameras for a local conservationist in Bandar Lengeh district or holding workshops for school children in Kahnuij in Kerman Province regarding the Asiatic black bear and environmental conservation.

●In line with our educational goals, we have worked closely with Aftab Azarine School, teaching sixth-graders the importance of threats and conservation measures for the Asiatic cheetah, and the PWHF's work in this regard and tried to raise public awareness on these subjects.

●The PWHF has worked on a moral and scientific basis with Sudeh School, holding painting exhibitions on the subject of threatened wildlife. All of the proceeds from the exhibition were given to rangers in Cheetah habitat as New Year's Gifts.

●PWHF participated in an exhibition of artworks of 22 private schools of the 22 districts of Tehran in Ebn-e Sina House of Culture, on the subject of "Harmony with Nature" for public awareness raising.

●Helping Ms. Tala Porbaha holding her "Baziyaft" exhibition at Mohsen Art Gallery, displaying the works of her students on waste reduction, recycling and nature conservation.

Participating in the IUCN World Parks Congress in Sydney

This conference was held by the IUCN in Sydney in October 2014. Amirhossein Khaleghi, wildlife conservation expert at PWHF, participated in this conference and had an electronic poster presentation on the protection of the Persian leopard in Golestan National Park. He also attended the general meetings and talked to the attendees on the general status of national parks in Iran.

Publications and Printed Educational Matter

PWHF produced and printed a variety of educational and awareness raising material, including Persian Wildlife Newsletter issues 9 and 10 and a bilingual brochure on the Asiatic cheetah in cooperation with the CACP.

A post card featuring the Asiatic cheetah, preparing the livestock-wildlife conflict mitigation and co-management booklet, a booklet for teachers in Bastak and Lengeh Districts (a part of the Larestan Wild Sheep Conservation Project) and a forthcoming book titled "Participatory Approach to Desert Ecosystem Restoration in Miandasht Wildlife Refuge", are among PWHF's printed items.

Educational Courses

A workshop headed by Dr. Abdolhossein Vahabzadeh on children and nature was held at the PWHF. On the invitation of the PWHF a group of conservationists, nature-lovers and NGOs participated in this workshop.

A workshop was held on socio-economic studies for experts, volunteers and other stakeholders, in which Dr. Mohammad Avatefi-Hemmat, presented various guidelines and then many questions regarding work with local communities were raised and discussed. The PWHF also held various professional courses for its experts and volunteers in order to raise their skills. These included web security, web3, InDesign, ecological restoration, camera trapping, conflict mitigation in habitats, and working with Distance software.

Working to Spread the Culture of Nature Conservation

In the past year, we at the PWHF while increasing and strengthening our relations with other organizations strived to spread the culture of nature conservation among the general public. In line with this goal, have we screened John Buxton's "Winter at the Crossroads" at the

National Museum of Iran and answered questions of the audience. In cooperation with Distant Horizons Tours we hosted foreign tourists at the PWHF Headquarters in 3 separated occasions and presented Iran's natural attractions and our conservation work for



Electronic poster presentation on the protection of the Persian leopard in Golestan National Park at IUCN World Parks Congress

them.

We prepared and designed information boards for the Tehran Zoo to educate visitors about various animal species.

The PWHF assisted Mr. Kourosh Behzadi in his project to cycle for public awareness about Asiatic cheetah and bottle-nose dolphin conservation across Iran, to spread warning messages about impending drought, and for protection of Caspian shorelines.

We have requested to become an IUCN member, thus strengthening our ties with this international organization.

The PWHF has helped draft the base documents on tourism and hunting as well as the planning for a national wildlife relief and rescue network of the DoE.

By participating in a the editing committee meeting of the sixth development plan of the DoE which aims to solve the challenges of the natural and marine environment, PWHF's expert proposed increasing the use of public potentials to protect the environment. Fourmind Advertising Agency and Vjeh Institute have helped the PWHF to improve its public relations and advertising campaigns. PWHF has had a stronger presence in public media in this year and news, articles and interviews of PWHF experts have been featured in the press and other media. The goal of these publications and interviews has been to raise public awareness on the importance of the natural environment for humanity, conservation of nature and environmental ethics.

Fundraising Activities

The PWHF regularly holds gatherings and meetings with its supporters and sponsors to report annual activities. This year we held such a meeting on February 19, 2015.

We were lucky to count Mr Firouz Firouz among our supporters, who has kindly taken the burden as our goodwill ambassador.

Persit Co, managed by Dr Rohani has been a great supporter, providing office space and furniture.

TadvinCo has taken the burden of accounting off our shoulders.

Dana Insurance Co. has held up its corporate social responsibility and come to our assistance by signing an MoU. Dana Insurance Co. offers a substantial discount on travel insurance for our experts and is taking measures to offer insurance for the Asiatic black bear, greatly helping the conservation of this rare and endangered species.

Acting in line with corporate social responsibility, many companies have helped finance PWHF. Poobor, Kayson, Iranshahr Civil Engineering Group, Barez Industrial Group and Mivita have helped us in our mission to protect Iran's wildlife.

We must not forget to express our gratitude to our long-time and new-found supporters: Messrs Esfandiar Lari, Gholamreza & Mohammad Shayeghi (Shahdab Co.), Mses Amin, Mina Lari, Leila Adle, Dr Mojatabaei, Mrs Soraya Gheisari, Mrs. Bahare Gemayel and Mr Abdolali Soltani.

On the rocky road of conservation we must always rely on the material and moral help of local communities and hence we are forever indebted to them. They have always warmly received us at their homes and helped us with all they had.



Distribution of dolphin- watching protocols to boatmen after a workshop, Photo by S. Kashani Doust

Final phase of the Conservation of the bottlenose dolphin project

The Conservation of the Bottlenose dolphin project in the waters surrounding Qeshm Island operated with the fund allocated by UNDP/GEF/SGP, and was executed by the Persian Wildlife Heritage Foundation (PWHF) in collaboration with Qeshm Free Zone Office of Environment.

This project started in 2009. Its first phase ended in 2011, its second phase started in 2012 and ending in December 2014. During its second phase, the PWHF sought to reduce pressure caused by tourism activities on dolphin populations by conducting several programs.

One of the main steps was to invite Dr. Koen Van Waerebeek, one of world's most renowned marine biologists and cetacean expert from Belgium. Due to Dr. Van Waerebeek's visit, we attained the following achievements:

- Studying dolphin head- count methods (population estimation)
- Preparing a dolphin- watching protocol
- Primary study on some threats such as fishing methods and by catch
- Identification of additional probable distribution areas for different dolphin sub- species

We also held training workshops for the boatmen. These workshops were held in 5 villages, namely Soheili, Tabl, Deyrestan, Hengam and Shibderaz, focusing on the scientific and international rules of dolphin watching. These workshops sought to involve the boatmen in encouraging visitors to abide by the rules.

Respecting these rules helps protect marine mammals like dolphins, and also reduces harmful impacts on sensitive ecological elements such as coral reefs and the surrounding habitats.

Giving order to the color and shape of wharfs and boats of each village is another achievement that we gained in this project.



PWHF logo figuring on Hermes Records advertisements

Cooperation to protect natural and auditory heritages

It has been six months since a memorandum of understanding was signed between the Persian Wildlife Heritage Foundation (PWHF) and Hermes Records. Our partnership has not been profit-based. Both parties have tried to offer mental support to each other and to introduce each other's goals and brands. Hermes introduces us to its music- loving audience through exhibiting our logo

on its teasers, billboards, and posters, and gives discount on concert tickets for our personnel thus giving us the chance to hear high- quality music. We, on the other hand, share with our nature- loving audience the news of concerts organized by Hermes and encourage them to enjoy rich music offered by them. We hope this partnership will continue and will lead to more extensive cooperations.

Screening of narrated wildlife documentaries to support nature

The screening of narrated wildlife documentaries has begun in Pardis- Gholhak Cinematheque since November 2014 to support targeted environmental actions of the Persian Wildlife Heritage Foundation (PWHF). Each month, by screening one of the productions of Disney Nature, we try to raise public awareness, create a warm atmosphere for cinema, nature and wildlife lovers to gather, raise funds to support targeted conservation- related activities. Until now Pardis- Gholhak Cinema has

donated half of the earnings from each film to the PWHF, with which we have provided a camera for a local ranger in Hormozgan Province, and helped organize educational workshops for school- children in Kahnuj Township of Kerman Province, one of Asiatic black bear's important habitats. We hope to continue this collaboration, with the same objectives and to attract more audiences who will enjoy watching wildlife and nature documentaries while supporting Iran's natural environment.



Photo taken by camera provided for local ranger in Bandar Lengeh Township from the proceeds of Chimpanzee, Photo by A. Zare