

# WCPF Newsletter 10: September 2003

**Dear Supporter,**

## **6 October 2003. Talk at the Royal Institution**

The Wilderness Trust and the Wild Camel Protection Foundation are jointly organising an evening talk (7.00 p.m.) at the Royal Institution, 21 Albemarle Street, Piccadilly, London on Monday, October 6th. I have been asked to give an hour's talk on 'A Desert Wilderness - Last Refuge of the Wild Camel.' This is a fund-raising event for both charities. Seating is limited and tickets are £25 each. The evening has been sponsored by the insurance company AXA Investment Managers which will underwrite the cost of hiring the Royal Institution and providing refreshments. There will also be a fund-raising auction for both charities and the WCPF is putting forward for auction a bronze of a dromedary camel by sporting artist John King. United Kingdom members will very shortly be sent an invitation to the event. If any UK members want additional tickets could they please email [Kate Rae](mailto:kate.rae@wcpf.org) stating how many more tickets they would like. Also if any overseas members would like an invitation could they please urgently email Kate Rae and give an address.

As The Wilderness Trust made the initial approach to the WCPF, it may be of interest to members to learn something about this worthwhile charity:

### **The Wilderness Trust**

Sir Laurens van der Post and Dr Ian Player, founder of The World Wilderness Congress movement, established The Wilderness Trust (TWT) in 1974. TWT is dedicated to preserving the world's last remaining wild areas. This preservation is done by lobbying, education and, wherever possible, by offering direct experience of wilderness itself.

Wilderness journeys arranged by the TWT into wild areas involve walking trails led by qualified guides who are deeply committed to the concept of wilderness. They emphasise the importance of both personal solitude and togetherness, the richness of an undisturbed natural environment and man's ancestral links to it. TWT uses wilderness for developing character, self-esteem and leadership skills, particularly for young people from under-privileged, inner city backgrounds.

TWT promotes the value of wilderness to all, particularly through schools, youth clubs and other institutions. It aims to influence potential leaders among youth and decision-takers from the world of business and politics. TWT works closely with its partners, The Wilderness Foundation in South Africa and the highly respected Wilderness Leadership Schools and The Wild Foundation in the U.S.A. New, exciting links have made it possible for TWT to start youth programmes for trails in Scotland that will involve minimum impact on the environment, and travelling with the utmost simplicity.

Website: [www.wilderness-trust.org](http://www.wilderness-trust.org)

The link between the two organisations is obvious. The wild Bactrian camel survives in some of the harshest and remotest wilderness areas in the world and it will be the theme of my talk. The Royal Institution seats 430 and if we can fill the hall, as all costs are covered by AXA, we hope to make a substantial contribution to our funds. If we achieve this then we can make realistic strides towards ensuring that the captive camel-breeding programme proceeds on a sound and realistic footing.

### **Captive Wild Bactrian Breeding Programme. Mongolia**

We have recruited a Mongolian, Mr. Enkhbileg as the Project Co-ordinator. He is a scientist and member of the Mongolian Academy of Sciences and has

extensive experience both scientific and practical of the particular protected area where we are siting the captive camel-breeding programme. We are working with the full support of the Ministry of Nature and Environment in Mongolia and it is therefore necessary for us to work with the Mongolian National Commission for Conservation of Endangered Species (MACNE) which has responsibility for protecting all Red Book listed species and its Director Mr. Dorjraa. The Mongolian Minister for Nature and the Environment, Mr. Barsbold has formally approved the programme and the involvement of the WCPF in initiating the first project phase which aims:

1. To work together and cooperate to establish the wild Bactrian camel captive-breeding programme in an agreed area in the Great Gobi Protected Area, Reserve A, Bayan Tooroi, Mongolia.
2. To raise awareness nationally and internationally of the plight of the wild Bactrian camel and the work being done at the captive breeding programme site in Mongolia to protect this critically endangered animal.
3. To protect the biodiversity of the area in and around the programme site.

I have to-day received an Email from Mr. Enkhbilkeg which states:

'We have done trip on captive wild camel condition in Bayantooroi and selection for the camel centre in Bayantooroi. But also we were met with people who erect the fence. The captive wild camels are (9) getting fat and we planned to move them to Bayantooroi the end of September. The herdsman of camel is selected (Tsogerdene). We have been starting to order of fence wooden materials and it will be arrived in Bayantooroi middle of September (15th). When materials arrived in Bayantooroi, we planned to erect it in short period. Permission on place of camel breeding centre is discussed and decided by local and park administration. Resolution will be done sooner. We will send the detail trip report soon for you.'

All this is most encouraging. So our latest endeavour to save the critically endangered wild Bactrian camel is underway. Incidentally, the overall plan is not to release the progeny into the wild but initially to build up a captive group in the Protected Area. In this way we hope to ensure that the unique genetic make-up of the wild Bactrian camel is preserved should any unforeseen disaster occur in either the Chinese or the Mongolian Gobi Reserves.

### **Sponsorship: Captive Wild Bactrian Camels**

The captive wild Bactrian camels once relocated to their new site will have to be protected and properly managed. This will mean paying local herders and a person on site to watch the camels daily. During the winter and spring months it will be necessary to buy feed for them and this is expensive to buy and also to transport to the site. Medicines will be required for the females and their offspring during the first five years. A number of Foundation members, individuals and organisations have already generously agreed to sponsor a young camel. However we need twenty more sponsors if we are to cover the costs for the coming year.

If you are interested and want more information please contact [Kate Rae](#), a WCPF trustee or you can easily download the [SPONSORSHIP FORM](#) and post it to the head office.

The cost of sponsoring a new born camel for five years is £500 per year or £2,500 for five years. (\$750 per year or \$3,750). This covers the cost of winter feed, the herders to protect the young camels from wolves and medical costs.

### **Lop Nur Wild Camel Reserve**

The Lop Nur Wild Camel Nature Reserve in China has now been upgraded to a National Nature Reserve. This means it comes under the direct supervision and protection of the State Environment Ministry (SEPA). The Nature Reserve has

benefited from the East West gas pipe line compensation from Petro China as outlined in Newsletter Number 9. The Reserve management Headquarters has sent the WCPF a budget in general terms for this money. We still need to see more financial detail and will be pressing for this over the coming months. The pipeline is not welcome, but inevitable. On the supposition that 'it is an ill-wind that doesn't blow some good' we are determined that these funds will be put towards underpinning the long-term future, and development of the Nature Reserve.

It will be seen from the following item that we have at last secured a scientific partner for the vitally important work that needs to be carried out in the Lop Nur Reserve and Mongolia.

### **Salzburg Zoo**

Kate Rae and I made a visit to Salzburg Zoo in Austria which already has strong links with Mongolia and holds a number of Prejewalski horses at the zoo. This species which became extinct in the wild in Mongolia in 1969 is currently being re-introduced into the wild in Mongolia. Our captive camel breeding programme can learn from the wild horse programme and Dr Chris Walzer, the head of the zoo, agreed to help us with our wild camel project in both China and Mongolia. As a result of our meeting, Dr Walzer wrote to us as follows:

I suggest we establish a simple wildlife / livestock / other activities monitoring system in both the Gobi A and the Lop Nur Reserve in China.

We will base this on the Cybertracker® system. This system has found it's way into conservation programs world-wide. The simple field computer is designed to be quick and easy to use in the field, even by non-literate users. Using a sequence of screens on a hand held computer (Palm OS), displaying simple and easily recognisable icons, rangers are able to record and store data in minute detail. They can for example record sightings, species and feeding behaviour, carcasses with additional criteria for example natural death, poached and predation. Basically there is no real limit from the technological side as to the type of data recorded. The program automatically stores this data along with a GPS fix and time for later downloading onto a PC. Detailed further analysis with mapping applications (Geographic Information System (GIS) e.g. ArcView®) and statistical packages is then possible.

In a first phase the cybertracker would have to be programmed (simple) and the screens customized to match the areas and rangers needs. In order to carry out this stage I will need significant input from you concerning the various species and datasets of interest in the Lop Nur Reserve. Changing the set-up is easily carried out. Adaptations can be implemented together with the rangers in the field.

I suggest we start implementing monitoring in China and initially wait to see what the GEF-UNDP Grant may bring the Gobi A. This grant contains significant amounts of resources for ranger training and monitoring implementation (I would hate to duplicate efforts here). However, once we have a working system we would immediately demonstrate it to the rangers in the Gobi A – (and possibly get a mandate from the GEF-UNDP project).

Before going into China we would test the set-up under field conditions with our "own" rangers in the Gobi B.

### **2.) Scientific Field Surveys and Research in Lop Nur**

The field surveys would initially be carried out using the above-described system. We would train a local scientist to manage the database and carry out some of the further analysis. Further input and planning would really need a field trip to the area. This trip would provide an insight into the needs of the local scientists and rangers and clearly define priorities. As we can combine this with point 1 we would already be implementing a first scientific monitoring phase on our initial trip.

### **3.) Captive Breeding in Mongolia**

As I had already pointed out we would need to have the mandate from the government to carry out this project. No point in starting and then finding the

surveyed camels moved to another area.

1. mandate
2. establish breeding station (personnel, communication modus, fences, sufficient fodder Reserves etc.)
3. move potential wild camels to the breeding facility
4. take samples for genetic analysis (compare with domestic and samples from China)
5. reproductive evaluation (general health exam, ID animals, non-invasive faecal steroids, ultrasonography of the reproductive tract)

Once the animals have been moved to the breeding facility and are available for examination we would require a single short fieldtrip (total 14 days from Europe) to collect samples and for reproductive evaluation. The personnel would have to be trained in communications and faecal sample collection, labelling and storage (list restricted to immediate veterinary needs). As far as I remember you are presently using a genetics lab for camel identification – would this facility be available and able to process and analyse these further samples? If not I could find a partner at Vienna University.

### **Awareness-raising, Educational Booklets**

Through the generous sponsorship of the Fred Foundation in the Netherlands and Shell China, work has started on two more awareness-raising booklets. The first will cover the valuable and endangered plant species within the new Nature Reserve in China many of which are used for medicinal purposes. The second will highlight the plight of the Chirru antelope, its habitat is contiguous with the Reserve, and its persecution by poachers to obtain its fine hair which is woven into scarves and sold at inflated prices to rich westerners. These booklets will be translated into Chinese, Uigher and Kazakh as were the two previously published books: *The King of the Gobi* (about the wild Bactrian camel) and *Blowing in the Wind - the Fight Against Desertification*. Both books have been written for a young readership and are available from the WCPF priced at £5.00 each.

### **MSP- Mongolia**

As outlined in [Newsletter 9](#), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the GEF have, with the Mongolian government drawn up a project for biodiversity protection in the Mongolian Great Gobi Reserve A. This is the same kind of medium-sized project that enabled us to work with SEPA to establish the Lop Nur Wild Camel Nature Reserve in China. The main aim of the MSP is to increase the capacity and infrastructure of the Reserve A. Because of limited financial resources and several severe winters the local protected area staff have been under funded. This has also meant little real opportunity for the protected area staff to study the habitat of the wild Bactrian camel, maintain and improve water points and the manage the threats, e.g., wolves, to the wild Bactrian camel.

One element of this MSP relates to trans-boundary co-operation between China and Mongolia especially when the migrating camel crosses the international boundary. It has protection in Mongolia but not in China where it is frequently shot or poisoned. Kate and I met with the UNDP project manager and it appears highly likely that the Wild Camel Protection Foundation will be responsible for implementing this part of the project, building on the success of the Mongolian/China International Wild Camel Conference which WCPF organised and funded in Beijing in August 2001. At this Conference a Letter of Intent was signed between the two countries to implement inter-country co-operation and information exchange on the wild Bactrian camel. WCPF has been invited to attend the Inception Meeting for the Mongolian MSP in September 2003. Kate Rae is planning to attend this meeting. As you will have read, we hope to involve the Salzburg Zoo and Dr. Chris Walzer in this programme.

### **Visit to Abenteuerland Walter Zoo, Gossau, Switzerland.**

I was invited to speak at the Abenteuerland Walter Zoo in Switzerland during

their first Camel week-end that the zoo had organised over 6/7 September. Over 2,000 people attended the zoo over the two day period and I gave two lectures. I was intrigued that there should be so much interest in camels especially with visitors from Germany, Austria and Sweden. The zoo has domestic Bactrian camels and offered to sponsor one of our captive wild camels in the breeding programme which is very welcome news.

The new European members we signed up, the publicity WCPF obtained and the contacts made during this visit means that there is now greater awareness of the work of the Foundation in Europe. In addition, we now have an English wildlife park and a Swiss zoo sponsoring a captive wild camel as part of the breeding programme.

### **Funding**

As members and supporters you are aware that the work of the Foundation is funded entirely by donations. The major work to start the captive wild bactrian camel breeding programme in Mongolia has been funded through a donation from an Australian donor, Hunter Hall Investment Management Ltd. We are very grateful for their support for without it this vital and important work could not have started.

### **Membership Renewal**

These will fall due in October. So will members who have not yet renewed their annual membership for 2003/2004 please send £15 (or its equivalent in foreign currency). Also emails addresses as this saves on postage.

Thank you once again for all your most generous and highly valued support.

Yours faithfully

John Hare