

WILD CAMEL PROTECTION FOUNDATION

Head Office, School Farm, Benenden, Kent, TN17 4EU England

Tel: 44 (0) 1580 241132

Email: harecamel@aol.com

www.wildcamels.com

Hon. Life Patron: Dr. Jane Goodall D.B.E.

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November 2013 - Newsletter Number 31

Dear Wild Camel Supporter,

CAMEL RACE DAY/ KENT COUNTY SHOW 2013

Unfortunately, for reasons not under our control, this year's Camel Race Day at Fawley Hill, near Henley had to be cancelled. However, Edward Barham has kindly said we can hold it again in 2014 at Hole Park in Rolvenden, Kent where we held it most successfully, although rather damply, in 2012. Let us hope the weather will be kinder next year.

However, the Fossett's and their racing camels were invited to the Kent County Show in July and performed three times a day for three days in the main ring where they attracted a great deal of attention. I was allowed to ride a camel around the ring to commentate on the racing and also to explain the vital work the WCPF is doing to save the wild camel from extinction. This resulted in a lead picture in Horse and Hound magazine (15th July). Many thanks yet again to Joseph and Rebecca Fossett as these activities really help to raise awareness for our work and the plight of the wild camel.

MONGOLIA and CHINA 2013

Mongolia

I travelled to Mongolia and China from September 15th until October 19th. Permission had been given by the Ministry of Environment and Nature in Mongolia for WCPF to release two of the wild male adult camels from our breeding centre where they were born. Having travelled the 1500 kms journey from Ulaan Baator in the company of Yad Adiya, a Mongolian wild camel expert and senior scientist from the Mongolian Academy of Sciences, who kindly hired our vehicle and Professor Liu Shaochuang, a Chinese remote sensing expert in charge of the Remote Sensory Unit at the Chinese Academy of Sciences, who had kindly donated the two satellite collars which we planned to put on the two wild bull camels. I was stunned and saddened to learn on our arrival that Dorjgotov, our Breeding Centre manager and the director of the Great Gobi Strictly Protected Area "A" had collapsed and died from a heart attack six hours prior to our arrival. He was only 41 and has left a wife and two children.

The shock among his staff was understandably considerable and in true Mongolian fashion they assuaged their grief with alcohol. Next morning 12 sad, hung-over rangers and our herdsman presented themselves for duty. The duty was loading the two wild camels, to be released, into a lorry. This first part of the operation took five hours, however, once successfully completed, we then travelled 250 miles into the desert to reach a fresh water spring with good vegetation, a suitable habitat for their release. We arrived at 3.00 am, snatched three hours sleep, and then completed a successful release at sunrise. The satellite collars are working the Chinese and Mongolian scientists and WCPF sharing the data. So far the two camels are apparently well and in good health. We are monitoring their progress carefully, as this is the first release

ever undertaken of wild camels bred in captivity into the wild.

The wild camels at the Breeding Centre are doing well and calves are born each spring. This year four calves were born (three males). The WCPF plan has always been to release surplus wild camels from the Breeding Centre and if the current release is successful this is excellent news for the future of the Centre. We will know that wild camels can be bred in captivity and successfully introduced into the wild. As violence can ensue between males during the mating season in November, December and January, it is essential we release mature wild bull camels to avert the risk of danger to the herdsman and destruction of the fencing surrounding the breeding centre during this highly active and supercharged period.

We are in close contact with the Mongolian Ministry of Nature and Environment and are waiting to see who will be appointed as the new Park Director

China

I then travelled on to China where I met WCPF trustee, Yuan Lei. We travelled another 1200 kms to Dun Huang on the eastern side of the Lop Nur Wild Camel National Reserve. Professor Liu Shaochuang has raised the funding to build a substantial Wild Camel Research Centre some 80 miles into the desert from Dun Huang. It also acts as a check-point for another threat which I had, before this visit, been totally unaware existed. We were there during a public holiday and Chinese tourists in 4-wheel drive vehicles were trying to enter the reserve. This is a major change and shows how certain sectors of the Chinese public have become affluent in recent years. When I first entered the Chinese Gobi in 1995 this activity would have been unthinkable.

Fortunately, there is a very active Chinese official manning the office/check-point. I agree with the reserve management, that if tourists are given permission to enter the Reserve then they should be restricted to one route, which goes into the mining areas, and all vehicles must be accompanied by a ranger. Miscreants should be subjected to heavy fines. This new and unwelcome activity must only cause greater disturbance to the wild camel and its fragile desert habitat.

The good news as reported by Yad Adiya is that the number of wild camels in Mongolia had increased from 450 in 1993 to 800 today and Yuan Lei asserts the wild camels in the Chinese Gobi were holding their own at about 600 animals. This is most encouraging for the work we, with your help, have undertaken.

VOLUNTEERS

Ayden Percy, our third volunteer, spent three productive months at the breeding centre in Mongolia this summer and came with me into the Gobi for the release of the wild camels and then on with me to China. He showed great resilience in living with Tsog Erdene, our herdsman in his 'ger' and managing to survive in a place where no-one spoke English. For the Mongolian visit I was also accompanied by Phoebe Boswall, a Chinese speaker, who is the daughter of a friend of mine from Kent.

HAY

The first winter hay has been purchased and WCPF has paid \$4,000. The remainder costing \$7,500 is still to be purchased.

WEBSITE TWITTER and FACEBOOK

Please continue to visit our website which is constantly being updated and contains a great deal of relevant information from both the China and Mongolia visit. Please see www.wildcamels.com if you have not already visited the site.

A very BIG THANK YOU to Anna Jemmett (who was our second volunteer in Mongolia and who although based in Canada until early December, continues to help the WCPF with its facebook and twitter pages. Please do look at both www.facebook.com/WildCamels and www.twitter.com/WildCamels

EDUCATIONAL AWARENESS-RAISING PROGRAMME

Two posters have been prepared to a highly professional standard thanks to the generosity of Alaska Zoo <www.alaskazoo.org>. They permitted the use of excellent posters they had prepared for a publicity display at the Zoo, about the wild camels to be adapted for use in the Chinese and Mongolian environmental awareness programme. Three educational booklets have also been prepared and will be turned into DVDs. All these materials are Phase One of a WCPF educational programme in China and Mongolia, which we plan to carry to the schools and villages, which surround the two huge wild camel reserves and our breeding centre in both Mongolia and China. With Mongolia currently in the grip of rampant mining fever and deposits of gold having been found in the Great Gobi Specially Protected Area 'A' attracting illegal miners, the campaign is vital and extremely timely. The materials will be translated into Chinese, Mongolian, Kazakh and Uighur and quantities printed will depend on our budget. The Chinese Xinxiang Provincial Government has made a significant contribution of funds to the Nature Reserve, which can be used towards the costs the project in China. And we are very grateful to the Mohammed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund for endangered species which made a very generous contribution which enabled us to get the campaign underway. I approached Rio Tinto in Ulaan Baator to find out if they were willing to sponsor the translation and printing of the booklets into Mongolian. I am waiting for their response.

We have printed the three booklets in English and they are available to buy from the WCPF website.

LECTURES

I continue to give lecture to schools and other institutions, societies or clubs. If any member knows of any suitable lecture audiences who might be interested in a talk please let me know. The wider the wild camel message gets out, the better.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS

Your annual subscription is used entirely for funding the Mongolian Breeding Centre Budget. So please remember to renew your annual membership and if you haven't, please send £20.00 (or its equivalent in foreign currency). You can pay by going direct to the website www.wildcamels.com using Paypal. If you are paying in US dollars or Euros you can also transfer funds direct into the WCPF's Euro or US dollar accounts. **Please email us for the WCPF bank and transfer details.** Thank you to the many members who pay by **setting up a standing order** with their bank to pay direct to the WCPF account. This keep costs down.

SPONSORING A YOUNG WILD CAMEL

If you are sponsoring a young wild camel at the breeding centre please remember to send your annual payment, which was due **1st March 2013**.

Very best wishes and renewed thanks for your great support for our on-going work – the protection and conservation of the critically endangered wild camel from extinction. It is with your help and generous support that we are able to achieve so much

John Hare

Wild Camel Protection Foundation Head Office,
School Farm, Benenden, Kent TN17 4EU

www.wildcamels.com

www.johnhare.org.uk

POSTSCRIPT: *Last Man In – End of Empire in Northern Nigeria*

My new book, which is unrelated to the wild camel but indicative of why I dedicated myself to its survival. I was the last recruit into the Colonial Administrative Service in Northern Nigeria – hence the title of this book. My years 1957 to 1964 coincided with a time of momentous change in Nigeria. I was brought into contact with rapidly disappearing cultures and customs in one of the remotest parts of West Africa. I was caught up in unrecorded political events which merit, I believe, a footnote in Nigerian history. The current enmity between tribal groups puts the emergence of the Muslim terrorist organisation *Boko Haram* and the present religious and political strife in Nigeria into a comprehensible context. *Last Man In* was given a very generous review by Matthew Parris in *the Spectator* and Roderic Dunnett in *the Oldie*. **To order a copy of *Last Man In* - approximately 290 pages, 15 arresting black/white photos - at £20.00 (plus £3.00 postage), please write to me at: School Farm, Benenden, Kent TN17 4EU or go to <www.johnhare.org.uk> (Latest Publication)> or <www.Amazon.co.uk>**