

THE WILD CAMEL PROTECTION FOUNDATION

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

Patrons: The Marchioness of Bute, The Countess of Chichester, Lady Grant, Professor Yuan Guoying, Peter Hall, Jane McMorland Hunter of Hafton, Gerald Kidd, Damon de Laszlo, Lulu Lytle, Colin McIntosh, Professor David Munro.

November 2015 - Newsletter Number 35

Dear Wild Camel Supporter,

WCPF PATRONS

WCPF extends sincere condolences to the family of Margot, The Dowager Marchioness of Reading who died on April 19th this year. In the last 20 years of her long life, Margot Reading's great passion was animal welfare and she bombarded everyone she could think of with letters demanding they do more to protect all forms of animal life. She wrote and telephoned me frequently, outlining what she was trying to do on our behalf – often with great success. A controversial and totally uncompromising person, I experienced nothing but kindness, a huge sense of fun and a deep concern for wild camel protection. We miss her very much indeed.

On the 18th August Jane Goodall DBE, our Life Patron, gave a talk at the Royal Geographical Society entitled "Gombe and Beyond" which outlined her working life with chimpanzees and also her establishment of "Roots and Shoots", <www.rootsandshoots.org.uk> the education programme which encourages children to implement practical positive change for people, animals and the environment by providing teachers with free resources and activities. I was in the audience, when, to my delight and surprise she devoted the last ten minutes to talking about WCPF and the work we do to save the wild camel from extinction.

Jane has also put up an extremely complimentary blog post on her website. Please look at:

<http://news.janegoodall.org/2015/11/16/good-news-critically-endangered-wild-camel/>

The irrepressible Jane McMorland Hunter has yet again participated in another marathon, and as a result has raised substantial funds for WCPF. Jane is another one of our patrons who has contributed so much over the years and to whom we are deeply grateful.

A huge "thank you" to both Janes. We are extremely fortunate to have such outstanding patrons.

CAMEL RACE DAY – SUNDAY, 4th of SEPTEMBER 2016

In 2016 the Camel Race Day will be held at CHILHAM CASTLE, which is located between Ashford and Canterbury in Kent. The date is SUNDAY, the 4th of SEPTEMBER. Chilham Castle is a magnificent setting to hold the races as will be seen from their website <www.chilham-castle.co.uk>

They are used to hosting horse trials and are very well equipped to hold our event. The picturesque village of Chilham is in the valley of the Great Stour River and beside the A28 road 6 miles (10 km) southwest of Canterbury. Fuller details will be sent out in the next newsletter.

The day will be similar to the event we held in 2014 with camel racing (the Fossett's racing camels are booked) Mongolian wrestlers and musicians, trade stalls and of course our magnificent puppet Gobi (War Camel). **Please note the date in your diaries** and try to come and support WCPF on our big

fund-raising event of the year. All funds raised go to buy winter hay for the wild camels at the Breeding Centre to ensure they have adequate stocks of hay to help them last through the harsh Mongolian winter.

MONGOLIA

The RELEASE of SIX WILD CAMELS from the Wild Camel Protection Foundation's (WCPF's) Breeding Centre in Mongolia into the Specially Protected Area Gobi "A"

The second release of captive bred Wild Camels (*Camelus ferus*) from the WCPF Hunter Hall Wild Camel Breeding Centre (the Breeding Centre) at Zakhyn Us, Mongolia took place on September 15th 2015. Anna Jemmett BSc Hons Zoology, who is the WCPF Communications Manager, accompanied me on the trip. Apart from handling our communications on the web, Anna is also responsible for updating the Stud Book which holds all the genealogical details of the captive wild camels at the Breeding Centre. In this hugely important task she is supported by Adiya Yadamsuren of the Mongolian Academy of Sciences, who also helped to supervise the release of the wild camels and who has a long and detailed experience of both the wild camels and the environment in Gobi "A". Anna made some impressive recommendations for the future and is a contributor to the following report.

The area chosen for the release was in the extreme south of the Great Gobi Specially Protected Area "A" not far from the Mongolian-Chinese international border. Gobi "A" was established by the United Nations Environment Programme 40 years ago and as well as being the only Mongolian habitat of the wild camel holds a sub-species of the Tibetan bear (*Ursus arctos pruinosus*). There are only approximately 35 Gobi bears left in the world and we were fortunate to meet Professor Harry Reynolds and his team who have been monitoring the Gobi bear for many years. It is particularly interesting because it is a relict species, a living witness of another time when the climate and landscape of the Gobi was much more suitable to other animals such as bears. Other endangered and critically endangered species in Gobi "A" include the wild ass (*Equus hemionus*), the black-tailed gazelle (*Gazella subgutturosa*), the Asiatic Wild Sheep (*Ovis ammon darwini*) and the Snow Leopard (*Uncia uncia schreber*).

Prior to the release, the opportunity was taken to check the health of all the wild camels at the Breeding Centre and a veterinarian gave them an anti-rabies vaccine. They were also all given an anti-helminthic to rid them of internal parasites.

The chosen release sites were over 600 kilometres from the Breeding Centre and it took more than 15 hours to drive over rough terrain, through mountain passes and stretches of flat, stone desert. Because of the tough conditions very robust trucks had to be used for transporting the camels. The four wild camels with satellite collars were transported first, with the other two following in a second truck. All six were given a sedative before being loaded on to the trucks. The radio tracking collars were donated and fitted at the release site by Professor Liu Shaochuang from the Chinese Academy of Sciences and his PhD student Adiya Yadamsuren from the Mongolian Academy of Sciences. Both men have worked with WCPF over many years in both China and Mongolia. The radio collars will allow the movement of the young wild camels to be tracked over time.

We arrived at the first release site, Sharhuls (Shara Khulsny Bulak) late at night and early the next morning we released the first four wild camels. Sharhuls is the shortened name of a spring in the Gobi, an oasis of fresh water with suitable vegetation for camels and it is surrounded by rocky mountains and desert. It is prime wild camel habitat. The four camels were not unduly stressed after their arduous journey and after a short rest trotted off into the surrounding vegetation.

The second release took place the next day at a second spring called Bogt Tsagaanders, which is approximately 250 kilometres from Sharhuls and also encompasses a large fresh water spring with ample wild camel vegetation. It is also prime wild camel habitat. The two camels released at the second spring were three-years-old and the youngest of the six. They were not fitted with radio collars as two of the collars brought by Professor Liu refused to function. One of the camels released at this spring took much

longer to recover from the journey and was monitored by the Gobi "A" rangers for a further 48 hours until he too, disappeared at a trot into the surrounding area. By splitting the two groups of camels, all six have a greater chance of survival and ultimate breeding success by reducing competition at the spring. It is interesting to note that satellite pictures of their movements show that they do not stay together but each one sets out on an individual track.

The British Ambassador to Mongolia, Ms. Catherine Arnold, witnessed the release and found the experience extremely interesting and rewarding. The British Embassy gave publicity to the release on their website. It is encouraging that we now have the full backing of the British Embassy, as well as the support of the Mongolian government for our work to save the wild camel from extinction.

Releasing six wild males into the Gobi is not an undertaking to be taken lightly. It is imperative however, that, before the breeding season starts in November, December, January the number of sexually active males at the Breeding Centre is reduced. Otherwise, when fighting for domination there is potential damage to our fencing and buildings and a very real danger to our herdsmen in charge of the wild camels at the Breeding Centre. Not all six may survive in the hostile Gobi, however, they have been given every chance to do so, and those that do, will inject fresh blood into the wild herds.

BREEDING CENTRE MANAGEMENT

Dovchin, the Director of Gobi "A" and, the manager of the wild camel Breeding Centre has sends us periodically excellent reports. In spite of the lack of proper internet facilities at Bayan Toroi he is communicating very well and has made many improvements to the Breeding Centre. Anna Jemmett who had not travelled there for three years was impressed by the developments at the Breeding Centre. The British Ambassador together with local provincial governors and officials also visited the Breeding Centre prior to the release of the six wild camels. They witnessed the veterinarian treatments being administered to the wild camels and I believe the overall opinion was very favourable. Certainly the Ambassador was impressed.

We are still waiting to be advised of the figures from the wild camel count, which was undertaken by Gobi "A" staff and ZSL in December 2014. I understand from ZSL, that the report has not yet been finalised.

CHINA

Yuan Lei, the Manager of the Lop Nur Wild Camel Nature Reserve office in China has just sent us the following encouraging report together with some excellent photographs of our educational booklets being used in Chinese schools to raise awareness of the wild camel in Xinjiang.:

- 1) *Education: We did education in over ten primary schools for wild camel's protection. My colleague named Kamila who is Uyghur gave very good report to the pupils . Chengyun and Sahen Guli had down a lots work for these. The education materials included your design. We also designed another three kinds of the materials. So we prepared a lots of the education materials to pupils. All pupils were very interested in wild camels' knowledge. The attachment includes some photos about these education.*
- 2) *The checkpoint Sanlongsha is doing it's management function. This year this checkpoint stopped over 15 group's of tourists into the reserve, especially in the long holidays, 1st May and "1st Oct". Although there were more tourist groups, we did not stop them because they owned very good vehicles or we did not find them.*
- 3) *We put over 27 infrared digital camera nearby the springs along Arjin Mountain and Aqik valley to monitor the wildlife. We collected over 20,000 animals' photos of over twenty species. This work started in 2013 and we will continue to do it, not stop.*

SUPPORT FROM ZOOS AROUND THE WORLD

We are delighted to say that WCPF has recently received a great deal of support and funding from American zoos - Alaska, Detroit, Cincinnati and the American Association of Zookeepers - Potawatomi

Zoo Chapter. This is hugely encouraging and is much appreciated. It is clear that our work and message is spreading through the Zoo Network in the USA.

The YORKSHIRE WILDLIFE PARK FOUNDATION <www.yorkshirewildlifepark.com> has given us a grant which together with the funding received from the COTSWOLD WILDLIFE PARK <www.cotswoldwildlifepark.co.uk> ensured that the funds we allocated to cover the wild camel release budget were fully covered. The Yorkshire Wildlife Park Foundation has also contributed substantially to the publishing and distribution of our three latest wild camel booklets, in Mongolian.

This support from these two institutions is very much appreciated, as well as the world-wide financial support WCPF is receiving. It is very encouraging and the Managing Trustees consider it is a substantial breakthrough, for securing the long term future of WCPF. Many other individuals and Foundations have also shown their on-going support and appreciation of how much they value what WCPF is trying to do to save the critically endangered wild camel and its rare desert habitat from extinction.

CHRISTMAS GIFTS

The **three educational booklets** are also published in English and are informative on all aspects of the wild camel and the wider camelid family. They are fully illustrated with superb photographs. If any member would like to receive a set I can send them in the UK for the special price of £10 plus £2.80 postage. Hurry and order them for Christmas – they make a great present – especially for children. I also have a new **stock of hats, and scarves made from wild camel wool** harvested at the Breeding Centre. They cost £35.00 plus £2.80 postage and again make a terrific and quite UNIQUE Christmas present. There are also superb **Mongolian slippers** (large, medium, small) at £35 .00 plus £2.80 postage. There are also **CHRISTMAS CARDS** at £5.00 for six plus £1.80 postage. Unfortunately the exorbitantly high postage costs make these goods impractical to send outside the UK. All these goods can viewed on our website <www.wildcamels.com> under **SHOP**.

WEBSITE, TWITTER and FACEBOOK

Please continue to visit our website which is constantly being updated and contains a great deal of relevant information and pictures from both China and Mongolia. Photos and a commentary on the release are on the site. Please see:

www.wildcamels.com

www.facebook.com/WildCamels

www.twitter.com/WildCamels

LECTURES

I continue to give talks to schools (recently to Eton – who are exploring the possibility of sending a group to the Breeding Centre - and Radley) and other institutions, societies and clubs. If anyone knows of any suitable audiences who might be interested in a talk in this country or overseas, could they please let me know. The wider the wild camel message gets out, the better, and I have found the contacts made after a talk are frequently invaluable and sometimes lead to substantial funding for the wild camel.

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). With over 550 members we cannot send out reminders but rely on individuals to send us the subscription themselves. 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 already pay by **standing order** direct to the WCPF account. We will send you our bank details on request. This is a huge help and means we have regular funding for the Breeding Centre salaries and costs are kept down.

SPONSORING A YOUNG WILD CAMEL

If you are sponsoring a young wild camel at the Breeding Centre, a sponsorship which covers vaccines, veterinary advice, hay and medicines, please remember to send your annual payment, which was due **1st March 2015**. **There are three new healthy young female camels looking for sponsors.**

A very **Happy Christmas and New Year**, and renewed thanks for your great support for our on-going work – the protection of the critically endangered wild camel from extinction. It is with your help and your generous support that we are able to achieve so much.

Very best wishes

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POSTSCRIPT - OTHER MATTERS

For those of you who are interested in “other matters” I also give a talk on “**The Historical Background to Boko Haram**”. In the early 1960s I worked for the British and Nigerian Governments in the area recently occupied by Boko Haram and stayed in villages in the area many times. I knew the tribal structures well and whereas I cannot talk about the current situation, I do have knowledge of the historical background to this horrific uprising. This talk has been very well received at a number of institutions and at the end I attempt to switch the audience’s attention away from the horrors of man to the magnificent wild camel!

My book, **LAST MAN IN - the end of Empire in Northern Nigeria** which covers this and other topics relating both to the area and the period is available from me at £20 hardback and £15 paperback plus £2.80 postage. In this case, cheques should be made out to John Hare