

WCPF Newsletter 13: March 2005

Dear Supporter,

Soane, 50 Pimlico Road, London

Thanks to the kindness and enthusiasm of Lulu Lytle who runs Soane, an antiques and furnishing shop at 50 Pimlico Road, the pre-Christmas exhibition she held on behalf of the WCPF was a great success. The opening night was well attended and fascinating camel-related objects and camel memorabilia were for sale on our behalf. A huge cut out Bactrian camel was displayed imaginatively in the window and all the objects were beautifully displayed on three floors. The exhibition raised almost £4,000 for our funds and we are very grateful to Lulu and her very friendly and helpful staff for all the generosity and help which they gave to our cause. Lulu is a camel 'nut' and it is good to know that she would like to be involved in future fund-raising ventures.

Training Course – Ol Maisor, Laikipia, Kenya 22/1/05 - 8/2/05

From the end of January until the end of the first week in February the WCPF ran a training of trainers course in Kenya for the middle management staff from the wild Bactrian camel nature reserve in China and protected area in Mongolia. There were three participants from Mongolia and two from China. The course was supported by the Zoological Society of London who provided an excellent instructor, Dr Tim Wachter. Tim an experienced zoologist with extensive experience of desert ecosystems organised the course. Participants will, on their return to their respective countries, be in a position to instruct reserve and protected area staff in a system which will enhance the collection of data on wild Bactrian camels and other wildlife and vegetation. Using a GPS as a method for planning routes, recording sightings, Tim enabled the participants to extrapolate the information in a logical manner and on return to their headquarters transfer this information to a computer data base. A monitoring and recording booklet was also developed for use in the survey work. The methods taught are used internationally for monitoring and research field work. An additional benefit will be that for the very first time, Mongolians and Chinese, who are involved in identical work – wild Bactrian camel protection – will be able to communicate with each other on a regular basis, and exchange information using a 'language' with which they are familiar. It is also hoped that they will participate on a regular basis in monitoring surveys in each other's protected areas.

The course was held on Ol Maisor, a ranch in Laikipia owned by co-trustee Jasper Evans. Towards the end of the training programme a three-day-field survey was organised with Jasper's camels. This enabled the participants to implement skills they had been taught on the course. It also enabled the participants to study a working ranch which also manages to provide a diverse habitat for African wildlife. Jasper's family and friends generously helped to ensure the training course ran smoothly and that the trainees were well fed and watered. It was a great success and we are grateful to them all. We would also like to thank, Dr Glyn Davies, the Conservation Director of the Zoological Society of London (ZSL) firstly, for giving his full support to the course and secondly for providing such as excellent course co-ordinator in Dr Tim Wachter.

Finally as part of the training course we discussed the captive camel breeding programme and the limited number of wild Bactrian camels there are in captivity. Dr Wachter recommended we establish an International Stud Book for the captive Bactrian camels using the IUCN guidelines. Further information including the conclusions from the training course can be found on our website.

International Stud Book for the captive wild Bactrian camels

When there are limited numbers of a critically endangered species, and only a small number of them held in captivity, for example in zoos or the wild Bactrian camel captive breeding centre in Mongolia, it is usual and best practice to establish an International Stud Book. In this way all of the wild Bactrian camels in captivity are identified and an accurate genetic record is kept. As the Wild Camel Protection Foundation has the largest number of wild Bactrian camels in captivity and they are breeding naturally, we have decided to establish the International Stud Book. With the assistance of the Zoological Society of London and following the IUCN guidelines we plan to establish this by May 2005 and have it listed on the website.

Captive Wild Bactrian Breeding Programme, Mongolia

The captive wild Bactrian camel breeding programme established by the WCPF at Zakhyn-Us near Bayan Tooroi north of the Great Gobi Reserve A continues to flourish and four captive calves (three females and one bull calf) have been born this year. While in Kenya, we met Dr Han Jianlin of the International Research and Livestock Institute (IRLI) who has been conducting genetic tests on wild Bactrian camels samples of blood and bone from China and Mongolia. With our knowledge of the requirements for the international Stud book and after discussions with Dr Wachter we have decided to have all the wild Bactrian camels in the

captive centre in Zakhyn-Us, Mongolia DNA tested using the Mongolian domestic Bactrian camel as the base DNA reference. We are having three sets of tests done. Dr Han Jianlin, who will be based for part of the year in Beijing has offered to do the DNA and genetic testing there and as was mentioned in the last newsletter, Dr Ulli Wernery, a leading camel veterinarian who works for Sheikh Mohammed Mahtoum in Dubai is also undertaking DNA tests on all the captive Bactrian camels, including the new born calves, to ensure that they are all genetically pure. Thirdly, Dr Glyn Davies, at the ZSL has offered to assist with further testing, possibly in Saudi Arabia. In this way each wild Bactrian camel in the captive camel centre in Zakhyn-Us will have its genetic purity established and DNA identified. This information will be recorded in the international Stud book.

I had been invited to visit Dubai this month, but have been advised by Dr Wernery, that the time is not right to visit Sheik Mohammed Mahtoum. He will advise if and when it is appropriate to do so.

In addition to Bilgee the project director, there are now two other project staff, the herdsman in charge of the captive herd and the vet. A Mongolian veterinarian has been appointed on a part-time basis to ensure, there is a vet on hand should one of the wild Bactrian camels require attention. It is important to understand the responsibility we have for maintaining and protecting what is the only herd of captive wild Bactrian camels in the world. All of the trustees are acutely conscious of this responsibility.

Meanwhile, Bilgee continues to manage the centre extremely well. He has undertaken extensive public awareness programmes among local schools and with the local government officials in the administrative centres that surround Zakhyn-Us. He has organised wildlife clubs for children in many of the schools that he visited. His reports are very good and he is extremely enthusiastic about his work and the future of the project.

If any member is planning to visit Mongolia and would like to see the work or visit the centre at Zakhyn-Us then please contact me direct.

MSP- Mongolia

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the GEF are, with the Mongolian Ministry of Nature and the Environment implementing a project for biodiversity protection in the Mongolian Great Gobi Reserve A. This medium-sized project is similar to work WCPF did with SEPA in China to establish the Lop Nur Wild Camel Nature Reserve in Xinjiang. Bilgee is working closely with the MSP project director and has attended all the Workshops so far, including the recent Workshop which was held to discuss the management plan for the entire protected area. This draft document should be ready sometime in 2005. The WCPF has responsibilities under the MSP for cross border liaison between the Chinese and Mongolian authorities and part of our work on the training course in Kenya with Chinese and Mongolian officials has already played an important part in achieving this end.

Expedition April 2005

Sadly, in spite of the contract which the Xinjiang authorities had signed, it became clear before Christmas that the central Chinese government would not allow the planned public awareness expedition across northern China, following in the footsteps of Owen Lattimore, to proceed. I have always in the past dealt with the Xinjiang provincial authority and I have never had to deal with the central Chinese government. Clearly the expedition was routed through areas the Central Government considers to be sensitive.

Instead, building on the work done on the training course, I am trying to organise a monitoring survey with domestic Bactrian camels in the spring of this year in remote areas of the Great Gobi Reserve A in Mongolia and again in October of this year to the 'hidden valleys' that we 'discovered' in 1999. It is hoped both Mongolians and Chinese will participate in both trips and exchange data collected. As ever, funding is all important.

Sponsorship: Captive Wild Bactrian Camels

The captive wild Bactrian camels have to be protected and properly managed. This will mean paying our herdsman or another person on site to oversee the camels' welfare. During the winter and spring months it is necessary to buy hay for them. This is expensive to buy and also to transport to the site. Medicines are required for the females and their offspring during the first five years. Eight Foundation members, individuals and organisations have already generously agreed to sponsor wild Bactrian camels. However we urgently require at least five more sponsors as a number of the female camels are pregnant.

If you would like to sponsor a captive wild Bactrian camel and want more information please contact Kate Rae, a WCPF managing trustee at the following email address: krae77777@aol.com or you can easily download the SPONSORSHIP FORM from the <www.wildcamels.com> website and post it to our 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 herdersmen to protect the young camels from wolves, the medicines and veterinary costs. Will those of you who have already sponsored a camel and are paying on a yearly basis, please remember to send your next year's donation as soon as possible.

Funding

As members and supporters you are aware, the work of the Foundation is funded entirely by donations. Your ideas and suggestions for possible sources of funding are always welcome.

Talks

Since the last newsletter I have continued to give talks to institutions, schools and colleges. If any member has ideas for future lectures then please contact either Kate Rae or myself.

Anne Savage

The untimely death of Anne Savage robs us of a generous and active supporter. Our sympathies and thanks go to her family.

Membership Renewal

Most members have renewed their annual membership for 2004/2005, but if you haven't, please send £15 (or its equivalent in foreign currency). 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 and ask for the bank transfer details.

Email Address

IF YOU HAVE AN EMAIL ADDRESS PLEASE SEND IT TO US AS THIS SAVES POSTAGE AND OTHER COSTS.

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

Yours faithfully,

John Hare