

WCPF Newsletter 16: July 2006

Dear Supporter,

Expedition October/November 2005 to the Lop Nur Wild Camel Reserve in China

Members will know all about the environmental tragedy at Kum Su spring in Lop Nur, which we reported in WCPF newsletter Number 15. National Geographic Magazine is publishing an article on the discovery of large quantities of potassium cyanide in Lop Nur in their September issue. But not all the news is negative. As a direct result of representations that the WCPF made to the Chinese Ambassador in London and to the Chinese State Environmental Protection Agency, the Chinese equivalent of a Ministry of the Environment, pressure was applied to the Provincial Government in Xinjiang to clean up the area destroyed by illegal gold miners in their use of the deadly poisonous potassium cyanide. A clean-up team was sent to the area and Yuan Lei, Professor Yuan Guyong's son who is Chief Researcher for the Lop Nur Wild Camel National Reserve, assures us that the clean up was successful as the following note from him shows:

" We found sodium cyanide on the November 2005 expedition led by John Hare WCPF and reported to Xinjiang Environmental Protection Bureau after we came back from the expedition. Xinjiang government and the directors of the Xinjiang Environmental Protection Bureau think about it very serious and organized a team as quickly as possible to collect them back and clear the pollution valley by using some hypochlorous acid and people wore anti gas mask and cloth. A leader from Bureau was to be a team leader, Bazhou government, Ruoqiang town government , Xinjiang Environmental Monitoring people and Ruoqiang's Police office consist of the whole team, total 22 persons. Only me from our wild Bactrian camel reserve office. We spent over ten days to go and back from there. We stopped near to Kum Su spring. We cleared nearly all of barrels by hypochlorous insufflation and nothing left on there now. We organized six vehicles and people from nine departments.

The action was very successful and also the State Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) in Beijing paid attention to this action very much. Some people from SEPA called to our team leader many times to check what about our action go on when we were on the way. Also it was very brilliant that we saw many different wildlife. Two group wild camel: 16 and 2 total 18 wild camels. Wild Tibetan ass: 3 groups and total 44. Argali sheep: 2 groups 4 and 4 total. Also, I found many wildlife footprints around Kum Su spring which include wild camels.

Yuan Lei,

Lop Nur Wild Camel Nature Reserve Bureau

Yuan Lei was part of a second investigative expedition in May/June 2006 to the Lop Nur Wild Camel Reserve north of Kum Su and south of Hami Here is his recent report:

20th, May to 5th ,June 2006, we organized an expedition of wild camel around Aqik valley in Lop Nur reserve. We started from Hami, pass by Yamansu town which was iron mine before, Cihai iron mine, Bayi spring which we have been there before in 1996, Aqik valley, Lop Nur dry lake, Hongliu spring, Hami.

Wildlife

We found two wild camels 5km south to Bayi spring where we have a nature restore spring project. They closed to our restore spring project area for drinking. Two wild camels run away to south Kum Tagh desert and along desert to east when they met us. The place is probably 100km-east place that we found four wild camels and followed them at an afternoon near the desert in 1996. Since 1996, I have been this area many times, nothing I found about alive wild camel but many wild camel prints, fur, foot prints, skeleton etc. We saw many gazelles at 90km west of Yamansu town that there is a mountain. We found many wild camel and gazelle prints. This mountain lies near the edge of our reserve in Hami area. It is said by our driver that he saw many wild camels two years ago in this mountain. But we didn't find new wild camel's prints.

Mine

78,000sq.km is large place. We found many mines on the way include gold, iron etc. Many of those mines near Aqik valley that we met before on our expedition was abandoned because mine empty. There are some new mines exploring in north mountain of Aqik valley

Lawuzi

Lawuzi lies the south edge of Lop Nur dry lake bed we have been there in 1997. We lost our domestic camels very near to Lawuzi at that time. Down to cliff of south edge of Lop Nur dry lake bed, we found lots of plants. A stream goes along into dry lake bed which come from Arjin mountains' flood. We found a great lot of wildlife prints, wild camels, gazelle, rabbit and wolf etc. This place is a good habitat for wildlife.

Conclusion

We have new finding near east edge of reserve in Hami area. Wild camel come to this area some times. This area is buffer area of reserve.

The plants of south of Lop Nur is still good like before.

The important problem is mine developing. It is very difficult to control mine exploration and development because reserve is a large place nearly 1% of whole of China's land.

Note: This huge reserve is very difficult to patrol because of its size. Illegal mining is a core problem but in some areas the wild Bactrian camel appears to be holding its own.

Fund-raising walk around Lake Turkana (Lake Rudolph) in northern Kenya and Ethiopia

I completed this walk/ride with domestic dromedary camels between March 1st and April 24th of this year. We made a successful completion of the 460-mile circuit and raised valuable funds and awareness for our projects relating to the preservation of the wild Bactrian camel. A very big THANK YOU to all members who very generously sponsored me during the walk and who, as a result, made the expedition possible. Here is a note that I have written about the journey:

"On March 1st 2006, Josh Perret (Jasper' Evan's grandson), Ivan Jensen (Josh's friend) eighteen camels, six herdsman and myself walked/rode around Lake Turkana in northern Kenya. The first time, as far as we are aware, that camels have been taken right around, that harsh, forbidding but spectacular lake. The average temperature during the six-week, 460-mile camel walk/ride was 43 degrees in the shade. This journey was undertaken to raise funds for the Wild Camel Protection Foundation in its efforts to save the wild Bactrian camel in China and Mongolia from extinction. In that respect, the expedition was very successful. Also many generous WCPF donors and friends in Kenya contributed towards the cost of the expedition.

To walk completely around Lake Turkana the Omo River has to be crossed. This river, which flows out of Ethiopia, branches into numerous tributaries before it reaches the lake. In the rains the current is strong and the swift-flowing river brings with it fertile silt which provides the fiercely independent Dassenach tribe productive soil for farming. And what farms they are.

We had come up the eastern side of the lake where the effects of the drought that has gripped the Horn of Africa were clearly seen. Hollow-eyed, hungry people sat and stared at us as our camels passed through what remained of their domestic flocks. The topi antelope, indigenous to this area had suffered and died in large numbers. Their carcasses were scattered among the skeletons of starved sheep and goats.

But once we had entered the Omo Delta the change was dramatic. Round-bellied, plump, naked urchins sat on platforms made of sorghum stalks and pulled at strings, which rattled tin cans to frighten away birds from preying on ears of corn bursting with grain.

'It's a second crop', I was told. 'The first was harvested before the end of November.'

Two crops in four months, not bad going.

Tiny cattle, the size of the Irish Dexter breed, were herded around the farms. The sheep and goats were fat and healthy, the Dassenach themselves were sleek and oiled, exuding rude health. No wonder they were eyed by their hungry neighbours to the east and west who were itching to let their AK47s off the leash. This tribal animosity and suspicion had ensured that two of our Turkana camel boys would not accompany us through the delta. They were to be ferried across the northern end of the lake where we would pick them up after we had made the Omo crossing.

A key to the crossing and to getting in and out of Ethiopia was an extraordinary Dutchman called Halwejn. He had spent so much time in the Omo delta, luring rich tourists into Dassenach country to part with \$1000 plus a day for the sight of an unspoilt part of Africa that he now styled himself, the King of the Omo. Tall, brisk, fiftyish and bursting

with energy, Halweijn was of the Dutch flower power generation who once he had abandoned his hippy lifestyle had fallen in love with Africa had spent a life time seeking out those parts of the continent that were still relatively unspoilt. The Omo Delta is all of that, but my guess is that it won't be for long. Missions, money, and AK's will soon, in their respective ways, change all that.

But for the moment, the Dassenach remain picturesque with their colourful head caps fashioned from mud and their womenfolk dressed in animal skins. But how to get the camels across? The rains had broken and the river as running hard. We attempted to wade them across after Josh and Ivan had assiduously sought out a viable route. No such luck. The delta mud gave under the weight of the camels and as they threshed about to free themselves they sunk deeper and deeper in the black sludge. It took a hundred Dassenach with ropes to eventually get three that were stuck in the mud to the top of the steep riverbank.

Then one old Dassenachian suggested that they had, from time to time, pinched a camel from the Turkana and demonstrated how camels could be successfully trussed up to enable them to be roped to the side of a boat. Halweijn sprang into action and commandeered a steel-built government boat. Then he weighed in with an outboard motor and soon we were ferrying the first camels across the Omo. 'Beware the crocs,' we had been warned but as far as I am aware we didn't see one. Maybe the multitude of helpers and the general frenetic activity scared them off. When half the herd of eighteen camels were over, the remaining nine were showing signs that they were anxious to join their chums on the western bank. The effort to get them into the water and trussed up to the side of the boat became easier and the time for each crossing correspondingly shorter. By the time the last camel was left, he could not wait to get into the water.

Was it the tsetse fly that caused two of the camels to go temporarily blind a few days later? We were not sure but the tsetse seemed to be high on the possible culprit's list. The relief in getting all eighteen camels across safely was palpable. Amazingly, on the whole these wonderful creatures seemed not to suffer from trauma or stress and like so many other characteristics of the camel, took this novelty in their stride. Considering that the width of the river was equal to nearly two football pitches it was a great achievement.

Later when we advanced over the little crossed Loriyo plateau the camels again showed their great worth. The plateau is strewn with larva and the descent, which we made off a beaten track, showed just how amazingly versatile and astute and long-suffering a camel, can be. The brittle larva flows from Teleki's volcano were somewhat of an anti-climax after the Omo and Loriyo crossings.

There was much else of interest on this extraordinary camel journey. Josh caught a 80-pound Nile Perch from the shore, which kept us in food for days. We had an encounter with armed Turkana bent on plundering a neighbouring tribe. Just for a moment the thought occurred to them that our camels might be a useful acquisition but a good meal calmed restive trigger fingers. The tall shade trees in the Turkwell River Delta set us in close quarters with other potentially turbulent Turkana tribesmen but the highlight of this enjoyable, and for the wild Bactrian camel and the WCPF, very rewarding trip, was the Omo River crossing."

Captive Wild Bactrian Breeding Programme, Mongolia

Dr Chris Walzer, director of Salzburg Zoo and a leading scientist advising the Przewalski wild horse programme in Mongolia, is currently in Mongolia taking additional samples from our wild Bactrian camels at Zakhyn Us for the captive wild camel genetic testing which is ongoing in Vienna. Dr Walzer had been a great help to us in the organisation of this DNA test programme and has introduced us to Dr Pamela Burger and assisted the Vienna Institute where she works in obtaining a grant for the programme. Here is an extract of Dr Burger's Email to me explaining her proposed activities. Dr Jane Goodall kindly sent us a strong endorsement letter for this work to enable Dr Burgher to obtain a grant:

Thank you very much, Mr. Hare, for the opportunity to establish a cooperation on the wild Bactrian camel genotyping. We are very happy to contribute to this important topic. About the possibilities of our institute: Currently we are analyzing the mitochondrial control region to establish the mitochondrial haplotypes of the camels and a first phylogenetic analysis. The next steps would certainly

involve microsatellite analysis and also RFLPs and in this respect I think the expertise is with Dr. Jianlin and Dr. Hanotte, as they have done a lot of important work in this field.

As Katja Silbermayr is going to do her doctoral thesis (for the next two years) she will also isolate a new set of microsatellites specific for the Bactrian camel with Christian Schlötterer (Institute of animal Breeding and Genetics, University of Veterinary Medicine Vienna) as her supervisor. Together with the already published MS the analysis of the current status of the wild Bactrian camel and its hybridization should be possible.

In terms of a cooperation it would be very useful to put together the existing samples and to collect more, we also would be very grateful for information of MS primers, which worked really well on the Bactrian camel, because our samples include feces. We would also think about exchange programs and certainly invite you to come to Vienna.

Pamela Burger

A full report on the current state of the testing programme will be sent to members after we have received Dr Walzer's report.

Bilgee our project manager has been on another training course, this time in Mongolia under a United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) initiative in the Great Gobi A Reserve. UNDP has established research on the wild Bactrian camel under a Middle Size Project (MSP) programme. Here are edited extracts from Bilgee's latest report to the WCPF. This will give members an idea of the competence of Bilgee and the efficient way he plans for the administration of Zakhyn Us. The English is unedited and is left just as it is received by WCPF:

First quarter Activity Report of Captive wild camel Breeding Programme Mongolia

By Enkhbileg

In 2006, we decided to implement programme activity by quarter (3 months) and we're aiming to work on improve and strengthening of Zakhyn-Us internal activities, supply necessary items and equipment, and prepare for Breeding center activities to abroad and nationally.

Concerning of activity plan

We have planned 15 activities to implement in first quarter 2006, except office activities as salary etc. From them, 2 activities were completely finished, 3 activities on discussing process, 3 activities

on going, and 7 activities were postponed into the next quarter activity plan.

On going activities as: *20-25 minutes film about Zakhyn-Us programme, Mongolia is in progress of making, however, there need to include some of interview as founder John Hare's and O.Dojraa's talks on this programme and significance of programme implementation and some picture of daily*

activities of Zakhyn-Us, like how herdsmen works etc. Also, translation of "King of the Gobi" is in continuing.

Frame of International Study Book on Captive wild camels,

We got and sent all needed blood and hair samples to three separated laboratories as Dr. Ulrich Wernery Scientific Director Central Veterinary Research Laboratory Dubai, Dr.Han Jianlin, Animal Genetic Resource Biotechnology International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) Nairobi, Kenya, and Prof. Dr. Chris Walzer Zoo and Wildlife Veterinarian Research Institute of Wildlife Ecology University of Veterinary Medicine Vienna, Austria. However, we have not yet the result from them,

Because DNA test result is the most important part and base work for develop to related documentation and classify and determine hybrid camels from Zakhyn-Us herd and start remove them.

Discussing activities:

Small tractor with accessories and 25 micro chips to put on captive herds with its reader.

About micro chips, this is directly relate to Inter. Study book activity and I asked from and discussed with Dr.Ch.Walzer about those items to find price and information on price and how we buy if they are good from Europe, especially, from Austria by e-mail, but we're learning

and looking for cheaper price than we planned. Because we discuss and explain them we use it for frame of agricultural development in rural area with Ministry for Food and Agriculture and they believe us, then we could be purchased by cheap prices.

Next activity under discussion is communication equipment at Zakhyn-Us. We included in the plan and explain needs of main antenna before, but we did not appoint a price. We found price of antenna with station from "Ikh Buren" company who responsible park communication network equipment and system and price is 550\$ +370 solar panel for charge the station. Therefore, we need to immediately purchase antenna and station, otherwise, soon "Ikh Buren" company staffs go to the park to get service and check all communication equipment of the park area. While they making service in the park, we have good chance that they put main antenna in Zakhyn-Us and get test if we buy antenna and send them to herdsman.

Academy of Sciences.

When we were in the field December 2005, Dr. Ch.Walzer shortly mentioned some talks about cooperation with Mr. John Hare, especially on veterinarian test. If I have understood correctly and Mr. John Hare and Dr. Ch.Walzer agreed on that situation then we're happy to work with him. Moreover, Dr. Ch. Walzer works in the Gobi June and July on khulan and wild camels, therefore, MR. John Hare could be officially suggest to him to help us to test the camels after that trip.

Future plans and conclusion

Frame of programme in Zakhyn-Us we have planned 10 activities for second quarter, however, now there are more 7 activities postponed from first quarter.

- Veterinarian A.Bat-Erdene participated to UNDP and WCPF joint Hybrid camel survey in Buffer zone sums of Great Gobi A behalf on Breeding programme. We planned to contribute into this survey, but we not contributed yet. Due to UNDP suggested to our programme to solve marking of hybrid camels in buffer zone sums and it will be our contribution to the survey. Therefore, we need to check what is more available to mark hybrid camels such as ear tag or micro chip. After marking hybrids, park UNDP and WCPF start to implant of female hybrids and castrate male hybrids to stop breed and increase hybrids near wild camel distribution Gobi A.

- Based on suggestion from the Park administration, we start Behavior study of wild camels in this spring under direct supervision park research officer Dovchindorj by student from University.

Based on problems mentioned previously about fence, and if we agree to do that, need to prepare wooden poles and buy net fence before October and start to widen and construct the fence. By our suggestion total length of fence will be 9 km with 5.1 km.sq area to be included to east and south side from current location. (see figure 12a and 12b) If we wide net fence shown in the figure, captive wild camel suitable to be inside the fence during year separately from livestock and stop a difficulties.

Sponsorship: Captive Wild Bactrian Camels

The captive wild Bactrian camels have to be protected and properly managed. This 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. Nine 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 herdsman 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/Publicity

Joseph and Rebecca Fossett keep domestic Bactrian camels in Warwickshire which they take to county shows around the country for displays and racing. They have agreed to give out our literature and raise awareness for the wild Bactrian camel cause. Their three Bactrians are the finest that I have seen in England and I was most impressed by their quality and temperament when I paid them a visit.

TALKS

NEXT TALK SEPTEMBER 2006

On September 4th there is an event at the Royal Geographical Society involving Ranulph Fiennes, John Blashford-Snell and myself under the heading "Expeditions, What's the Point?" Libby Purves is in the chair and after individual presentations questions will be invited from the floor. Tickets are £20 from A. Bowring, Walnut Tree Farm, Benhall, Saxmundham, Suffolk IP17 1JB. Cheques should have name and telephone number on the back and a sae should be enclosed in the envelope. Proceeds will be split between the charities connected with the three speakers which in our case is of course the WCPF.

I have also been invited to talk to Directors of Exxon Oil Company on September 8th. This is an unusual audience but hopeful will give me a chance to raise additional funding for the wild Bactrian camel.

JULY 10TH 2006

I spoke at Christie's on July 10th during the preview of a Christie's sale of Chinese and Japanese artefacts. The subject of the talk was called 'The Secrets of Lop Nur' and highlighted artefacts and other related discoveries which were found on expeditions into the Lop Nur Gashun Gobi. Although the talk was not directly related to the wild Bactrian camel, Christie's generously gave all the proceeds to the WCPF and the wild Bactrian camel conservation programme.

FEBRUARY 2006

I spent 10 days aboard the Queen Mary 2 at Cunard's invitation accompanying passengers on a cruise around the western seaboard of South America. During this time I was able to give four presentations on behalf of the wild Bactrian camel. Not much funding was raised as there were restrictions on fund-raising during the lectures, but much interest was generated in the fact that camel milk when drunk on a daily basis has been credited with arresting diabetes.

Workshop October 12 to 14, 2006 Ulaan Baator, Mongolia

The WCPF is co-hosting with UNDP a workshop in Mongolia on the wild Bactrian camel. It is hoped that for the first time prominent Chinese scientists will attend and present papers at the workshop together with Mongolian scientists. As long-time members of the WCPF will be aware, we have striven for many years to get Chinese and Mongolian scientists to cooperate with each other on wild Bactrian camel matters and exchange data and research. At last we are achieving success in this area which we believe is so important for the future of the wild Bactrian camel in both countries. We hope that the international scientists working with us on the DNA research will also attend and we have invited others whose organisations are connected with wild Bactrian camel research and welfare.

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. PLEASE REMEMBER TO LET US KNOW IF YOU CHANGE YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS.

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

Yours faithfully,

John Hare

NOTE FROM TRUSTEE KATE RAE

I am pleased to say that John Hare has been awarded the Mungo Park Memorial Medal by the Royal Scottish Geographical Society.

It was given for 'distinguished contributions to exploration and to the conservation of the wild Bactrian camel.