

# THE WILD CAMEL PROTECTION FOUNDATION

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**November 2019 - Newsletter Number 42**

**Dear Wild Camel Supporter**

## **NEW WILD CAMEL DEVELOPMENTS**

During the last twelve months there has been a great deal of positive activity. As many readers will know, Anna Jemmett started a PhD in 2018 on the wild camel, with a particular emphasis on wild camel genetics, at the University of Kent. She is undertaking ground-breaking work under the supervision of Dr. John Ewen, a fellow of the Zoological Society of London (ZSL) and Professor Jim Groombridge her course supervisor at the University of Kent. Anna could not be in better hands. Dr. Pamela Burger of the Veterinary University of Vienna, who has worked with WCPF for many years has kindly offered to assist in any capacity which would further wild camel research. After five years of testing wild double-humped camel blood, bone and skin samples for WCPF Dr. Burger published a scientific paper confirming the wild camel was an entirely separate species of camel. WCPF is funding the cost of this PhD, the first on wild camels.

## **MEETING at the Zoological Society of London 7th October 2019**

A wild camel meeting was held at the ZSL offices kindly made available by Dr. Ewen. Dr. Ewen chaired this meeting which was attended, by Kate Rae, Anna Jemmett, Dr. Adiya Yadamsuren and I on behalf of WCPF; Dr. Pamela Burger, Veterinary University of Vienna; Dr. Jaroslav Simek, Deputy Head of Prague Zoo; Bridget Johnson and Jen Quayle, Knowsley Safari Park; Dr. Sam Merson and Dr. Marcus Rowcliffe of ZSL; and Dr. Pablo Orozco-ter Wengel, genetics expert at Cardiff University and via SKYPE Professor Groombridge.

This meeting with WCPF's new scientific partners and advisors was a success and extremely productive. The main action points to be implemented are:

1. Biological samples from all of the captive wild camels at the breeding centre to be collected and stored.
2. Hybridisation research to be undertaken to ascertain the number of hybrid camels (the cross between domestic Bactrian camels and wild camels) within and outside the protected area of Gobi "A".
3. The Wild Camel Stud Book to be finalised. Prague Zoo agreed to supervise this task, as the Zoo will be managing the Stud Book. This task which needs to be completed urgently as it is extremely important for the overall credibility of the captive herd.

4. The ear tagging of all the captive wild camels to be finalised and modifications to be completed at the breeding centre. Fence modifications need to be made and security fences added.
5. The data recorded by the several *in situ* camera traps will need to be assessed. These camera traps have been placed by two projects working in the GGSPA'A'. One project has used a Grid system to place the camera traps inside the GGSPA'A'. The other project had placed camera traps along the boundary of the GGSPA'A' which is on the border with China.
6. The ZSL distance-sampling project and all meeting presentations to be shared among meeting participants through a dropbox.
7. Two new wild camel breeding centre sites to be researched. The capacity of the wild camel breeding centre has almost been reached. The breeding centre site is 60 hectares (150 acres) and there are now 35 wild camels. Dr Adiya has identified a potential breeding centre site at Tol Bulag, 20 miles from the former Russian research centre of Ekhyn Gol on the eastern side of Gobi "A" which has permanent water. Tol Bulag is over 300 miles from Zakhyn Us. It is important that new sites are situated a good distance from each other for security and potential disease factors. Prague Zoo has identified a further site to the north-east of Tol Bulag, which is currently under investigation. Approval for any new site has to be given by the Soum (local government) Governor and the Mongolian Ministry of Nature and the Environment (MET) based on a proposal and budget prepared by WCPF. Once approval is given, fund-raising will be required to pay for the building of the new site and the training of additional staff.
8. There are plans also for a Wild Camel Research Centre and the disused but well-built buildings at Ekhyn Gol might provide a solution.

## **VISITS**

### **DR. ADIYA YADAMSUREN**

WCPF'S Mongolian consultant Dr. Adiya Yadamsuren visits Zakhyn Us and Gobi "A" most months and a joint trip to the area with Anna and ZSL's Dr. Sam Merson involving camera trapping was undertaken in April 2019. Dr. Adiya as part of his CMS project arranged for 85 camera traps to be placed along the international border with China to monitor any wild camels migrating into China. The wild camel is a migrating species and Dr. Adiya is the focal point in Mongolia for the Convention on Migrating Species (CMS).

Dr. Adiya also organised camera trapping and wildlife monitoring training for the Park rangers and border soldiers in Bayan Tooroi. Ten soldiers from the Border Agency and fourteen Rangers from Gobi "A" attended. During the field training a good co-operation was forged with the Border Agency, which bodes well for the future.

On a visit to Prague Zoo, Dr. Adiya met Irena Valaskova, who is the Head of In-Situ Projects Department and Lubomir Kadane, who is the Fundraiser for In-Situ Projects. Dr. Adiya is the Director of the WCPF Mongolia NGO and I am pleased to be able to announce that the WCPF NGO signed a contract with Prague Zoo, for the zoo to fund a double fenced area inside the

breeding center at Zakhyn Us. This is necessary to separate the young wild camel males from the main herd during the wild camel breeding season.

After the ZSL meeting, Dr. Adiya, who had come to England to attend this meeting visited Knowsley Safari Park, not far from Manchester, where he undertook one week of veterinary training. Dr Adiya said he felt that he had learnt a great deal from this course and WCPF is very grateful to Knowsley Park for organising and funding his training.

### **KNOWSLEY SAFARI PARK**

As a result of the agreement signed between WCPF and Knowsley Safari Park in September 2018 Bridget Johnson and Jen Quayle (a private vet) from Knowsley Park made a visit to Zakhyn Us in April 2019. The highly successful outcomes of their visit were that they:

1. Tagged 11 wild camels, including the 2019 calves to make individual identification easier.
2. Profiled 8 camels that were missed in 2018, meaning 31 camels now have individual identification sheets.
3. Took 5 blood samples for health screening, which can also be used for genetic analysis to contribute to the creation of a more accurate studbook and the running of a sustainable breeding programme.
4. Undertook visual health checks on all individuals and further examined the new calves and other individuals the herdsman identified as having veterinary issues.
5. Instructed herdsman how to record post-mortems, so more accurate causes of death can be given.
6. Collected 8 hours of behavioural data, which will feed into the development of a larger project looking at the role of behaviour, personality and sociality of wild and domestic camels in terms of conservation translocations.

### **WCPF VISIT**

I visited Mongolia in September 2019. A new contract covering future work conditions for WCPF in Mongolia was drawn up and discussed with Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET) officials. The previous contract under which WCPF had operated was out-of-date. This new contract has been finalised and was signed this month (November 2019). The Mongolian WCPF NGO also signed a wild camel co-operation agreement with the Mongolian MET. Dr. Adiya Yadamsuren is the Director of the WCPF Mongolian NGO.

I travelled to Wild Camel Breeding Centre, Zakhyn Us with Dr. Adiya; and a number of administrative matters were finalised. Work was initiated to clean the breeding centre site and level the mounds of sand, which had accumulated over the years. This had to be finished before the wild camels came into the fenced area; and before the breeding season, which starts in late November. The cleaning operation was successfully concluded, fence repairs were initiated and winter hay was sourced and purchased.

I travelled to Tol Bulag with Dr. Adiya and we agreed the site was suitable for a wild camel-breeding centre, especially as it has an all-season water supply and suitable vegetation. We inspected the disused buildings at Ekhyn Gol, which had been a Russian research centre up until the 1990s, and concluded that one of the buildings could be suitable for use as a Wild Camel Research Centre. We had spent a great deal of time during my last visit looking at a possible site elsewhere, but we were unable to secure the agreement of the local Soum governor. Finding a suitable site takes time and requires the approval of the local Soum governor first before a proposal can be presented to the Ministry of Environment and Tourism.

We met Mr Mukhtar the Governor of Shinejinst Soum (local government) who has jurisdiction over the proposed breeding centre site at Tol Bulag and he appeared to be enthusiastic for WCPF to establish a breeding centre in the area under his jurisdiction and gave us every indication of support. He also indicated he would approve us acquiring one of the empty buildings at Ekhyn Gol as a Wild Camel Research Centre for the wild camels. Now we need to prepare a proposal, with appropriate scientific advice, and a budget for this new Centre.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL CLUBS**

We also visited four out of the eight Eco-clubs which are supported by WCPF thanks to generous funding from Yorkshire Wildlife Park. We helped one of the eco-clubs to secure a meeting room for their club in the local school. I was very impressed with the way the clubs are being run and the environmental awareness of the young club members. A young Mongolian girl, Baasan Bata, who is the leader of the Umbrella Club at Shinejinst Soum has been put in touch with Lucy McLean in Scotland, who organizes the children's section on our website. A link has been forged between a school in Scotland and a schoolgirl in Mongolia.

Yorkshire Wildlife Park also gave funding for an educational environmental centre in Shinejinst Soum. This is managed by an enthusiastic man called, Mr Dashchinev and the building has been repaired and painted by WCPF and the Gobi Bear Project [www.gobibearproject.org](http://www.gobibearproject.org) It is a very impressive place with a wide range of local exhibits under the supervision of a dedicated environmentalist.

### **DONATIONS AND FUND RAISING**

#### **WILD CAMEL PRINT**

Charlotte Williams, a highly talented wildlife artist, has agreed to paint a portrait of a wild camel in its natural environment in the Gobi Desert. WCPF would have limited edition prints made and sell them as a fundraiser. It would be a limited addition of 30 prints at £200 a print. Her limited edition prints normally sell for £250 each. So we would require pre-orders for the 30 prints from Members, to enable us to proceed with this fund-raiser. If you are interested in pre-ordering please contact me direct.

Please look at Charlotte's website [www.charlotte-williams.com](http://www.charlotte-williams.com) where you will see how talented she is. She is a great camel lover and is determined to help us raise funds for our work.

### **DETROIT AND OTHER ZOOS**

A huge thank you to Detroit Zoo which has just made another generous donation for our wild camel work. We now have a number of zoos in America, Europe and the UK, which give us financial support, many on an annual basis.

**If YOU have a fund raising suggestion do please contact me direct.**

### **WEBSITE, TWITTER and FACEBOOK**

Many thanks to Anna Jemmett, who continues to do a brilliant job with our communications on Facebook and Twitter. Anna will be directly involved in both the development and implementation of the Wild Camel four-year-plan and future fundraising.

Lucy McLean, a Scottish schoolgirl has volunteered, as part of her Duke of Edinburgh award, to set up a junior page on our website is working hard. Do have a look at her efforts on behalf of junior supporters on [www.wildcamels.com](http://www.wildcamels.com) - Gobi Kids Corner.`

Our website is maintained and updated by Deborah Swain and her costs are funded by a generous Beijing supporter, who has been a member of WCPF since the very beginning. Please

visit our Website and Facebook page, as they are updated regularly and contain a great deal of wild camel information and pictures from both China and Mongolia. Photographs and a commentary on the release are also on the site, as is the link to the French TV documentary. Please see:

[www.wildcamels.com](http://www.wildcamels.com); [www.facebook.com/WildCamels](http://www.facebook.com/WildCamels); [www.twitter.com/WildCamels](http://www.twitter.com/WildCamels)

### **ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS**

Many thanks, to all our supporters world-wide. 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, then send £20.00 (or its equivalent in foreign currency) to WCPF. With over 600 members and only volunteer staff we rely on members to send us the subscription themselves. You can pay by going direct to the website [www.wildcamels.com](http://www.wildcamels.com) using PayPal, or by setting up a direct debit with your bank. 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 ACCOUNT 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 cost effective and the regular income is essential for WCPF and the long-term sustainability of our work to protect the wild camel.

### **SPONSORING A YOUNG WILD CAMEL**

Many thanks to our Members, who are currently sponsoring young wild camel calves at the Zakhyn Us, Breeding Centre. Five calves were born this year (all males). If you want to sponsor a captive wild camel calf please contact me direct. There is a sponsorship form on the website. Sponsorship covers vaccines, veterinary advice, hay and medicines. Sponsors please remember your annual payment, is due on 1st **March each year.**

### **LEGACIES**

WCPF has received several bequests in Wills, from wild camel supporters. All bequests WCPF receive are spent either directly at the breeding centre or to fund wild camel research. So if you are making a Will do **please remember the Wild Camel Protection Foundation.**

Renewed thanks for your great support for our on-going work – the protection of the critically endangered wild camel in its fragile desert habitat from extinction. It is with your help and generous support that we are able to achieve so much.

### **GIVE SOMEONE A WCPF MEMBERSHIP THIS CHRISTMAS**

Members can buy gifts or Christmas presents by going to SHOP on the website [www.wildcamels.com](http://www.wildcamels.com) and orders should be sent directly to me at [harecamel@aol.com](mailto:harecamel@aol.com). Postage always presents a problem, however, by sending the order directly to me, I can respond with the exact cost of postage.

Very best wishes,

John

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