

NEWS AND EVENTS

BIOSPHERE EXPEDITION TEAM CONFIRMS EVIDENCE OF ARABIAN LEOPARD

The recently conducted Biosphere Expedition, which was sponsored by Land Rover, was successfully completed with results indicating the likely presence of the Arabian leopard (*Panthera pardus nimr*) in the region. Supported by the Oman Office of the Adviser for Conservation of the Environment, Diwan of Royal Court, the Ministry of Regional Municipalities, Environment and Water Resources and the Ministry of Tourism; this Expedition aimed at bringing together people from different walks of life with a single mission of supporting wildlife existence and conducting a survey on the existence of the Arabian leopard in the Musandam peninsula and its current status and distribution in the region.

The current survey does not lend sufficient statistical analysis to draw any specific conclusions about the presence of the Arabian leopard, but the team did identify leads that indicated the possible existence of a large predator. Interaction with local inhabitants, the presence of traditional waterholes, track marks and other traces provided definite signs of three species of fox and caracal in the area. Although samples are yet to be analysed, the team is confident that their evidence will point towards the existence of an Arabian leopard.

Speaking on behalf of the Expedition team, Matthias Hammer, Founder and Field Operations Director of Biosphere, said, "We are very pleased with the success of the expedition and the results achieved. Though this was only a presence/absence survey with no concrete outcome, it has enabled us to lay down the initial groundwork for further research. Only baseline information has been collected by talking to local inhabitants and visiting remote areas of the peninsula."

"The success of the Expedition is attributed to the team of participants; the enthusiastic local inhabitants who provided an invaluable source of knowledge, the local Oman authorities and of course, most importantly Land Rover, our main sponsor who provided us with a fleet of LR3's that enabled us to reach the most remote areas and cover the tricky mountainous terrains with utmost ease."

Speaking on Land Rover's involvement, Marwan Halabi, General Manager: Marketing, said, "The Biosphere Expedition provided us with an ideal opportunity to be part of an endeavour that supports sustainability and preservation of the environment we operate in, which is an area that we strongly believe in. Our partnership has been very rewarding as we share the same values and have a singular mission of working towards a common cause of conserving the biosphere."

The Expedition team will continue the research next year to confirm the presence of the Arabian leopard and maximize potential of developing Musandam as a future destination for eco-tourism. This Expedition is especially significant, since the Arabian leopard is the last surviving species of big cat in the Arabian peninsula and is a severely endangered species.

For more information on Biosphere expeditions log onto.
<http://www.biosphere-expeditions.org/>

[02-6-2006]



Expedition members are shown camera trapping techniques.
©Biosphere Expedition

The Wildlife Disease Association Africa and Middle East Section 2004

November 2006

The Wildlife Disease Association Africa And Middle East Section 2004 conference proceedings CD is ready for distribution. Those interested in acquiring a copy can contact Jacob M. Mwanzia at the following e-mail address: musee36@yahoo.com.

