

## EDITORIAL

It is always difficult to come up with an original editorial for each issue of WME news. At the back of our minds we are aware that lecturing and pontificating on the environment becomes repetitive. However it is an opportunity for the editors to reflect on how we are damaging our environment and maybe this then leads to reflection in one or two of our readers. Apologies in advance!

It seems after failures at Copenhagen and also our failure to make substantial changes to the global economy following its near collapse, that unsustainable consumption remains the world's priority in the new millennium. Governments fail to act when their people give them no reason to. Thus the actions of individuals have to become the building blocks of change.

While parts of this issue highlight the conservation work of individual specialists (Sand cats; Pg 5, Preventative Medical Care for Hoofstock pg 6) the power of the ordinary individual to instigate change should not be underestimated. Valuable work such as the artificial insemination of sand cats becomes academic if no environment remains in which to release these animals.

If not for people power the slave trade would still be in existence, South Africa would still have apartheid and Kenny G would still be getting number one hits. It is this ground swell of feeling that will be required if we are to reverse what is happening to our planet: the environment is the individuals' responsibility. If enough individuals believe this, then governments will be forced to change their attitudes. To reinforce this point Ed Millband, Britain's Secretary for Climate Change and Energy, was recently quoted as saying; *"We politicians know the science regarding climate change, we understand. And we can see what is needed, and it is huge. What we don't have yet is the courage to take the massive, internationally co-operative leaps necessary, because we don't yet have the feeling that the citizens of our countries are awake to the gravity of this peril. Please make a much bigger noise."*

How do we change the attitude and habits of the individual? Much has been written on this subject and a surf of the internet highlights a number of articles on the subject. However an article by Professor Martin Patchen of Purdue University (<http://www.purdue.edu/climate/pdf/Patchen%20OP0601.pdf>) raises a number of interesting points;

- Encourage community. The actions of communities and organisations have been shown to encourage change in people. Most people are reluctant to change habits or support a cause when they see them as isolated and not replicated by those around them. The efforts of individuals such as David Stanton and colleagues who established the Foundation for the Arabian Leopard in Yemen (pg 3) are to be commended for this reason but equally examples can be set at schools, community centres and by religious organisations.
- Set examples. It is shown that the actions of individuals are most influenced by those close to them....*"is this activity something people I respect / look up to / love, would approve of?"* Members of the family through to influential heads of State (especially in this region) can all set examples that can influence behaviours.
- Educate. From school children to decision makers. Let people know what they can do and how effective their actions are likely to be. Research has also shown that people with a more materialistic outlook are less likely to act on an individual level to prevent climate change.

### WILDLIFE MIDDLE EAST NEWS OBJECTIVES

- Raising awareness of environmental and conservation issues affecting wildlife in the Middle East.
- Distributing information to enable better management healthcare and welfare of wildlife.
- Providing a central contact point for practical advice and information on wildlife management in the region.

While this point may be obvious, education would make them realise for their lifestyle not to suffer in the future, certain changes need to be made now. Education can be pitched in such a way that it is relevant and important to the targeted audience. In one of the highest carbon emitting cultures (per capita of population) in the world there appears to be pitifully little education both from governments and NGOs.

Finally our 5 minutes on the soap box comes to an end. I apologise if this editorial has driven you all insane with boredom but maybe it encouraged you to just turn down that patio heater a wee bit or take the Hummer out on a few less road trips ! To finish, it is worth quoting the director of Green Peace who recently said;

*"It is possible to develop a sustainable future for this planet but it needs all of us to get involved."*  
*"What I learned is.....not to underestimate the power of the voices and actions of ordinary people. I strongly believe in the decency of ordinary men and women in rich and poor countries who all care about their children, and their grandchildren, and children in their families. I think when they put the pictures of those kids in front of them and think what kind of planet are we going to give them, I hope people will rise above whatever short-term economic and other interests they might have."*

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