

“VANISHING SPOTS” SAVING THE ARABIAN LEOPARD IN YEMEN

The Yemeni Leopard Recovery Program (YLRP) is a volunteer effort to ensure an expanding population of Arabian Leopards in Yemen. Relying on extensive contacts in the government, military, business, scientific, and diplomatic communities in Yemen, and on the unbridled enthusiasm of student supporters, YLRP has already achieved some notable successes towards its goal since the program's inception in August, 2007.

For example:

1. More than 200 participants raised close to \$6,000 during the “1st Annual Walk to Save the Arabian Leopard” on November 11th 2007. This event was covered in the local press and on the web.
2. Articles in the Yemeni and International Press have brought the issue of Arabian Leopard conservation to thousands of readers here and abroad.
3. A series of lectures locally and abroad have brought the issue to an even wider audience.
4. YLRP has successfully lobbied to have the Arabian Leopard declared as Yemen's national animal, the Council of Minister's decree having become official on April 29th 2008.
5. Volunteers from YLRP's Arabian Leopard Club redecorated the “Awareness Center” at the Sana'a Zoo to make it a more appealing venue for the education of some of the zoo's 1.4 million annual visitors.
6. YLRP has donated five conservation DVDs to the Sana'a Zoo for viewing by the public. More DVDs are on the way.
7. YLRP has initiated an institution building process at the Zoo which is leading to positive changes for the four captive Arabian Leopards there.
8. YLRP has loaned startup funds to the Yemen Animal Welfare Foundation needed for this organization to become an official NGO. YAWF is now legally able to work for positive change at the Sana'a Zoo.

YLRP has instigated negotiations between the Yemeni Minister for Water and the Environment, HE Abdulrahman al Eryani, and residents of Wada'a, Amran in the interest of declaring the world's first “Leopard Sanctuary.”

YLRP has also commissioned a story by children's author and folklorist Carolyn Han. Translated into Arabic by Fuad al Harithi, “Vanishing Spots: the Arabian Leopard” is currently being illustrated by Yemeni artist Abdullah al Amin. The goal of this project is to distribute free bilingual editions to Yemeni schoolchildren. Inspired by the thoughtful donation of UAE Dirhams 5,000 by the students at Jumeirah English Speaking School in Dubai, YLRP is currently seeking sponsorship from students in other schools. Ideally, the entire cost of publishing and distribution of “Vanishing Spots” would be underwritten by student donations from around the world. Obviously, the more money raised the more copies can be printed and distributed thereby benefiting more Yemeni students and having a greater impact on the conservation of Arabian Leopards in Yemen. Every school that contributes to this cause will be recognized for its support and receive several copies of “Vanishing Spots” when publication is final.

If you would like to learn more about Arabian Leopards, YLRP, and/or how you can help this cause, please contact the YLRP Coordinator, David B. Stanton at ylrp@yemenileopard.org

