

# Barbary Macaque Conservation in the Rif (BMCRif) Newsletter

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## Welcome to Karmoun

Mohamed Karmoun (known as Karmoun) joined us at the beginning of April as our Education and Awareness officer. We are very happy to be able to employ Karmoun in this position and very grateful to Zoo Barcelona who are funding Karmoun and his work. Karmoun is from Lahcen,



a village close to Bouhachem and has excellent contacts with the local people. He is already spreading BMCRif's message. A shepherd from Karmoun's village, who has allowed his dogs to kill monkeys in the past, was in the forest with a wild hunter when they found a young macaque. The hunter wanted to take the youngster to the city to sell it (which is illegal) but the shepherd insisted that he call Karmoun for advice. That advice was provided and, instead of being taken away to a lonely life in the city, the macaque was set free again. This is a significant achievement for both Karmoun and BMCRif. Barbary macaques are not seen as special or important in the north of Morocco and are often cause for ridicule and amusement. However, we hope to change this by using a number of different strategies. The first step in our Education and Awareness programme is to give out a specially written leaflet to the local people informing them about our work. These will be given out with t-shirts for boys, and for the girls, cloth shopping bags with our logo which will also hopefully encourage everyone to use less plastic bags. Karmoun is now organizing an inter-village football match where the teams will wear t-shirts with the BMCRif logo. The village boys are already looking forward to this as there will be a small cup for whoever wins!



## Another Welcome To Mohamed



Mohamed Chitwan is our project assistant and lives in the village of Taliamine on the edge of the forest. Mohamed's has a huge knowledge of the macaque groups and where they spend their time. He is helping us with a lot of very useful information plus introducing us to the local people who are sometimes a bit shy and apprehensive about approaching us. He is also an accomplished road builder and is invaluable as we gradually repair the old tracks which we use to observe the macaques as these have been badly damaged in the winter's torrential rain.

## New Projects

We are getting to know the whereabouts of many of the macaque groups of Bouhachem thanks to our local shepherd friends. One of these is Abuleela (right) who is from the village of Slalem. Abduleela has helped us locate a number of groups in the forest above his village. One day, however, he appeared with a horribly swollen hand which the medical staff had failed to treat in the nearest town because they had no medical supplies. We immediately took him to Tetouan where he had a large bot worm removed from between his fingers.



Abduleela's hand was very painful and infected, and the doctor told us he could have lost his hand if he had had to wait much longer for treatment. This demonstrates the lack of medical help available for the people of Bouhachem and has given us the idea of offering first aid courses to carefully selected female villagers in the area. This will at least give them some training of what to do in an emergency as the area is very remote and few people have vehicles. Ahmed will train the shepherds in mountaineer's First Aid as their situation is somewhat different to that of the villagers. We are currently developing a proposal for this project so if you have any advice or can offer any help, equipment or funds then please do get in touch with us. This project will not only help the people of Bouhachem but will increase their awareness of the macaques and the indirect benefits the macaques can bring them.

## Dog Welfare – Project Officer, Tamlin Watson



Tamlin (seen here with Project Dog, Smelly) writes: I have been appointed Bouhachem Dog Welfare Project Officer for BMCRif to run an initial pilot study providing us and the local authorities with the information needed to implement programmes which will not only improve the care of owned dogs and lessen uncontrolled breeding but, will also help impoverished shepherds and their families living around the forest. BMCRif have noted recurring problems with suspected feral dogs attacking wildlife and livestock within Bouhachem. The latter has been an important issue for the

local authorities in the area and they have now requested our help to try and solve this problem. Firstly, it is very important to establish the origin of these dogs before any management strategy is undertaken. Dogs are commonly lost or abandoned in the area by hunters, tourists, religious pilgrims and probably villagers whose surplus dogs which are often left to fend for themselves. Owned dogs are also allowed to roam freely.

Subject to gaining sufficient funding, I will be spending the autumn in Bouhachem giving rabies vaccinations (supplied free of charge by the local government veterinary department) to dogs from two villages, giving parasite treatments and using marking techniques to show the origin of the dogs treated. Using GPS collars I will be tracking selected dogs to gain a better understanding of daily time budgets, feeding/ hunting behaviour and comparisons drawn from tracking dogs with obvious welfare problems (generally underweight) with those showing high standards of care. Data obtained during this study will be used to develop and support dog population management, welfare and education strategies around the forests of Bouhachem.

## Barbary Macaque News

The macaques enjoyed a bumper crop of acorns in the autumn. Acorns are very high in fat and an important source of food for the macaques and some of them got VERY fat. This was a good thing as the winter was very cold and extremely wet.

Spring has now arrived in the Rif and so have the new babies. So far we have seen about 40 but the females will continue to give birth for the whole of May and part of June as well. Both mother and baby are very vulnerable at this time and the females are a bit nervous for the first few days after the birth but as they get used to the situation they get a bit more relaxed and let the males do the carrying (see right!).



During the autumn of 2009 a group of workers restored one of the old tracks through the forest of Bouhachem. The track is inside the range of one of our largest study groups who we call the Big Whoppas because of the large size of some of the males (see left). One day, we were told that three of the workers had rescued a male macaque from a big group of dogs that were attacking it. When we spoke to the workers they told us that the dogs had actually caught the macaque and they had managed to save it at

the last minute. We did see this macaque and although badly injured, he was recovering from his wounds thanks to the swift action of the road builders (two of whom are seen with Ahmed on the right of the photo). A few days later, whilst observing the Big Whoppas, we heard dogs barking and monkeys screaming with fear. Although we couldn't see what was happening, we couldn't allow another monkey to be attacked and possibly killed, so we ran towards the noise. When we got there we saw about 18 dogs around a tree full of macaques which luckily for us ran off when we shouted at them!



Although this story has a happy ending for the macaques, the local people in the area have not been so lucky and many have lost cows and goats to the dogs. It is a serious problem for both people and macaques and we hope we can try and help resolve it with our new project described in more detail on page 2.

### **BMCRif visits Rainfer Primate Rescue Centre, Madrid, Spain**

Ahmed and I were invited to visit Rainfer in October last year. Ahmed's attendance at the 2-day primatology course was kindly sponsored by Rainfer and I gave a presentation on the work of BMCRif. Everyone was very interested in our work as we are currently the only conservation project working long term on the Barbary macaque. We are only able to do this because of the incredibly generous support of The Royal Zoological Society of Scotland. We would also like to thank our friends at Rainfer for their generous hospitality during our stay.

There was also a meeting of individuals from NGOs concerned about the high incidence of illegally smuggled Barbary macaques to Europe. European primate rescue centres are full of Barbary macaques which have grown up and are no longer the cute babies that people bought when they visited Morocco in the summer. The people who buy baby macaques are mainly expatriate Moroccans living in Europe. BMCRif will be running a small awareness campaign in Tetouan during the summer to try and persuade visitors that monkeys belong in the forest and not in their homes. There will be more about this in our next newsletter.

**Facebook Group** - <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=108304019192845>.

Now that we have a good camera (thanks to La Vallée des Singes in France) we have been able to get some reasonable macaque photos. If you have a Facebook page then please join our group, enjoy our photos and invite your friends to help us give the Barbary macaque a higher profile in Morocco and in the rest of the world.

**Media** - Ahmed El Harrad was invited to speak on Tetouan local radio on Earth Day. Ahmed talked about BMCRif and they were so impressed with what he said that his broadcast went national!

## Barbary Macaque Conservation in the Rif (BMCRif) – Mission Statement

This interdisciplinary conservation project focuses on the Barbary macaque (*Macaca sylvanus*) with its enormous potential to act as a flagship species for the threatened flora and fauna of the unique and diverse ecosystems of northern Morocco. This project aims to halt the decline of the Barbary macaque in northern Morocco by gathering scientific data, raising awareness, and working with local and national stakeholders to develop a long term management plan to safeguard the species, its habitats, and the livelihoods of the local people.

### Who We Are

#### Project Director - Siân Waters

Siân is from South Wales and has been working with wildlife for over 20 years specializing in primate and carnivore conservation. As well as managing BMCRif, Siân is working on her PhD out of Durham University in the UK. She is a member of both the IUCN/SSC Primate & Reintroduction Specialist Groups and an honorary research associate of the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland and Oxford Brookes University UK.



#### Deputy Director - Ahmed El Harrad

Ahmed has been working with the project since its start in 2004. His hobbies are outdoor sports in the mountains and he is the founder and President of the Friends of Mountaineering and Outdoor Activities in Tetouan. Ahmed's wife, Samira, and his children, Kinza and Soulayman, are also keen supporters of his work with BMCRif.

#### Education and Awareness Officer - Mohamed Karmoun

Mohamed (known as Karmoun) lives in the village of Lahcen in Bouhachem. Karmoun explains our project to local villagers and organizes events and visits schools to raise awareness about the Barbary macaque and its habitat in the villages surrounding Bou Hachem.



#### Bouhachem Dog Welfare Project Officer - Tamlin Watson

Tamlin has a wealth of experience in the area of animal welfare in the UK and has also worked on donkey and horse welfare projects in Egypt. She also has a strong background in wildlife conservation and so is very well qualified to undertake the Bouhachem domestic dog study as well as organizing future programmes to improve dog welfare and alleviate poverty in Bouhachem.

### Contact Us:

Siân – (in English or Spanish) [sian\\_s\\_waters@hotmail.com](mailto:sian_s_waters@hotmail.com)

Ahmed - (in Arabic) [ahmed\\_BMCRif@yahoo.com](mailto:ahmed_BMCRif@yahoo.com)

Karmoun – (in Arabic or French) [Karmon\\_1987@hotmail.com](mailto:Karmon_1987@hotmail.com)