

Barbary Macaque Conservation in the Rif (BMCRif) Newsletter

ISSUE 3 - OCTOBER,
2010



Sponsored by the Royal
Zoological Society of Scotland,
Edinburgh, UK

This month BMCRif is celebrating the anniversary of our first full year in the field and thanks to the generous support of the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland (RZSS) and the knowledge of the local people we now have more information about the distribution and numbers of Barbary macaques in Bouhachem than ever before.



In addition, our interest in the macaques has, in turn, sparked the interest of local people who provide us with information about the macaques (see left). Many now see the macaques as something to be proud of. Of course, not everyone has changed their mind about the monkeys, but we hope that in another year the majority of people living around Bouhachem will see their forest and the wildlife living there in a different way and see the benefits that having an interesting animal like the macaque living nearby can bring.

In BMCRif's first attempt to demonstrate these benefits, Tamlin Watson has begun the rabies vaccination programme for village dogs in three villages in Bouhachem. A preliminary report on this programme can be found on page 3 with more to follow in the next newsletter. Suffice it to say that people are really pleased with the programme and it has also been welcomed by the local authorities.



Returning an Infant to its Group

In June BMCRif welcomed Els van Laverien of the Moroccan Primate Conservation Foundation (MPC), an NGO based in the Netherlands. Along with other NGOs (including BMCRif) MPC is trying to stop the illegal capture and trade of infant Barbary macaques in the Middle Atlas Mountains of Morocco. Although capture for the pet trade in the north is rare, BMCRif is extremely vigilant regarding this issue and we are often called by our village contacts if they see anything suspicious. For instance, a villager from one of



the local market towns found an infant macaque on the roadside of the road and picked it up. Someone from our village phoned Ahmed who raced to the area where the man was showing the baby to Spanish and Moroccan tourists. From the photo it is clear that the man did not know how to look after the very young infant and it would have died if BMCRif hadn't been alerted to the situation. The man told

Ahmed where he had found the infant and, because we have detailed information about where the groups live, Ahmed was able to return the infant. The baby's mother would have been alerted to its presence by its distress calls and come to reclaim it. The fact that a local called BMCRif to tell us about this incident means that some people now feel a responsibility for the macaques in their part of the forest and also demonstrates the value of our constant presence in the area and our philosophy of involving local people in the project.

Next year we hope to start work on the Barbary macaques found in the eastern mountains of the Rif. Ahmed El Harrad has a good knowledge of these mountains and many contacts amongst the people there. There is a high level of poverty in this area. We know that very small numbers of infant macaques are captured from these populations for sale to tourists. These macaques are illegally smuggled out of Morocco and it is becoming a problem in Morocco itself. We have encountered macaques who have been released into the forest by their owners when the monkeys have grown up. These animals either starve to death or try to get close to people. Some are aggressive so can present a risk to



human and macaque welfare. In one instance, local youths killed one of these macaques by repeatedly driving their car at it. This unacceptable behaviour leads to the macaques being seen as expendable by certain sectors of the population. Hopefully by communicating with local people and educating them about the macaques we can prevent further captures in the eastern Rif.

Barbary Macaque News

The macaques had a hard, hot, dry summer and had to travel long distances to find food and water. Some of our study groups were also bothered by van loads of people passing through the forest on their way to a religious event in Moulay Abdsalom (see right). People from outside the area tend to get very excited when they see the macaques but unfortunately their shouting and missile throwing really stresses the macaques who are trying to find water in the area. People also camped near the only water source but they were all happy to move on when it was explained to them that the macaques were afraid to come and drink if people were there. Nevertheless, we were all glad when everyone went home again!



Bouhachem Dog Health Programme – Tamlin Watson

After finally securing funding at the last minute, I arrived back in Morocco in mid September. I have spoken (through Mohamed Karmoun) to all the villagers in Lahcen, Taliamin and Tayenza and all would like their dogs to be vaccinated and treated for internal parasites. Examination of deposits left by the dogs show burdens of internal parasites, so worming treatment will ensure that any food the dogs manage to find can be more efficiently utilised. Whilst undertaking these surveys, some interesting data have been collected regarding the dog population and its current management, these data warrant further investigation and will be followed up in due course.

I have started monitoring shepherd dog movements using photographs and GPS locations to identify the ranges and habits of the dogs being studied. I have also been accompanying shepherds and their goats through the forest to gain a better understanding of their lives, to conduct informal discussions

about their dog management and also to gain their trust.

Pictured left are two shepherd's dogs in good condition though a little defensive at our sudden appearance through the mist.



The rabies vaccination programme has become even more pertinent now due to the recent, unfortunate death of a woman from one of the villages included in this programme; she contracted rabies from an animal bite. Dogs are one of the most common vectors of the disease so it is imperative we implement the programme, particularly as these dogs are in direct contact with wildlife every day and have an important role in livestock guarding in the forest.

Our programme will run for three weeks this autumn and subject to funding we hope to expand it next year. The chief veterinary officers for each province have been extremely supportive and our thanks go to Dr Rachid Belyasmine (Tetouan) and Dr El Aoini ben Aissa (Larache). We are also very lucky to have a qualified veterinary nurse, Sonia Moles Poveda from Barcelona, as an unpaid volunteer for this important work. More news on this programme will follow in the next edition of the newsletter.

BMCRif Conquers Mount Toubkal!



In the summer, 13 year old Soulayman El Harrad became the youngest member of the Royal Moroccan Mountaineering Federation to ascend the highest peak (4165m) in North Africa, Mount Toubkal in the Middle Atlas Mountains. Soulayman (pictured in the middle) is a big fan of BMCRif and ascended the summit wearing a BMCRif T-shirt. Well done Soulayman - a great effort.

Soulayman is also a member of our **Facebook Group – Barbary Macaque Conservation in the Rif** <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=108304019192845>. We now have over 450 members. Please join us or, if you are already a member, then please invite your friends to join too and help us give the Barbary macaque a higher profile in Morocco and in the rest of the world.

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 (UK) 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, organizes events and visits schools to raise awareness about the Barbary macaque and its habitat in the villages surrounding Bou Hachem.



Bouhachem Dog Health Project Officer - Tamlin Watson

Tamlin is an animal behaviourist with a wealth of experience in the area of animal welfare in the UK. She has also worked on donkey and horse welfare projects in Egypt. She has a strong background in wildlife conservation and is very well qualified to undertake the Bouhachem Dog Health Project.

Contact Us:

Siân – (in English or Spanish) sian_s_waters@hotmail.com

Skype – [sian.waters](https://www.skype.com/en/contacts/sian.waters)

Ahmed - (in Arabic) ahmed_BMCRif@yahoo.com

Tamlin – (English) tamlin.moroccananimals@gmail.com