

REVIEWS AND NEWS

The camel from tradition to modern times: a proposal towards combating desertification via the establishment of camel farms based on fodder production from indigenous plants and halophytes

The proposal aims to establish more camel farms, and to decrease the numbers of wild roaming camels in the desert rangelands. This will serve as an active contribution to reducing desertification, and will allow natural ecosystems and habitats to recover from decades of overgrazing. It also suggests exploring means to feed the animals in farms with indigenous Arabian Desert plants, which are also to be produced in farms, and which are very likely to require no fertilizer, less pesticides, and significantly less freshwater irrigation. Furthermore, drifting away from cow farms to camel farms will allow the keeping of animals in shaded farms while still allowing the production of large quantities of milk. Cows require artificially cooled environments, as otherwise they produce very low amounts of milk.

Advantages in a nutshell:

- 1) Less freshwater consumption for fodder production;
- 2) Less fertilizer and pesticides for fodder production;
- 3) Rangeland rehabilitation and combating desertification
- 4) Healthier products for human consumption. More information can be obtained from Dr. Benno Böer, UNESCO, Qatar. e-mail: b.boer@unesco.org

Poison blamed for critical deaths

BirdLife News Alert

Mon Oct 27 12:00:00 2008 http://www.birdlife.org/news/news/2008/10/bald_ibis_poisonings.html

Three Critically Endangered Northern Bald Ibis *Geronticus eremita* have been found poisoned in a remote Jordanian desert, hundreds of miles from their breeding grounds in Turkey. The three birds were being tracked by satellite after leaving Birecik, south-eastern Turkey, where one of only four colonies of Bald Ibis remains. The birds were found 32 kilometres from the Jordanian capital, Amman. Autopsies have ruled out electrocution and shooting.

"The deaths are heartbreaking but they may not have died in vain. They came from a semi-captive population and the fact that they left the colony proves they haven't lost their migratory instincts", said Jose Tavares, the RSPB's Country Programme Officer for Turkey. "The birds flew via Palmyra in Syria, where a tiny colony hangs on, which means birds we release from Turkey next year could join the group in Syria."

The Northern Bald Ibis's migratory habits have baffled conservationists for years but in 2006, BirdLife International and the Syrian Government, tracked the 3,800-mile round trip of adult birds from Syria, finding new wintering grounds in Ethiopia. But young birds were never seen on migration and scientists fear they face mystery threats on an entirely different over-wintering route. Sharif Al Ibouir of BirdLife in the Middle East, who found the dead birds, said: "We know where the adults go but it's crucial we follow the young birds' migration route so that we can protect them in winter and help them return to Turkey and Syria to breed."

To solve the riddle, more Turkish birds will be tagged next year. The tracking project has boosted hopes for Northern Bald Ibis in the Middle East with conservationists now more optimistic that they can re-establish a completely wild population in Turkey.

Children get it spot on to save leopards

Gulf News 15/11/2008 <http://archive.gulfnews.com/articles/08/11/15/10259644.html>

Black spots on the wall, masks, leopard ears, posters hanging from the ceiling and glue stains on the floor - this was the scene as the Horizon School, Dubai was extending its support to the endangered Arabian leopard. Children from three other Dubai primary schools (Jumeirah English Speaking School, Dubai English Speaking School and Kings School) were also involved in their own 'Spotty Days' to raise awareness of the plight of the leopard and to raise funds.

On Spotty Day at Horizon School, each year group had an activity with the four and five year-olds making leopard masks. One of the pupils, Seinna Ryder, proudly showed off her mask and said: «My entire class is wearing spots today and we want to help all the leopards on the planet.» Another pupil, Thomas Haigh, said, «The Arabian leopards are dying. People should stop hunting them down.» Riley Teulon agreed saying, «I do not want the leopards to be extinct. Please try and save them!» Cyndi Teulon, a mother of two, volunteers at Horizon school and is a member of the school's 'Green Group', which comprises teachers and parents who want to help children become better global citizens (WME News Vol 3 No 1). She said, «I helped arrange this event so that children understand the concept of extinction.»

The 'Spotty Day' events focused on spreading awareness and collecting donations to support leopard conservation in Yemen. Over 10,000 AED was raised by the children in the 4 schools to help support the Yemen Leopard Recovery Fund (YLRP) and their publication of a children's book called 'Vanishing Spots'. At the same time as the Dubai School 'Spotty Days' were running, the Sanaa International School (where David Stanton, the founder of the YLRP works) had a sponsored walk.

Wildlife Middle East News thanks the staff, parents and children, as well as the media and professional people, who gave their time to make these events a success. If any teacher or parent would like information on how to organize their own 'Spotty Day' or Endangered Animal Day, contact the WME editor Theri Bailey.

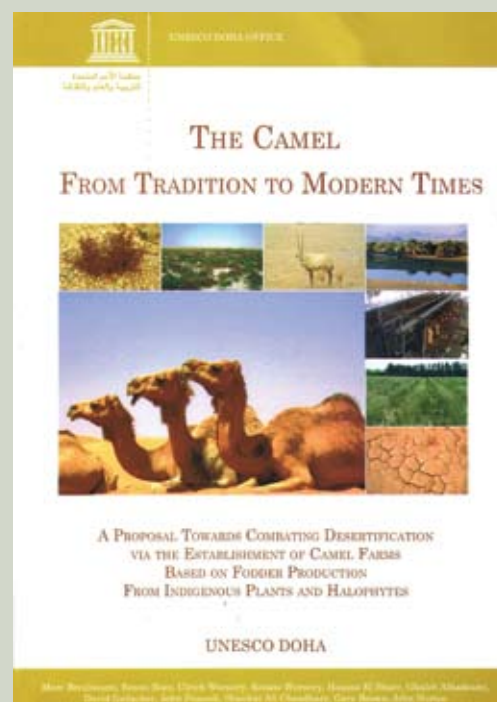


Fig2. Bald Ibis (©Andy Hultberg; www.rarebirdyearbook.com)



Fig1. Hannah and Malachi Bailey in Spotty Day costumes (©Tom Bailey).