

**Education and Awareness Raising In & Around Bouhachem,
Northern Morocco – 2010
Barbary Macaque Conservation in the Rif (BMCRif)**

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Awarded a BFF and PSGB Conservation Grant in March 2009

Abstract

The BMCRif Education and awareness programme achieved significant success in 2010. The aims of the programme were to increase local awareness regarding the importance of the Barbary macaque and its habitat locally and to explain our work on the Barbary macaque in and around Bouhachem oak forest in Northern Morocco. Funding from the Born Free Foundation (awarded through the PSGB Conservation Working Party) and from PSGB was used to purchase educational materials for lessons in local schools delivered by BMCRif's Education & Awareness officer in 2010.

Lessons about the Barbary macaques and their habitat were delivered to three schools in the local area. The children were taught all day in each school once a month (all age levels are taught in one class). Prior to BMCRif's involvement, the children were given the day off because their teachers had to visit the local markets to buy their provisions for the month (the



villages are very remote and this takes most of the day). BMCRif was approached by one local teacher and asked if we would be interested in stepping in. The first lessons were such a success that two more teachers from nearby villagers requested if we could do the same thing for them. This practise is continuing in 2011 and we are extending it to other villages.

The programme also produced an information leaflet for locals around macaque habitat which was read out in every village mosque on the periphery of the forest. Additionally, cloth shopping bags were made by local women and printed with the BMCRif logo along with t-shirts. The bags are distributed to both men and women in the area. Everyone receiving a bag is told that it is

to replace the use of plastic bags which are discarded in the villages and streams. T-shirts have been distributed to our shepherd informants and are often requested by other shepherds who have seen their friends wearing them. Volunteers wore these t-shirts whilst vaccinating dogs against rabies during the BMCRif Dog Health Programme thus emphasising the connection between the project, the macaques and a programme benefiting both dogs and people by decreasing the risk of rabies in the target villages.

The BMCRif football tournament involved four schools from three Bouhachem villages. We distributed football shirts to every player. Due to the low opinion people have of the macaques in the area I was doubtful if the children would wear them because of the monkey on the front. However they proved very popular and some little boys were so disappointed when there weren't any left that they burst into tears. They cheered up when we gave them adult t-shirts.

These actions resulted in youths from two villages pledging to stop hunting and killing macaques for sport, locals reporting anybody trying to capture macaques for the pet trade and individual shepherds now preventing their dogs from harassing the macaques in the forest. BMCRif is now extending its work to the other main area of Barbary macaque distribution in

the north of Morocco. In the light of the drastic decline of the species in its stronghold of the Middle Atlas Mountains these northern populations can no longer be ignored, and education and awareness work has a vital role to play in their conservation in this area of Morocco. For more information see our website - www.barbarymacaque.org

