

Encouraging Public Participation in Barbary Macaque Conservation in Three Moroccan Cities

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Granted The Cyril Rosen Award in 2015

There is little awareness among the Moroccan public regarding the Endangered Barbary macaque (*Macaca sylvanus*). The species is portrayed in the Moroccan media as a tourist attraction, and macaque ownership is common because the public is largely unaware that keeping the species as a pet is illegal. All Barbary macaque infants for sale as pets have been captured from the wild. Providing accurate information about the species in Arabic has been successful in one region of Morocco. To increase our outreach capacity, we trained volunteers from four Moroccan cities, supplying them with a portable education exhibit and awareness materials regarding the species and the issues surrounding the illegal pet trade, to encourage participation in the species' conservation and decrease demand for the species as pets. A decrease in demand would reduce pressure on the wild population in the Middle Atlas.

The portable exhibition includes images and short bullet points of information about the macaque in French and Arabic, and has been developed by the BMAC team based on our own exhibition. We designed a visually engaging leaflet of bullet points about Barbary macaques (behaviour, diet, threats to the species' survival) along with some information on how the public can participate in the species' conservation. We provided a telephone number so the public could report illegally held Barbary macaques directly to us, ensuring their anonymity (people are often unsure and distrustful of reporting directly to the authorities, so BMAC acts as an intermediary). We began recruiting volunteers using our Facebook page in autumn 2015. We were successful in recruiting students in Marrakech, but we have only recruited one ambassador in Casablanca and three in Rabat. We have produced an information sheet about the Ambassador role that can be downloaded from our website here: <http://www.barbarymacaque.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Ambassador-Role-French.pdf> All our Ambassadors can be found on our website: <http://www.barbarymacaque.org/staff-category/ambassadors> The majority of these volunteers have participated in our #justsayno campaign against the use of Barbary macaques as



photo props, shared BMAC posts on Facebook and maintained a good level of contact with members of the BMAC team. Ten volunteers (six from Marrakech, three from Rabat, and one from Casablanca) attended two training workshops, which we held in Tétouan in April and October 2016. On the first day, the volunteers were introduced to Barbary macaques, the wildlife

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trade and BMAC's work during a presentation and training workshop. They were also given training packs and taught how to set up the exhibition, which they took with them. The next day, we took the Ambassadors to Bouhachem to see Barbary macaques and visit our conservation and education centre. We administered a simple before and after questionnaire about Barbary macaques and the illegal wildlife trade to the participants. The Ambassadors achieved ~50% correct answers before their training and 100% afterwards.

The Marrakech Ambassadors have presented the exhibition at the Museum of Natural History on four occasions, reaching around 120 university students and a high school class of 35 students, aged 14-16, as well as a group of VIPs visiting Marrakech for the COP22 meeting. One Ambassador took the exhibition to her home village outside Marrakech, where she raised awareness about the macaque among ~60 village school children. The Marrakech Ambassadors also recruited and trained two other ambassadors to the group, making eight individuals in total. There is no culture of volunteering in Morocco and the ambassadors need quite a lot of support as they lack experience in conducting activities. However, we feel confident that their enthusiasm will assist them in finding ways to raise awareness about Barbary macaques. We feel it is important to continue and expand this strategy, thus increasing our outreach potential, as there is a serious lack of alternative conservation education in Morocco. Young Moroccans are in touch with the kinds of approaches that will help their peers engage in conservation, and they are excellent role models for younger children. As our initiative goes from strength to strength, so the Moroccan public will feel an increased ownership of their unique and important macaque species.