

EARLY WARNING BY RESCUE CENTERS FOR ANIMALS

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In the eighties and nineties of the previous century new legislation in the Netherlands was implemented that put a ban on keeping primates as pets. Reason for this legislation was the knowledge that these social animals would suffer too much from solitary keeping, the growing awareness that the trade in these animals causes a lot of problems in terms of species conservation and the fact that keeping these animals, once they grow up, is not without risks. As a result, many confiscations took place and rescue centers were constantly overloaded. All available time and effort was put into providing the best care for the animals.

It took until the nineties before a thorough registration was started, keeping track of numbers of animals being offered, species and the origin of the animals. Not only the animals that eventually were taken in were registered, but also animals that could not be taken in were listed. This led to a Dutch overview of problems that enabled us to gain insight in the most important areas of attention regarding problems with animal welfare. The international Barbary macaque program being the most important one.



Figure 1. Barbary macaque Quibla from a Dutch household. Photo: Petra Timmers/AAP

At the start of this registration AAP was offered only a relatively small number of Barbary macaques (*Macaca sylvanus*) annually. The majority of these animals came from Eastern European cargo ships that passed African harbours: sailors bought all different kinds of items in these harbours and sold them on their way to Poland and the USSR. This problem was easily solved in collaboration with Dutch customs by instructing the companies owning the ships

and by explaining them the risk of a ship chained in a Dutch harbour because of the violation of regulations regarding the trade in primates.

At the end of the nineties numbers gradually went up again: in 2001 AAP received 27 request for intake of which 10 Barbary macaques could be taken in. At the end of 2004 AAP decided to start an investigation into the source(s) of these animals and a survey was done in Morocco (Van Lavieren, 2008*). The conclusion was that annually more than 300 infants were smuggled out of Africa and ending up in European Rescue centers. Another conclusion was that this number was far higher than the remaining population could deal with according to CITES guidelines for "sustainable harvesting".



Figure 2. Barbary macaques in the wild in Morocco. Photo: Ronald Troostwijk/AAP.

As a follow up some research was done into the routes used to smuggle these animals out of Africa. As far as could be established, most of the animals were transported by car through Spain into Europe. A training session of both Moroccan and Spanish customs created some awareness of how to track the smuggle of endangered species. Numbers of intake requests for animals at AAP in the meantime went up to 60-70 per year!

AAP rang the alarm bells and used the International CITES meeting (COP14) to address the issue in order to prevent the Barbary macaque from becoming extinct. An uplisting request done by AAP and partners resulted in a red listing by IUCN. Uplisting to CITES I through an uplisting proposal prepared for Morocco was not executed.

During the same period Spain decided to raise the penalties for smuggling CITES II animals into Europe. Also, on the Moroccan side some awareness resulted from the alarms that went off in Europe, unfortunately this coincided with political turmoil in the Arabic part of the world.

The conclusions from this on-going project:

In 10 years of documentation, more than 400 requests for intake were posed at AAP.

The enforcement of legislation in Europe has been lifted.

Through a growing co-operation between rescue partners there is a far better overview of numbers of Barbary macaques in Europe. The Early Warning mechanism is no longer based just on the Dutch figures.

Education of tourists going to Morocco by car has been done for 4 years now creating a far better awareness in the main target group. An evaluation in 2012 will have to show what the results of these campaigns are.



Figure 3. Education campaign in Spain, July 2012. Photo: Petra Sonius/AAP.

AAP-Primadomus is going to invest into building a new facility that enables us to rescue the majority of animals being offered, whereas now some 60-70 animals can not be helped. Enforcement in Morocco is also key for further success.

AAP will continue protecting Barbary macaques, to make sure they will not disappear from the wild.

* TRAFFIC Bulletin Vol. 21 No. 3 (2008) The Illegal Trade in Barbary Macaques from Morocco and its Impact on the Wild Population