

Barbary macaques in Gibraltar

Our clients – Gibraltar's Minister for the Environment, the Gibraltar Tourism Agency Limited and Sights Management Ltd – were dismayed by the terms of the article, 'Monkey business in Gibraltar' (*Oryx*, 27 (1), 55–57), which creates the impression that very little is being done in Gibraltar for the protection of nature generally and, in particular, for the protection of the Barbary macaque.

The Gibraltar Tourism Agency Limited is a Gibraltar government agency whose chairman is the Minister for the Environment. The Minister has for some years now been actively involved in the protection of all aspects of Gibraltar's natural heritage and much recent legislation has placed Gibraltar well ahead of many other European countries in this respect. These efforts have been assisted by a close association with the Gibraltar Ornithological and Natural History Society.

As far as the Barbary macaque is concerned, it is true that their management was placed in the hands of Dr Fa's company, Medambios, but the article gives the impression that the contract with Medambios was unilaterally broken, whereas the termination of the contract was perfectly lawful and in accordance with its terms.

The article gives the general impression that, since the termination of the contract with Medambios, the situation with regard to the macaque has greatly deteriorated and that the animals are now at greater risk than before. While our clients accept that the situation is not as they would like, this is because it takes a certain amount of time to ensure that long-term plans for the adequate protection of the macaques are put in place.

Sights Management Limited was appointed to look after the Barbary macaques by the Gibraltar Tourism Agency Limited on 1 June 1992. The management team involved with the welfare of the animals comprises a nature reserve manager, an ape keeper and three full-time cleaners, who are supported by other Sights Management Limited personnel. Sights Management is also assisted and advised on a regular basis by the Gibraltar Ornithological

and Natural History Society, which has within its ranks qualified biologists and experienced naturalists.

The Gibraltar Tourism Agency and Sights Management are both fully aware of the problems associated with the interaction between humans and the macaques, particularly regarding incorrect feeding and the transmission of disease, and they are addressing these problems with vigour.

Our clients express their surprise at finding such a one-sided and inaccurate report in a learned journal. It was clearly based on information supplied by only one party. If the writer had taken the trouble to contact our clients or the Gibraltar Ornithological and Natural History Society, a much fairer picture would have been projected and many of the inaccuracies would not have appeared. While our clients welcome well-informed and constructive criticism given in the spirit of goodwill, an article such as the one published can only make those dedicated to the welfare of the Barbary macaque disheartened and disillusioned.

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Helen O'Leary replies

I was saddened by the response to my article. Our interpretations of the events obviously differ but I remain confident of the reliability of the facts obtained at the time the article was submitted in summer 1992.

I am glad to note that advice is now obtained from the Gibraltar Ornithological and Natural History Society. Anyone familiar with my activities on site in Gibraltar would know that I enjoyed friendly relations with the cleaners and new Ape Keeper, was strongly encouraging of all their positive moves and shared any information from my 2-year study that might be helpful to them. Before leaving in October 1992 I had a productive discussion on the apes' welfare with Dr Finlayson, NCC Gibraltar. Offers to meet Sights Management Ltd in December 1992 in 'a spirit of goodwill'

were never responded to but at the time I complimented Sights Management on their erection of multilingual 'No feeding' signs at Apes' Den in October/November 1992.

I am disheartened that Sights Management has chosen to react so antagonistically to my article and it is sad that relevant information obtained within the last 2 years and offered to them free of charge was ignored. I intend to send Sight Management copies of my full report in the hope that some of the information may be useful.

We all recognize the problems at Apes' Den and the complexity of strategies it may take to resolve them. I have always encouraged and welcomed any positive steps taken on Gibraltar to improve macaque status and health and I would welcome hearing of further measures being taken because much still remains to be done.

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Rhinos in Kenya

Having consulted Peter Jenkins I wish to comment on W. F. H. Ansell's remarks in 'Lake Nakuru Black Rhinoceros Sanctuary' (*Oryx*, 26 [4], 236). There are doubts as to whether there are two subspecies of white rhino; it appears to be accepted by genetic experts that the difference between the northern and southern white rhinos is negligible. It is known that the white rhino occurred throughout East Africa in prehistoric times. White rhinos are being reintroduced successfully into many areas of Kenya from South Africa where there is a surplus due to successful conservation measures. Instead of being concerned over minute differences between subspecies, it might be more to the point if Kenya's example were followed and this surplus be introduced into more areas of East Africa rather than being shot by trophy hunters.

When white rhinos are introduced into a fenced area, such as Lake Nakuru National Park, there is no danger of cross-breeding be-

cause there are no resident animals to start with. The white rhino is a much higher profile animal for tourists, being more easily accessible than the black rhino for photography on the plains.

Mr Ansell writes that, 'it is misguided to expend what are no doubt limited resources on the southern form'; in this he is incorrect because there are no northern rhinos available for translocation and South Africa is delighted to provide southern animals for introduction.

With regard to Christopher Lever's letter (*Oryx*, 26 (4), 236), I wish to reply as follows.

1. Rhino Rescue Trust was formed in 1985 as a result of an invited after-dinner talk to the Shikar Club by Peter Jenkins, the architect of the Rhino Rescue Project of Kenya. The Trust funded the Lake Nakuru Sanctuary and its development and management plan suggested stocking with a founder population of black rhino and, should the opportunity arise, introducing white rhinos also because there was ideal habitat for them.

2. It is recognized that the Rhino Rescue Trust was started in order to help save the black rhino from extinction and, therefore, to fund sanctuaries. However, the Trust should recognize the value of the white rhino as good public relations and the spin-off will benefit the black rhino.

3. My only part in assisting with the Lake Nakuru Sanctuary was in the translocation of the black rhino from Solio. However, as warden of Solio Game Reserve for many years my 'assistance to Peter Jenkins's plan for rhino sanctuaries' was in an advisory capacity, having had experience of a ring-fenced situation and having been involved in capture and translocation.

I do feel that had it not been for Peter Jenkins's pressing for concrete measures to save the black rhino from extinction, conceiving the Special Sanctuary idea and the formation of the Rhino Rescue Trust, then there would have been no safe area for the excess rhino from Solio Reserve. Undoubtedly Kenya is indebted to the Rhino Rescue Trust for its part in saving the black rhino.

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