

Revenues donated to the Large Herbivore Initiative Auction Frans Lanting pictures at Sotheby's

Frans Lanting, world-famous nature and wildlife photographer, donated 44 beautiful large sized pictures to be auctioned at Sotheby's in Amsterdam. The photographer donated the revenues to two nature conservation organisations who have ongoing projects in Mongolia, namely the International Foundation for the Protection and Preservation of the Przewalski Horse, and the Large Herbivore Initiative.

WWF-Netherlands organized the event in cooperation with Frans Lanting and Sotheby's on 28 September.

Frans Lanting has been working for National Geographic for

Bidding at the auction.

photo © Nadja van Leeuwen / LHI



many years and was declared Wildlife Photographer of the year 1991 by the BBC. He produced numerous beautiful books for WWF, and his work has been exhibited world-wide in museums in cities like Paris, New York and Amsterdam. The 44 pictures for the auction were of excellent quality, measuring 1 by 1,5 meter, and have previously been exhibited in the Yamagata Museum of Art in Japan, and in Amsterdam.

For the Large Herbivore Initiative this was a good opportunity to draw attention to the



Frans Lanting (l) and Hans Voortman (director WWF-Netherlands) at the auction.

photo © Joost Hogenboom / WWF-Netherlands

LHI-projects in Mongolia, namely on Mongolian saiga and Mongolian gazelle.

The auction proved to be a great success. The 44 pictures generated just over US\$ 50,000.

LHI supported initiatives

The Mongolian saiga (*Saiga tatarica mongolica*) is the most threatened subspecies of the saiga antelope. Habitat loss and fragmentation, as well as illegal hunting for their meat, skin and horns are the major threats. In

particular poaching for their horns, to be used in traditional E. Asian medicine, has led to an alarming decline of saiga in Mongolia. It formerly existed over a large area of the semi-desert zone in western Mongolia, but the current range of the Mongolian saiga is only 20% of the original. Recent saiga population information fortunately shows an increase: from an estimated 2,000 heads in 1998 to a certain 5,000 end 2000. The saiga has also been regaining some of its lost range the last two years. This increase is the positive result of the LHI / WWF Mongolia project for the conservation of Mongolian saiga. By



Mongolian gazelle.
photo © Olga Pereladova / LHI-WWF Russia

further decreasing poaching and illegal trade, decrease competition between the saiga and livestock habitat, and increase public awareness, WWF / LHI hopes to restore this peculiar antelope species in Mongolia.

The Mongolian gazelle (*Procapra gutturosa*) is nowadays mainly found in the eastern parts of Mongolia. Less than a century ago Mongolian gazelles used to roam all over Mongolia in huge herds up to ten thousands of animals. The mass migrations of these huge herds that still occur over long distances into China and Siberia is an unique phenomenon in Eurasian nature. Habitat fragmentation has severely decreased the range and number of Mongolian gazelle. The construction of the Ulaanbaatar-Beijing railway in the 1950s created a large North-South barrier on the migration route of the gazelles. Animals are trying to cross the railway, but instead get killed in the fences, created to keep life stock of the railway track. Large numbers are still around, but because of its herd-behaviour it is at risk of a quick and sudden extinction.

Tasteful and money-making artificial bison

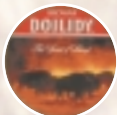
The habitat of the European bison or wisent is not only characterised by 'forests', 'meadows' or 'grassland'. A habitat description of some populations of the European bison is best described as 'air-conditioned spaces', 'busy factories' or 'beautifully furnished offices'. This is the environment in which many European bison live. A population that is even much bigger than the wild ones in Poland, Russia or Ukraine. A population that survives as a company logo, on a label or just as a name.

Four examples

These bison are for instance found with the Grasovka vodka company in Poland. Or the Bison Kit company (glue and related

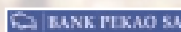


products) in The Netherlands. What about Dojlidy beer from the Bialystok brewery in Poland? They even have a chapter on nature at their website (www.dojlidy.com.pl)



Or BiSON: the Birmingham Solar Oscillation Network. BiSON consists of a network of six remote solar observatories monitoring low-degree solar oscillation modes. Are you still there?

Finally, again in Poland, the PeKaO S.A. Bank uses a bison for its company identity.



CONNECTION

Why?
What is the reason behind this choice for bison? Does the strength of the animal reflect the success of the company? Is the company, the organisation or the institution interested in bison conservation in the wild?

Whatever the reason may be, it is obvious that these artificial bison are doing much better than their wild, flesh and blood relatives. More about the latter can be found in the life stock section of this newsletter.

In the next issue we hope to come back to you with comments from the companies and institutions on why they have chosen the bison as their trademark.

COMMUNI-ACTION

Conservation missionaries

Conservationists have, in certain ways, to act as missionaries. They have to bring information on the need for conservation to important persons in society, who, on their turn, have to commit themselves to conservation and act as a new group of 'conservation missionaries'.

This important communication role is shown by the work in western Kopetdag - Turkmenistan where LHI / WWF Russia representative Olga Pereladova explains the ideas and activities to a council of elders, including their religious leader, the mullah (in red). The role of reliable, up-to-date and attractive information is



crucial in convincing national and local authorities, such as the council of elders, of the importance of conservation.

The meeting was held in a conservation hot spot where a carnivore (leopard) and herbivores 'interact'. A compensation programme for the loss of sheep finally became operational after important background information on the role of carnivores and (wild) herbivores in the area was discussed and clarified by Olga Pereladova of LHI / WWF. As a result a new system was developed, including representatives from the council of elders, to manage the flocks of sheep.

Council of elders with Mullah (in red) and Olga Pereladova (centre).
photo © Olga Pereladova / LHI-WWF Russia

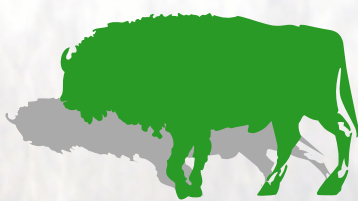
Calendar

- International Conference on Forest Dynamics and Ungulate Herbivores, 3-6 October 2001, Davos, Switzerland
- LCIE network meeting, 11-12 October 2001, Cracow, Poland
- LHI CG, 20-24 October 2001, Antalya, Turkey
- Standing Committee Bern Convention (Council of Europe, Convention on the conservation of European wildlife and natural habitats) 2-5 December 2001, Strasbourg, France
- International workshop on the conservation of the Kalmikya saiga, beginning December 2001, Astrakhan, Russia, organised by the Russian UNESCO / Man and Biosphere programme, for information see the life stock section.
- Workshop on Wildlife Conservation issues including Seminar on CITES, US ESA and EU Regulations, Safari Club International Foundation in cooperation with Eurasia / Asian Caprinae Conservation Cooperative, spring 2002, Kyrgyzstan
- III World Conference on Mountain Ungulates, 10-15 June 2002, Zaragoza, Spain.

The Browser is distributed amongst the members of the Large Herbivore Initiative (LHI) and related persons and organizations.

This newsletter and the LHI-brochure are available upon request, both printed and digital (pdf).

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LARGE HERBIVORE **LHI** INITIATIVE

The Browser

THE OTHER SIDE [Full Name: Ö. Emre Can] [Birth Place: Ankara, Turkey] [Birthdate: 24.07.1973]

'We are naked apes'

In this section of *The Browser* we show you a glimpse of the conservation life of one of the LHI-members. Our first choice was not a difficult one. Emre Can, host of the fifth LHI Coordination Group meeting, was the obvious favourite. You will probably remember Emre's humorous and informative presentation on the conservation of Turkey's large mammals at the LHI-meeting in Spain. But how did his career look like before his involvement with the LHI?



Emre holding a tiger cub.
photo © WWF Turkey

The Browser: How did you get involved in nature and conservation?

"As a kid I stayed my first five years in two villages in the forests near the Black Sea. My mother worked as a teacher in these villages. I preferred to spend these five years with my big Anatolian shepherd dog. He was my best friend. After that period we moved to Ankara, the capital of Turkey and I spend the next ten years watching Jacques-Yves Cousteau's documentaries about his travels on the Calypso. But I must tell you that I prefer mountains to sea and snow to rain. Then I discovered the work of Desmond Morris and Albert Schweitzer. After my graduate education, I returned to the Black Sea forests and studied the ecology of grey wolves in winter for my graduate work. Then I was asked to join WWF Turkey with initial financial support from the LHI. This was followed by work on the Anatolian leopard, brown bear and preliminary surveys on large herbivores."

The Browser: What is your favourite animal and why?

"Grey wolves fascinate me but chimpanzees hold a greater attraction to me. We are naked apes and they are the apes."



Mountain range near Kayseri, Central-Turkey, with harvested reed from the Sultan Marshes in the foreground.
photo © Marc Argeloo / ANC

The Browser: If you would have been a Turkish minister with much influence in conservation related matters, what would be your first action?

"First, I would take the prime minister to the nearest field for tracking the wolves and bears (herbivores as well!). Then I would arrange an expedition for the parliament members in a proper region in Turkey. During that time I will have enough time and chance to influence them in many issues. Practising is seeing. Seeing is believing."

The Browser: What are your future plans in relation to conservation for the coming three years?

"I am planning to work for my Ph.D., and then form a wildlife team for future work."

The Browser: Is there anything you would like to recommend the LHI? If yes, what?

"Although it may look costly at first, LHI may try to secure some additional funds to support undergraduate students for wildlife training in relevant locations in the region. After that they may return to their countries hoping to cause the 'snowball' effect. But it is not as easy as it seems. We need a very effective conservation network to support them in the future. In underdeveloped and developing countries, viability of wildlife populations is an issue but we also need viable populations of wildlife workers as well. Education is not the guaranteed way to success but it is the main road that we need to follow."

International Workshop on Kalmikya saiga

Early December 2001, the first international workshop on the conservation of the Kalmikya saiga will be held in Astrakhan, Russia. The saiga population in Kalmikya is the only remaining European and most western population of this peculiar steppe antelope species. Habitat fragmentation and poaching are major threats to the Kalmikya saiga.

Emergency support by the LHI last year for anti-poaching measures (e.g. radio's, off-the-road motor bikes), followed by other international support, has at least lowered the impact of poaching for the time being. A beginning has also been made with a captive breeding programme near Elista/Kalmikya. A 2001 population census organized by the Russian government and the Denver Zoological Foundation revealed a population of just over 18.000 animals of which less than 1 per cent turned out to be males.

In the workshop, organized by the Russian UNESCO / Man and Biosphere programme, several international organisations (zoological societies, WWF, LHI) will team up with Russian and Kalmikyan experts and governmental representatives, to set up the frame work for a conservation and restoration programme for the Kalmikya saiga. The organisation of the workshop is, amongst others, supported by the Dutch government and the LHI. For further information please contact Anna Lushchekina, UNESCO / Man and Biosphere committee: mab.ru@g23.relcom.ru



Kalmikya saiga, the most western population of a peculiar European steppe antelope

photo © Anna Lushchekina / LHI-WWF Russia

Bison on the move in Poland and Slovakia...

At Wola Michowa, Poland, the old bison enclosure has been rebuilt with support of the Regional Directorate of State Forests at Krosno, and is ready to accommodate up to six bison. This fall it is planned to bring three to four bison from Sweden and Denmark, all fitted with radio-collars, to the enclosure. After an acclimatization period the animals will be released to the wild to join the free-ranging herd at Baligrod and Komancza forest districts. An intensive monitoring programme in Bieszczady has been started involving Ph.D. student Norman Duncan from Leeds, U.K. and French student Sophie Ruyis.

In Slovakia, the site for the bison enclosure is finally

agreed upon by all relevant authorities. It is situated about two kilometers from the drinking water reservoir Starina. Hopefully, the construction, supervised by State Forest District Ulic, will be ready in early spring 2002.

LIFE STOCK

...and giving birth in Russia

European bison conservation is on-going in the Orel region, Russia. Although the project is in a stand-by situation, due to a lack of funding, the main group of animals is growing.

At least seven newborns survived and have been registered by the rangers. The Russian Strategy for European Bison Conservation at last has passed all the stages for final approval. This will hopefully give a new impulse to the project which enables it to bring new animals to other key areas - Bryansk and Vologda - which will guarantee the development of a self-sustaining population.

European bison.
photo © Olga Pereladova / LHI-WWF Russia



EDITORIAL

This is the first issue of the Large Herbivore Initiative Newsletter. An issue for which the information was collected from Olga Pereladova, Kajetan Perzanowski, Emre Can, Joost Hogenboom and Fred Baer-selman. Information that was subsequently 'screened' and edited by Marc Argeloo and Nadja van Leeuwen. Marc and Nadja sincerely thank the persons who responded on our request for information.

We would like to offer a fair amount of variety of information through this newsletter. We can not stress enough that we greatly rely on information coming from the LHI 'correspondents' in the field. Collecting information turned out not to be an easy challenge. Still, we can not be grateful enough for your contribution. We already predict a similar process for the next issue of this newsletter and sincerely hope that you are willing to contribute more images, text and topics for the next issue to:

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The Browser

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*The proof of the pudding
is in the eating.*