

Project Update: March 2006

As expected, a full page article about the project featured in the latest BIAZA Magazine (attached). This has raised some interest in the zoo community, and I have been approached by the new Conservation Officer at London Zoo who is grappling with the distinction between 'zoo' and 'field' conservation.

I had an excellent first meeting with Annette Lanjouw, the new Director at FFI responsible for initiatives such as this. She was very interested in the concept of building a relationship with zoos and I am hopeful that there will be proactive input from this international conservation NGO.

Through my FFI meeting I was introduced to the new Director of the FFI Eurasia region, Paul Hotham, who expressed the need for help to put in place a conservation programme for the critically endangered saiga. I have spoken with the Director of BIAZA who put me in touch with the chair of the Taxon Advisory Committee for antelope, EAZA, who has introduced me to a contact at Rotterdam zoo. This counterpart opportunity is now beginning to look promising. Needless to say, I make it clear to all contacts that this is a Rufford sponsored project.

The draft report from my survey of conservation in UK zoos last year, has been seen by FFI and is now my top priority. Its completion has been somewhat delayed by my relocation to the Democratic Republic of Congo. I shall forward a copy to you as soon as it is complete, with another to Oryx in the hope that a version can be published.

I have established a contact at Howletts and Port Lympne zoos with a view to discussing the potential of a welfare/conservation project for the black maned lions in Addis Ababa. I will be taking this to the next stage on my return visit to the UK in May.

Finally, I am now based in Lubumbashi, DR Congo, close to the Zambian border. The town includes a pitiful zoo, but within extensive grounds which have the potential for a holding and rehabilitation area for confiscated wildlife, if the need exists. We are therefore planning visits to two of the nearest national parks, which are gradually being recovered from rebel forces by the national parks authority, in order to establish their needs. This would of course provide an exciting opportunity for the Zoo Counterpart Initiative.