

# The Human Dimension: Taking Cultural Factors into Account in Reintroduction Programmes



Sian Waters<sup>123</sup> Clio Smeeton<sup>3</sup> & Ken Weagle<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Anthropology, Durham University, UK

<sup>2</sup> Barbary Macaque Conservation in the Rif, Morocco

<sup>3</sup>Cochrane Ecological Institute, Alberta, Canada

# The Human Dimension



- Successful reintroductions can sometimes depend on the tolerance and acceptance of local human populations. We discuss examples of two biologically successful reintroductions where cultural factors have been fundamental to demonstrate the importance of the human dimension in reintroduction programme planning.

# Swift Fox (*Vulpes velox*)

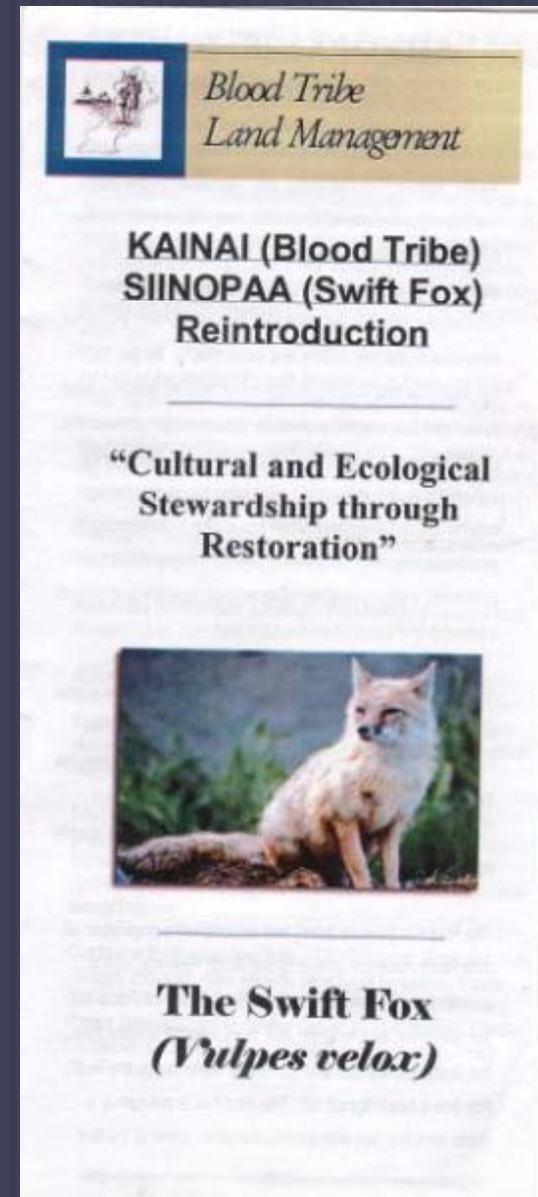


- ❑ Small fox native to the Prairies.
- ❑ Extirpated in Canada and Montana in 1950s.
- ❑ Successful reintroduction involving both captive and translocated swift fox in Canada between 19- 1996

Reintroduction sites Have you a  
map?

# Swift Fox and People

- The swift fox plays an important cultural role in the northern Plains tribes with the Swift fox society as a major warrior society of the Blackfeet & Blood Tribes.
- The return of the species is perceived by the tribes to play an integral part in the regeneration of their culture.
- Ranchers outside the reservation welcomed the swift fox as a new gopher predator.
- Habitat requirements were adequately met and the reintroduction of captive-bred swift fox from CEI took place between 1997-2002.



# Inter-Cultural Obstacles



- The annual releases had to take place at the sacred site on the confluence of two rivers.
- In common with other Native American people there was resistance to perceived interference with the animals such as radio-collaring.
- In the view of tribes, the recognition of the programmes by western science was immaterial to their success.

# Success

- The captive bred swift fox survived to breed and disperse outside the Reservation.
- In an intercept study in 2003, significantly more reservation residents knew about the programme & could recognise the species than did non-residents.
- A reintroduction on the adjacent Blood Tribal Lands on the Canadian side of the border followed in?



“..from a Native American stand point, Blackfeet perspective if you will, the need for vindication and legitimacy through qualification, quantification and recognition are not often required in matters of the spirit and heart. Which is what this action (swift fox reintroduction) was, and is. The western scientific approach is not legitimized in the view of many indigenous peoples. Cumulative factors (including spiritual, heartfelt and cultural values) must be taken into account and priorities may be set from there. I will point out that the most enduring and valuable messages are those visual and storied accounts.....The project worked because ....matters of the heart and spirit must guide the way. It was simply the right thing to do.. ”

Ira Newbreast, CEO Native American Fish & Wildlife Society, 2005.

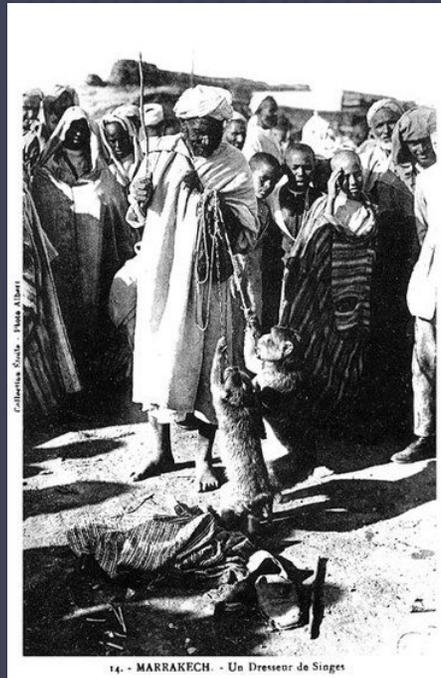


## Barbary Macaque (*Macaca sylvanus*)



- Found in fragmented populations in Morocco and Algeria & an introduced population on Gibraltar.
- Threatened by habitat destruction & degradation.
- Some populations seriously threatened by capture for the pet trade

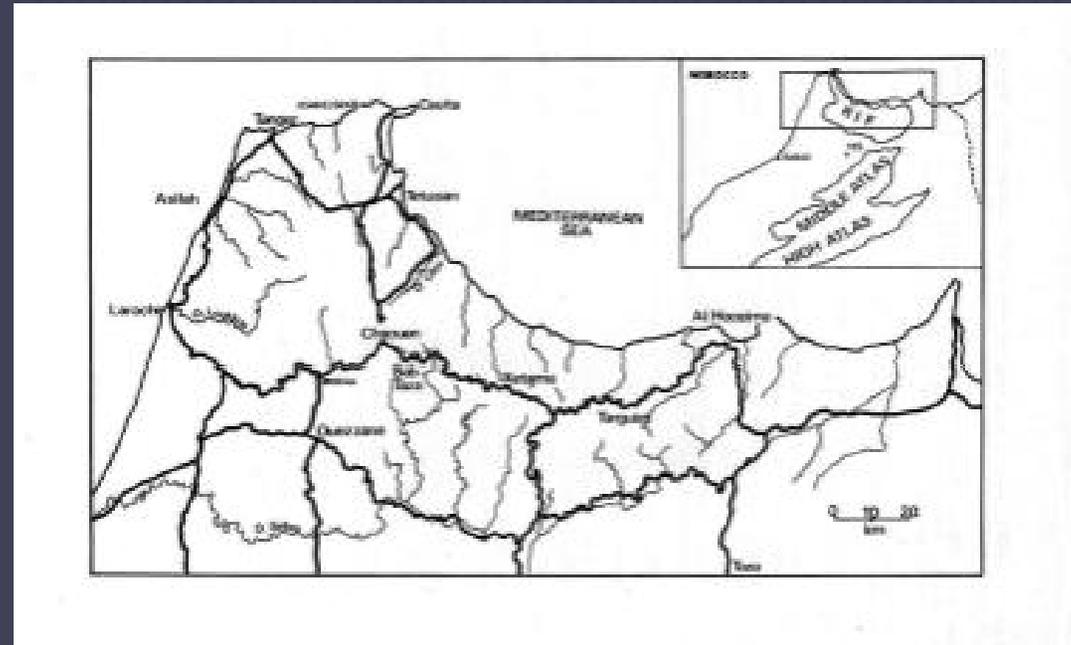
# Barbary Macaques & People



- ❑ Barbary macaques have had a long and close relationship with humans in the Mediterranean.
- ❑ Human-animal relations are fundamental to Barbary macaque conservation.
- ❑ There are no stories about Barbary macaques in Berber or Jbala culture
- ❑ Primates are stigmatised in Islam.
- ❑ Barbary macaques are persecuted by people in some areas of their distribution.



# Reintroduction Sites



- >600 Barbary macaques from two captive breeding colonies in France and Germany were released in Morocco at the request of the Moroccan government to encourage tourism.
- They were released in at least two sites in the Middle and High Atlas Mountains and in Nador province in northeastern Morocco

# Reintroduction



- ❑ The macaque groups were not monitored post-release, but were reported to enter villagers' homes and raid agricultural crops on a regular basis.
- ❑ Information is scarce but two populations survive, both in popular tourist locations.
- ❑ Ouzud in the High Atlas is the site of a waterfall and a popular tourist destination.

# Introductions?



The surrounding habitat of the surviving populations is heavily degraded so macaques are unable to disperse – this may suggest introductions for tourism rather than reintroduction for species restoration.

Local people living around the reintroduction sites were not included in the reintroduction procedure.

# Problems



Feeding at both sites is prohibited on paper but is not enforced and tourists are openly feed the macaques.

The macaques exhibit inappropriate, often aggressive, behaviours and their health suffers.

At the Nador site, tourists are encouraged by a “guide” to buy infant macaques.

# Repercussions?



- ❑ Since the late 1980s, the macaques have been heavily used as entertainment and photo props with high sales of wild-caught infants.
- ❑ This situation is condoned by the authorities as tourism is seen as fundamental to Morocco's economic development.
- ❑ This unsustainable pet trade has decimated the High and Middle Atlas macaque populations.

# Conclusions

- Both these reintroductions were successful because captive-bred animals survived and reproduced in the release sites.
- There are challenges for reintroduction practitioners in understanding world views of different cultures but acknowledging them and working with them may be fundamental to the project's ultimate success.
- One species is valued as a cultural icon and the other is valued economically.
- In any mammal reintroduction, where local people are not active stakeholders, there may be unforeseen negative consequences due to resentment at their exclusion.

# Acknowledgements



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