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Anti-poaching awareness through the distribution of posters in Wakhan National Park, Afghanistan

By

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Figure 1. Amruddin Sanjer, WCS logistic and community liaison officer, fixes a 'no-hunting' poster in Khandud, Wakhan National Park, November 2018.

Context

For the past years a number of community rangers have reported that illegal hunting of wild ungulates has been increasing in the Wakhan National Park, particularly during winter (Salahuddin pers. comm.). The introduction of SMART monitoring tool and a new operational plan for rangers, allowed to translate this 'impression' into indisputable evidence of poaching cases of Siberian ibex, urial sheep and Marco Polo sheep during winter 2017-2018 (Bradfield and Rajabi, 2018). As a reaction to this growing threat, WCS has organized and facilitated in 2018 three meetings, respectively in Khandud (Rajabi and Bradfield, 2018), Little Pamir (Fazel 2018) and Sarhad-e Broghil (Salahuddin, 2018), to raise awareness between Wakhi and Kyrgyz people about hunting regulations. People attending these meetings have committed by writing that they will not hunt and report to authorities any case of hunting. Also a new ranger operational plan was designed and put in action for the period December 2018 to April 2019 to continue monitoring illegal hunting and evaluate the effectiveness of awareness campaigns. The third component of this reaction against poaching was the development and dissemination of a poster endorsed by authorities and informing people of the Wakhan National Park about hunting regulations.

Results

The training, education and outreach team of WCS led by Hafiz Rahmani designed and developed a poster on no-hunting regulations in Wakhan National Park with the technical participation of the WCS Wakhan team. The poster was shared for approval with MAIL and NEPA. Fifty copies of it were printed in Kabul on plastic sticker paper, glued on wooden boards and laminated. The poster is expected to resist to UVs, moisture and winter external conditions for several years. Four copies of the poster were given to MAIL and NEPA. The 46 other posters were brought by road to the Wakhan National Park in mid November 2018. WCS staff distributed and fixed 26 posters at various locations throughout the Wakhan Valley in November-December 2018 (Table 1; Fig. 2). The message carried by these posters in Dari language is: *Hunting and wildlife trade are Illegal. Hunting and wildlife trade are prohibited according to the Environmental Law and Presidential Decrees. Any offender will be prosecuted in the full extent of the Law. Wildlife is a valuable national legacy and it is the responsibility of everyone to protect it. Hunting may result in the extinction of wildlife.* The remaining 18 posters carry a shorter message on the same topic but in four languages (Chinese, Dari, Tajik, and Urdu) and will be positioned in border areas in Pamirs in 2019.

Table 1. Location, date of distribution and responsible distributors of ‘no-hunting’ posters in Wakhan National Park in November-December 2018, Afghanistan.

*Snow Leopard Team

Location	Village	Date	WCS responsible person
School	Pagish	24 November	Asli Gul
	Ftur	27 November	idem
	Kipkut	28 November	Shanbe (SLT)*
	Qila-e Panja	28 November	Shanbe & Karmal (SLT)
	Sast	28 November	Shanbe (SLT)
	Kret	29 November	idem
	Dehghulaman	29 November	idem
	Rachon	29 November	idem
	Chilkand	29 November	idem
	Sarhad-e Broghil	29 November	idem
	Qazideh	29 November	Asli Gul
	Wergund	1 December	Babr Ali
	Shkhawr	1 December	idem
	Wark	1 December	idem
Check-point	Khandud	4 December	Amruddin
	Qazideh	27 November	Ali Madad Rajabi
	Qila-e panja	4 December	Asli Gul
Clinic	Goz Khun	4 December	Karmal (SLT)
	Kipkut	28 November	Shanbe (SLT)
	Ptukh	29 November	idem
Bazaar	Khandud	26 November	Amruddin
	Sarhad-e Broghil	29 November	Shanbe (SLT)
Hot spring	Sargez	28 November	idem
	Sarhad-e Brohil	29 November	idem
Guesthouse	Khandud	30 November	Amruddin
Governorate office	Khandud	24 November	idem

Conclusions

The ‘no-hunting’ posters are the first of this kind to be distributed across Wakhan National Park. In combination with the awareness campaign carried out in 2018, the main aims of this operation were to make sure that none of the park’s inhabitants remains unaware or ignorant that hunting is a violation of the Law in Wakhan National Park, and to reinforce the necessity to stop illegal hunting. The posters have been positioned at locations frequently visited by people, in all schools and also at the three main check points of the district to inform visitors, and remind the border guard authorities that ‘no one is above the law’. How and to which extent this message is now recognized and accepted by the population of Wakhan will have to be assessed in the future.



Figure 2. A border guard stands by the “no-hunting poster” at Qila-e Panja Village check point (left); and the poster about to be fixed in Khandud Bazaar (right), Wakhan National Park, Badakhshan, Afghanistan, November – December 2018.

Literature Cited

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