

Sharon Miller, Chair of Trustees, summarises 2017

2017 was a very busy year for Wildlife Vets International with eight vets and one vet nurse going to nine different countries, including one project in the UK (translocating pine martens). Our team of dedicated wildlife veterinary consultants have gone to China and Cambodia for the first time and worked with new partners, such as the Australian organisation Free the Bears.

WVI continues to be a leading player in field conservation and wildlife medicine, providing training, advice and practical help to our partners in field saving small populations of endangered animals. The classification of our projects under four thematic areas has helped us explain more clearly to our supporters what we are doing.

In the second half of the year we ran the #Vets4Vultures campaign that raised funds for our Raptor Rehabilitation Programme: a suite of potentially three projects building the capacity of vets dealing with injured birds of prey in India, South Africa and Bulgaria. We were able to use the catchy campaign title to raise the profile and funds for a programme with a dry title and for birds that have a distasteful public reputation.

Taking Salem, a hooded vulture, to the London Vet Show was a first all round. Although experienced at dealing with the public, Salem had never been to an exhibition centre like the Excel Centre. Once he had got over the attraction of the overhead metal work, he was very happy posing for photos with delegates. By the end he was so comfortable he was preening himself and having quick snooze between photoshoots.

For the first year we present our projects in the Annual Report under our clustered activity headings: Training, Practical Clinical Help, Information and Advice, Disease Surveillance and Research. This will help us keep track of our project activities, ensure transparency and keep the reporting between projects consistent.

New for 2017 was supporting Jon Cracknell's work looking at the presence of human tuberculosis in bears rescued by Free the Bears. Whilst at Phnom Tamao Wildlife Rescue Centre, Cambodia, Jon trained local vets in clinical skills and developed surveillance, isolation and quarantine protocols for current bears and all new bears that are brought in. As it is highly contagious and deadly disease, it is important to ensure that it doesn't spread throughout the centres. In addition, much was learnt about tuberculosis epidemiology in Malayan sun bears and Asiatic brown bears that will help other rescue centres and conservationists dealing with bears in the trade.

Focal to WVI's work since the beginning has been Dr John Lewis's work with tigers and Amur leopards. This year he extended his work with WCS Russia and their counterparts across the border. Invited by WCS China, John gave presentations and demonstrations at a human-tiger conflict workshop. John has been mentoring Russian wildlife vet Misha Gonchuruk for many years now and recently has been providing him advice remotely, thanks to a grant from IFAW Russia. Misha is one of the vets involved in the tiger rescue and rehabilitation centre at Alexyevka. John was able to visit the rescue centre and meet with other Amur leopard and tiger conservation colleagues twice in 2017. Remote support in addition to at least one trip will continue through 2018.

Dr Jessica Bodgener was able to visit our partners, WildTeam, in Bangladesh. A trip that had been postponed from 2016 due to a terrorist attack in Dhaka. Thankfully her trip went without a glitch and was highly productive, catching the end of their pilot project in to the presence/absence of canine distemper virus in village dogs living on the edge of the Sundarbans. We look forward to finding out what will come of the results.

The translocation phase of the Pine Marten Recovery Project, lead by Vincent Wildlife Trust, was completed in the autumn of 2017. A total of 51 pine martens have been successfully translocated from Scotland to the release site in mid Wales to supplement a dwindling population already there. The translocations were deemed successful. Annual mortality rates were within normal parameters over the three years and in the first winter, kits conceived in Scotland were known to be born to at least four of the ten translocated females.

One of the first short term successes was the birth of kits in the spring 2017 from matings in Wales. It is still early days and while WVI's immediate involvement has ceased, the population will remain closely monitored by Vincent Wildlife Trust.

In India vet nurse Matt Rendle and avian surgeon Stefan Harsch had another successful year as part of an international team providing expert surgical and rehabilitation support and training for birds injured during Uttaraayan. The Jivdaya Charitable Trust continue to improve the welfare and rehabilitation needs of their patients as well as developing an education programme to reduce the number of birds and mammals affected. Matt and the team continue to use data collecting to demonstrate the effect of protocol improvements.

In Africa, founder vet Andrew Greenwood continued his support of species recovery programmes run by Mauritian Wildlife Foundation and Jane Hopper visited the Carnivore Research Malawi project. Carnivore Research Malawi were looking for training in anaesthetising large carnivores (mainly hyaena and leopard) and discussion for further collaboration and training of the Malawian Veterinary Department.

For the first time ever, WVI took our corporate sponsors to the field. Henry Schein Animal Health (HSAH) have been supporting WVI for a number of years and as part of their VIP package we took two members of staff to the neutering and vaccination clinic in Zimbabwe. HSAH got their staff to apply for a position on the trip and two members of staff, Pamela Stewart and Millie Lockley-Boyd, were chosen.

Steve Philp has taken over leading this project from Steve Leonard and he was joined by a British vet based in Zimbabwe, Gemma Campling. Steve Leonard put forward Leonard Brothers Veterinary Centre's latest recruit, recent graduate Dave Beeston. The trio was completed by final year student Bethany Dixon who, with the rest of the Liverpool University Veterinary Zoological Society committee, raised over £2000 for WVI.

WVI's Executive Director, Olivia Walter, completed the team of seven who vaccinated over 1200 dogs in 5 days and neutered 40 bitches and 60 dogs in twelve community locations around Painted Dog Conservation's headquarters and rehabilitation centre.

The publicity we were able to gain from Olivia's first-hand experience together followed up by the #Vets4Vulture campaign meant that WVI finished 2017 on a high.

2018 is looking to be a quieter year which will give us breathing space to raise funds for a busy year in 2019. Thank you to all our supporters for enabling us to do our bit to save endangered species.

Sharon Miller

Chair of Trustees, 2017