

Executive Summary 2019

Miranda Stevenson, Chair of Trustees, summarises our achievements in 2019:

This has been a particularly significant year for Wildlife Vets International (WVI) as an organisation. We have taken time to reassess our strategic goals and the framework underpinning their realisation. As a result, the end of 2019 sees WVI established not just as a source of world-class veterinary expertise to the global conservation community but also as a sustainable organisation with real strategic integrity and meaningfully defined goals and objectives.

Our vision is a world where wildlife survives and flourishes, and our mission is to support vets and conservationists in using veterinary science to protect endangered species. We do this by equipping those on the conservation frontline with the necessary veterinary science and skills to have a real impact on the species with which they are working. And we continue to do all we can to raise awareness of the need to put world-class veterinary science right at the heart of conservation.

This year we significantly expanded our work with sea turtles, partnering with rescue centres in both Spain and Greece which receive sick and injured animals who are frequently also the victims of plastic pollution. We continued to work with 'avian A&E' vets and volunteers in India during the annual kite-flying festival, as well as maintaining our long-standing support of tiger and leopard rehabilitation and reintroduction in Russia. Once again, we were able to send a team to Zimbabwe to support the conservation of painted wolves. The summer also saw the official launch of the Wild Tiger Health Centre – the first online resource of its kind.

In January, our highly experienced team of avian surgeon Stefan Harsch, vet Ashley Clayton and vet nurse Matthew Rendle were joined by vet nurse Rhian Jones for a return visit to the Jivdaya Charitable Trust in India. There they were once again able to help with the hundreds of injured birds arriving during each day of the annual kite-flying festival, when horrific damage can be done by glass-coated kite strings. The casualties typically include some endangered birds of prey. The training that the team are able to give to local staff and volunteers means that these species will benefit from the improved protocols and techniques, as do the more common birds that are seen on a day-to-day basis. The team was able to build on their previous research into the importance of ventilating birds during anaesthesia, as well as looking into lead poisoning and some previously unknown clinical specifics of black kites.

Sea turtles have been a particular focus of our work in 2019, with a WVI team visiting the rescue centre of ARCHELON – the Sea Turtle Protection Society of Greece - in both February and August. Six out of seven of the world's sea turtle species are endangered and the seventh is likely to be exposed to the same threats, although data is insufficient to confirm numbers. Marine vet Tania Monreal and vet nurse and reptile specialist Matthew Rendle were able to

advise the staff at ARCHELON on a range of areas from wound healing and pain relief, to diet, water temperature and exposure to UV light. They were also able to help with several clinical cases, and demonstrate useful techniques including calculating heart rate, turtle physiotherapy and how to get the most information from X-rays. Thanks to the work of the WVI team, the welfare and treatment of turtles has improved considerably, with the result that recovery tends to be faster. That means turtles are released more quickly, freeing up capacity for more casualties.

Tania is also funded to make monthly visits to Spain's CRAM Foundation for the Rehabilitation and Conservation of Marine Mammals, where she is similarly able to give clinical assistance and advice regarding the turtles in their care.

Turtles and the threats posed to them by plastic pollution were the focus of our annual flagship fundraising campaign through the UK's Big Give Christmas Challenge. We raised a record £15,000 this year, which will go directly to support our work with the turtle rescue centres in the coming months.

July saw two very important developments for our work with large carnivores: The publication of the comprehensive Disease Risk Analysis for the planned reintroduction of Amur leopards in the Russian Far East, and – just in time for Global Tiger Day at the end of the month – the unveiling of the online Wild Tiger Health Centre.

Both are ground-breaking. The Disease Risk Analysis (DRA) is the first of its kind for a large carnivore reintroduction, while the Wild Tiger Health Centre website is the first online resource of its kind for any species. The DRA, which has been published in Russian in order to make it easy for local conservationists to use, represents years of research by Dr John Lewis and Dr Alex Tomlinson and brings the historic reintroduction of a new population of Amur leopards one step closer. The Wild Tiger Health Centre has been designed by Dr Lewis as an accessible one-stop-shop for all those involved in tiger conservation around the globe, and brings together expertise from those working in all tiger range states.

In September, a WVI team headed by Dr Jane Hopper returned to Zimbabwe to help once again with the neutering and vaccination clinics for domestic dogs which are run by our partner Painted Dog Conservation. Protecting domestic dogs against Canine Distemper Virus (CDV) and Rabies helps stop the spread of disease to the painted wolves, and has benefits for human health too. This year our team were also able to assist with the preparation of a pack of painted wolves who were being relocated from PDC's rehabilitation centre to a local game reserve.

In November, Dr John Lewis travelled to the Russian Far East, where he not only was able to continue his invaluable support to the Primorsky Tiger and Leopard Rehabilitation Centre, but was also able to lecture at the Primorsky State Agricultural Academy. This was an opportunity to inform a wider Russian audience of the critical need for veterinary support in tiger conservation

initiatives around the globe, and to promote the Wild Tiger Health Centre as a one-stop hub for information and resources.

Throughout the year, WVI has had a presence at various events which has helped considerably in raising our profile with the veterinary profession in particular. These have included Vet Festival and the BIAZA AGM and Conference in June, and the BVZS Conference and London Vet Show in November. Our stand at the London Vet Show in particular attracted considerable attention as we showcased some of the issues – and solutions - around plastic pollution and sea turtle conservation.

Back behind the scenes, our strategy review benefitted considerably from the timely appointment of Chris Washington-Sare as a Trustee. Chris is an expert in strategic planning, communications and fundraising, and has been very generous in sharing with us his considerable experience of working with other charitable organisations.

As we turned to implementation of our new strategic plan, it was clear that it was time to expand our administrative team. Our new Fundraising Manager, Angela Davies, began work in October and has brought a wealth of experience from project management, including in the spheres of regeneration and health. Angela has embraced her role with enthusiasm and her work is already proving very effective in complementing that of our Executive Director and Communications Manager.

None of this would have been possible without the unstinting support of our patrons and trustees, the generosity of those who fund our projects, the dedication of our inspirational partners on the ground, or indeed the commitment of our veterinary partners, without all of which WVI would simply not exist.

At the time of signing of these accounts, the charity had already been impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic and was experiencing a loss of projected income. The trustees have reassessed the organisation's ability to continue for at least 12 months from the date that the accounts were approved and have concluded that, while we have to make some cuts, no material uncertainties exist that cast significant doubt on the charity's ability to continue as a going concern.

Miranda Stevenson PhD OBE