

THE BARBARY MACAQUE

on the brink of extinction



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The fate of the only primate in North Africa – a species that is a symbol of Moroccan biodiversity and can help to protect vital Moroccan water resources

By Els van Lavieren

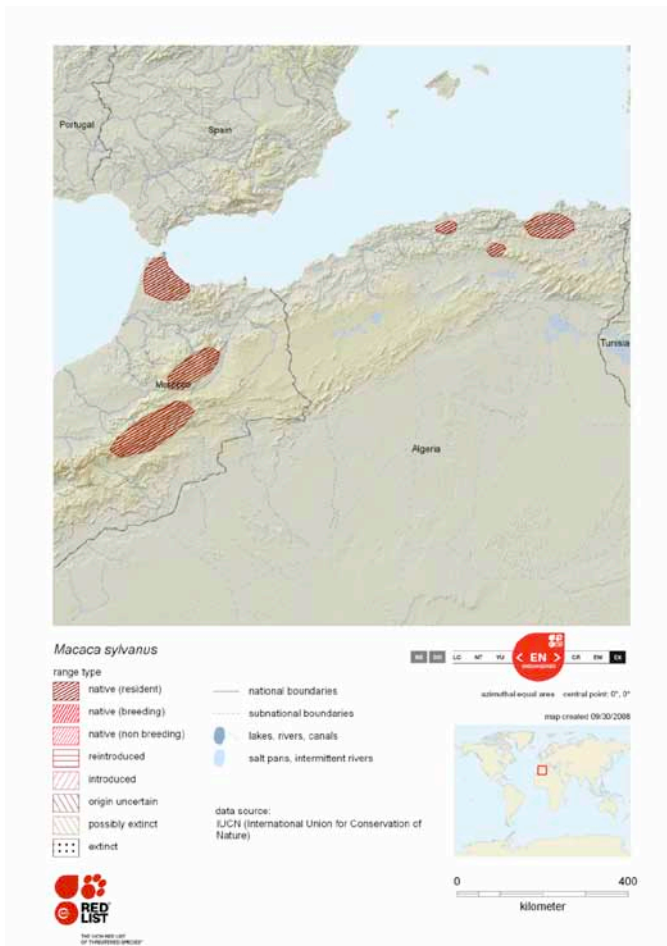


Figure 1: Distribution of the Barbary macaque in Morocco and Algeria

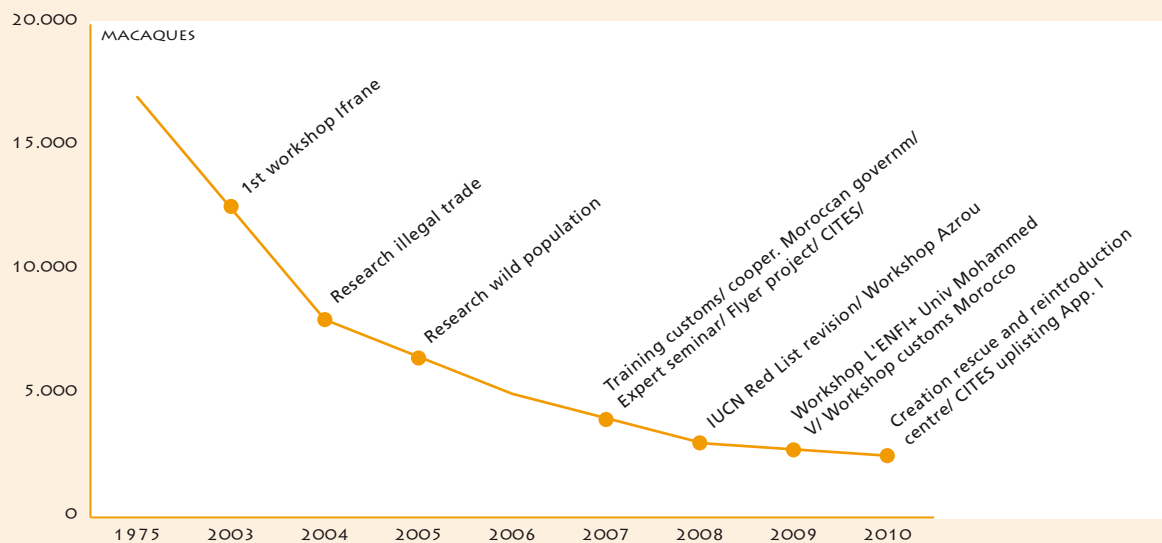
UNIQUE SPECIES

The Barbary macaque (*Macaca sylvanus*) is the only primate to be found north of the Sahara desert, the only primate that lives in Europe (Gibraltar) and the only species of the Genus "Macaca" that can be found outside of Asia. The Barbary macaque is an extremely adaptable animal that can live in very cold and very warm weather conditions. The Barbary macaque lives only in Morocco (Rif-, Middle Atlas- and High Atlas mountains), Algeria (Tellian Atlas mountains) and Gibraltar (introduced semi-wild population).

STATUS

The Barbary macaque used to be widespread throughout North Africa. Now the wild populations are restricted to small patches of forest in both Morocco and Algeria. The largest population of the Barbary macaque can be found in the unique and beautiful cedar forest area of Parc National d'Ifrane in Morocco, but this population, like the other populations is declining rapidly (Figure 2). The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species uplisted the Barbary macaque from "Vulnerable" to "Endangered" in October 2008. The Barbary macaque is now classified in the same group as some of the subspecies of the orangutan and gorilla.

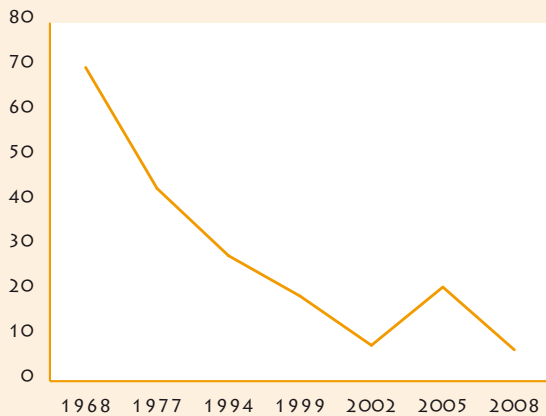
DECLINE OF NUMBERS OF BARBARY MACAQUES IN MOROCCO SINCE 1975



Note: 1975 (Taub, 1975); 2004 (Ross, 2004); 2006 (Camperio Ciani, pers. comm); 2008 (Camperio Ciani et al, not yet published)

Figure 2

AVERAGE DENSITY OF MACAQUES IN MIDDLE ATLAS (IND / KM²) SINCE 1968



Note: 1968 = (Deag, 1974, 1984); 1977 = (Taub, 1977); 1994, 1999, 2002 = (Camperio Ciani et al, 2005); 2005 = (Van Lavieren & Wich, In press, 2009); 2008 = (Camperio Ciani et al, not yet published). The increase in density in 2005 is caused by the fact that this study was conducted in high density areas with a smaller sample size than in the studies of 2002 and 2008 (van Lavieren & Wich, Oryx, In press)

Figure 3

CHANGE IN ATTITUDE

Until recently (2005) it was wrongly believed by the Moroccan authorities and the local human population that the Barbary macaque was common and even increasing in numbers in the cedar forests of Parc National d'Ifrane. Ongoing studies done by scientists on the status of the species show the contrary is true. Since western based NGO's started informing and collaborating with the Moroccan forestry department (Le Haut Commissariat aux Eaux et Forêts et la Lutte Contre la Desertification (HCEFLCD)), the authorities support the data published by the scientists.



Livestock activities in Parc National d'Ifrane

THREATS

The reasons for the rapid decline in the wild population can be divided in 2 categories:

- 1 Habitat degradation and destruction
- 2 Illegal live trade in Barbary macaque infants from Morocco to Europe, mainly for the pet industry

The destruction and degradation of the macaque's forest habitat is the most serious threat to the species. Severe habitat loss, fragmentation and degradation have been caused by domestic and industrial consumption of wood, use of fire, clearing for cultivation and overgrazing by sheep and goat herds (Taub 1977, Fa 1984, Camperio Ciani 1986, Menard and Vallet, 1993). Monopolising the natural water wells for the herds of goats causes the macaques and other wildlife to be deprived of drinkable water where it was previously accessible to them (Camperio Ciani et al. 2003).

The illegal trade in live infant macaques from Morocco to Europe is another significant threat to the wild Barbary macaque populations. It is estimated that 300 infants are taken annually from the wild from the Moroccan habitats (van Lavieren 2004, 2008). AAP, sanctuary for exotic animals in the Netherlands is the only sanctuary left in Europe that takes in this species. Figure 4 shows the amount of requests for shelter at AAP for Barbary macaques since 2001. Note that these are data coming from one sanctuary in Europe only.

Infant Barbary macaques are offered openly and covertly for sale on markets all over Morocco, and prices of up to 200 Euro per animal have been recorded (van Lavieren 2004, 2008). People can easily smuggle the monkeys across the border to Spain (by ferry), especially in the summer months, when most macaques are sold to tourists and Moroccans living in Europe, as the customs have to deal with a large amount of cars passing through. Taking 300 infants from such a small population annually is calculated to be 50% too many to maintain a healthy population (van Lavieren, 2008).



Macaque for sale Place de Fes, Tanger

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

To make a comparison: there are less Barbary macaques in the wild than Sumatran orangutans (7.500, WWF, 2009) and Western and Eastern Lowland Gorillas (resp. 100.000 and 17.000, WWF, 2009). The wild populations of the Barbary macaque will decline further if no action is taken and the species will go extinct in 10 to 15 years.

There is not much time left, but not too late yet if the recommended measures are taken now. Macaques in general are a strong species. Barbary macaques live in regions where the temperature ranges from 40 degrees Celsius in the summer to minus 10 degrees Celsius in the winter. In a healthy forest, with sufficient water and food, and no poaching, the populations could be thriving.

NUMBER OF REQUESTS FOR SHELTER FOR BARBARY MACAQUES ANNUALLY AT AAP (2001-2008)

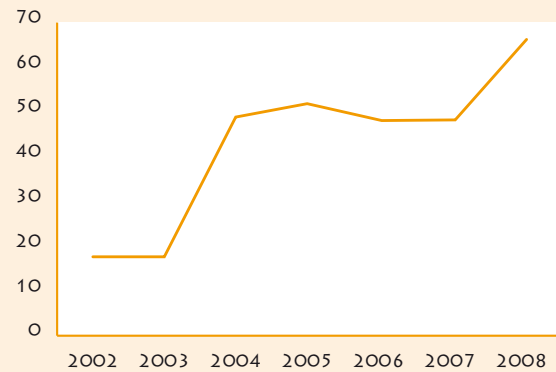


Figure 4

WHY IS THIS SPECIES IMPORTANT?

Saving the Barbary macaque is not just about saving a beautiful and unique species. Saving the Barbary macaque and its habitat means saving the forests of the Middle Atlas mountains, which provides 40% of the national fresh water supply of Morocco. The Middle Atlas is often referred to as “the castle of water”. Apart from water, the forest provides for wood, lichens, grazing lands, charcoal, and an extremely beautiful rich ecosystem that is unique in the world. The Barbary macaque is an indicator of a healthy forest, and a symbol of Morocco’s wide range of biodiversity. Its diverse habitats contain many rare, endemic and endangered animal and plant species, the best known being the Barbary macaque. The disappearance of the Barbary macaque and its habitat would mean the disappearance of a pristine wild area and one of the most unique primate species of the world.

Moreover, the Barbary macaque plays a very important role in maintaining a healthy forest, by dispersing seeds, resulting in regeneration of the trees, and also controlling insects.

The survival of the Barbary macaque and the protection of its habitat will ensure the quality of life of many people living in and close to the area. Economic benefits derived from especially Parc National d’Ifrane include tourism, subsistence wood, agriculture, and water resources.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE AND BY WHO?

Figure 5 shows an overview of the actions that have already been taken by International and Moroccan NGO's, in cooperation with HCEFLCD and Institut Scientifique in Rabat. Research has been done on the status of the wild population over the last years. Also in 2004 the first scientific data were collected and published on the illegal trade in the species resulting in the fact that many NGO's have become active. These are AAP, Sanctuary for exotic animals, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), The Species Survival Network (SSN), MPC (Moroccan Primate Conservation Foundation), GEA and Fomanef.

■ In 2007, AAP and IUCN organized a seminar on the species, with participants from different backgrounds. Also a Moroccan delegation of HCEFLCD was present. This team of experts concluded that action has to be taken now. Some have already taken place, some are ongoing or planned.

■ A large scale education programme was implemented in the ports of Algeiras and Tanger in the summer of 2007, in which potential buyers were informed not to buy a macaque during their stay. The Dutch government funded this programme and it was executed by AAP and IUCN. The same programme will take place in 2009 through Fomanef. The assessment of the status of the Barbary macaque on the IUCN Red List has resulted in an alteration from Vulnerable to Endangered.

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Macaques openly for sale on Jma Fnaa, Marrakech

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Macaques openly for sale on Jma Fnaa, Marrakech

■ AAP has been working on creating a platform in European countries for better implementation and control of CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species) regulations and national trade laws.

■ In 2007 the Spanish custom officers were trained on CITES and Barbary macaque trade issues, resulting immediately in an increase in numbers of confiscated macaques at the Moroccan-Spanish border. AAP funded and implemented this training. The same training will take place with the Moroccan customs in 2009 through SSN.

■ Trainings and workshops, coordinated by WWF, have taken place for local NGO's and National Park staff in Azrou, for I'ENFI students and for students of the Mohammed V University in Rabat. Also preparation work has been done and is ongoing for the uplisting of the Barbary macaque from Appendix II to Appendix I within CITES, which could result in better regulation of the trade.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE?

Despite all the actions already taken, the species is still declining in numbers. If the decline is not halted in the near future, it will be too late. The following actions are needed:

Management plan Parc National d'Ifrane – at this moment, a management plan is being developed for Parc National d'Ifrane including a plan for zonation of grazing lands, less human activities in the region, strict controlled logging, and effective replanting of cedar and oak trees.

Education of local people – local communities should be educated on the fact that saving the forests and its inhabitants is in their own interest. However, not only on local level people should be educated, also on national level it is important to change the attitude towards preserving wildlife and their environment. (use as example Cascades d'Ouzoud).

Strict law enforcement on trade – It is expected that if the open trade of live infant Barbary macaques is put to a halt, that the trade will decrease up to 60%. High penalties should be implemented.

Education of potential buyers – in Europe the potential buyers should be informed about the illegality and the risks of buying a pet Barbary macaques during their stay in Morocco.

Rescue and rehabilitation center – Customs and HCEFLCD can only do their work if they have a place to take the confiscated macaques to.

Strict control at borders – At the moment Morocco serves as a passage from West/ North Africa to Europe when it comes to trade in wildlife (products) (Pers. comm. Mme Mesbah, HCEFLCD).



Educational flyer for potential buyers

ACTIONS TAKEN BY DIFFERENT ORGANISATIONS SINCE 2004

	AAP	IUCN NL	Institut Scientifique	HCEFLCD	WWF NL/ MedPo	SSN	GEA Onlus	Fomanef	AESVT	MPC/ E. van Lavieren
1st workshop Barbary macaque conservation Ifrane					Funder & exec.		Exec.			
Research illegal trade 2004	Funder		Collab.							Researcher for AAP
Research wild population last 10 years			Collab.				Research-ers			
Research wild population 2005	Funder									Researcher for AAP
Lobby for law implementation Europe 2005-now	Funder and exec.									
Training customs Spain 2007	Funder and exec.									Exec. for AAP
Establishm. cooperation with Moroccan authorities 2006/2007		Funder								Exec. for IUCN
Expert seminar Amsterdam 2007	Funder and exec.	Funder and exec.	Particip.	Particip.			Particip.			Exec. for IUCN
Flyer project Spain & Morocco 2007/ 2009	Funder (2007)	Funder (2007)	Cooper. (2007)	Cooper. (2007)				Exec. (2009)		Exec. for AAP (2007)
CITES CoP 14 Lobby 2007	Funder and exec.	Funding & exec.		Particip.			Collab.			Particip.
IUCN Red List status change (Endangered) 2008		Collab.	Particip.				Particip.			Exec.
Workshop Azrou NGO's & National Park staff 2008			Particip.	Particip.	Funder & exec.		Exec.		Particip.	Particip.
Workshop I'ENFI and University Mohammed V 2009			Particip.	Particip.	Funder & exec.		Exec.		Particip.	Particip.
Workshop Moroccan Douane & NGO's 2009	Funder				Funder & exec	Exec.				Trainer
Creation Rescue and reintroduction center 2009	Funder feasibility study							Exec.		Exec.
CITES CoP 15 Uplisting Appendix I 2010				Exec.		Exec.				Prep.

EXEC. = EXECUTER / COLLAB. = COLLABORATOR / PARTICIP. = PARTICIPANT/ PREP. = PREPARATION

Figure 5



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WWF NL/ MedPo = World Wildlife Fund the Netherlands and Mediterranean Programme
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HCEFLCD = Haut Commissariat aux Eaux et Forêts et à la Lutte Contre la Désertification
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SSN = Species Survival Network
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Gea Onlus = Associazione Internazionale per lo Studio e la Conservazione degli Ecosistemi
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Fomanef = Fondation Marocaine des Néerlandophones & Flamands, Mohammedia, Morocco
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AESVT = L'Association des Enseignants des Sciences de la Vie et de la Terre



MPC = Moroccan Primate Conservation Foundation
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