

The rescue of the Gyumri Zoo lions in Armenia

Wednesday 17 February, 2016

Last week, the Foundation for the Preservation of Wildlife and Cultural Assets (FPWC) in collaboration with the Worldwide Veterinary Service (WVS) have organised the rescue of the Gyumri Zoo lioness Mery and her cubs Zita and Gita to the Caucasus Wildlife Refuge, a privately protected area managed by the FPWC.

Named "The World's Saddest Zoo" by the Daily Mail, these beautiful animals were living in unbearable conditions, cramped in small dirty cages, displaying all the signs of creatures slowly being driven mad by their unnatural existence. These animals were starving, barely surviving only on scraps fed to them through bars by kind volunteers.

WVS quickly identified that swift action was required and despite the difficult weather conditions and snow, the transfer of the last inhabitants of Gyumri Zoo was managed seamlessly.

The lions are in a good physical and mental state after the adventurous experience. They are staying in heated cages until the quarantine station has been built. They will then remain there until they are ready to be moved to an appropriate facility outside of Armenia to live out the rest of their lives.

Gyumri Zoo lions are now part of a larger conservation picture. According to the memorandum signed between WVS and FPWC on February 2, 2016, the parties will work together towards in-situ conservation, animal rehabilitation and rescue initiatives in Armenia.

The construction of this quarantine station for animals in the Caucasus Wildlife Refuge, where the lions will be kept for vet examination and medicinal treatment, will mark yet another point of successful collaboration between FPWC and WVS. The quarantine station will also be the foundation stone of the Wildlife Rescue Centre, an even larger sustainable project the partners are currently designating.

It's only because of the huge tide of support that WVS have received that this has been possible. A particular thank you to International Animal Rescue who have been a phenomenal support to WVS in this. It may only be the first step on a much bigger journey for Mery, Gita and Zita but getting them out of the 'World's Saddest Zoo' asap was imperative and a brilliant achievement by all the teams concerned.

For further information, please visit:

<http://www.wvs.org.uk/what-we-do/latest-news/bears-lions-gyumri-zoo-armenia/>

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www.wvs.org.uk

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