

DR HORMOZ ASADI (1948-2008)



HORMOZ ASADI described himself as 'just a labourer for wildlife', while his colleagues described him as a 'trail-blazer', a 'great and honourable person' and a 'larger-than-life character'. He was a conservation biologist who strived passionately not for personal gain or career success, but for the animals he studied and fought to protect. He cared little for personal reward or achievement, but only for the results of his work, in animal protection and in the progress of his students. In his fight for wildlife conservation he worked with everybody, from top academics and high level politicians, to the wildlife rangers in the field and the people in local communities whose daily lives brought them into contact with wild animals. It was this recognition of the importance of the human element in conservation that let him touch so many people, and drove the success of his initiatives.

Hormoz studied wildlife conservation and environmental studies at the College of the Environment, Karaj, Iran, before continuing to a BSc and MSc in wildlife biology and environmental studies at Minnesota State University at Mankato, USA. His primary study and conservation focus became big cats, and he spend some years in India in the early 1990s working with WWF, Traffic International and the Indian Government on Indian tiger conservation.

Hormoz completed his PhD at the Johannes Gutenberg University, Mainz, Germany in 1996, for which he studied the distribution and conservation status of the grey wolf in Bosnia.

He returned to Iran in 1997, where he became a lecturer in wildlife ecology and management at The Azad Islamic University in Tehran, worked tirelessly on the conservation biology of the Asiatic cheetah in Iran, and became a member of the IUCN cat specialist group. More recently he also took up the challenge of Caspian seal conservation. In 2000 he became aware of the large numbers of seals dying during the distemper epidemic in 2000. While investigating that mortality, he became aware of the many seals killed during fisheries along the Iranian coast. Since then he has instigated a highly successful programme with local fishermen, which has already saved the lives of many seals. He has also, with his colleagues in the Dept of fisheries and the Caspian Environment programme, begun to set up a unique Seal Centre in Guilan province. This Centre will bear his name in his memory.

His untimely death came in a traffic accident as he drove back from conservation work in Isfahan Province on behalf of the Environment Department of the Iranian Government. As his colleague in the seal project, Leili Shamimi, has said, he had much noble and unfinished work still in his life.

His enthusiasm, dedication, energy and sheer love of wild animals inspired all who knew him, and will long outlive him. Anyone who spent anytime with him would come away energised with ideas for new conservation initiatives or research projects, an imagination fired by stories of big cats, or expeditions in to the mountains and deserts of Iran, and a strong perspective of what really matters in conservation. His colleagues and students will find a way to do what he most wanted – to continue the fight for wildlife conservation. He will be missed, but not forgotten. May he rest in peace.

Hormoz Asadi, born February 18th, 1948, died January 9th, 2008, is survived by his daughter, Lobat, and his wife, Maheen.

