

All About Animals

We came to Bhutan in 1997. We are devoted Buddhists and animal lovers, and started to rescue animals from the streets of Zhemgang 18 years ago.

We could not remain inactive with so much suffering around us. The work we do is all about helping those animals in most need: treating them and for those who have no home, giving a temporary, safe and loving place to live.

We have currently 201 dogs, 13 cats and 24 monkeys; all these animals were in such physical conditions that none would have survived outside. Most of "our" animals have become permanent residents: for some it is inevitable as they are either paralyzed, or without limbs, or with cancer and they need permanent care.

For those animals that have improved and could be placed in private homes, we have found it very difficult to have interest in adoptions. In 18 years, we have been able to give for adoption only 12 dogs and 3 cats.

Over the years, we have been blessed with the compassionate and active support of many Bhutanese friends, to which we owe deep gratitude. Their support has been essential in helping us deal with the daily suffering of animals we encounter.

We also receive vegetable and food donations from the Subji Bazar vendors, the Taj Tashi hotel, businesses as Norphel Tshongkhong and many more individuals. Our supporters also helped us establish the civil society organization Bhutan Animal rescue and Care last year. This support together with the evident happiness of the rescued animals surrounding us, gives us the energy to continue.

Over the past 18 years a lot has changed in Bhutan and new laws have posed new requirements. We made sincere efforts to formalize our already existing animal hospital when new laws were passed.

When the Ministry of Health introduced a new law on medical practice at the end of 2007 an exam to informal practitioners to allow them to become 'legally competent' was offered. But we could not avail of this opportunity, as it did not include assessment for veterinary care.

We are self-funded. We do not receive any government funding. Over the years, we have received donations of medicines and supplies by friends and visiting doctors.

It is an established fact that "without support of government and other funding bodies, animal welfare groups are often faced with no other option than to utilize expired medications" and "the shelf life of most drugs is extremely conservative, enabling them to still be efficacious after their expire date" (Source: The Australian charity Vets Beyond Borders).

We have been blessed by high-level approval, which allowed us to continue our welfare mission. We fully understand that certain procedural, administrative and legal issues need to be studied and resolved, especially as Bhutan modernizes and legislation is put in place.

Our lives evolve around the care for animals and we have documented many of the routine and complex veterinary treatments and surgeries, which we have performed over the years and hope that this testimony, as well as the positive feedback we receive on our treatments from so many animal lovers and pet owners, can help find a solution.

All our monkeys have been rescued from persons who captured or rescued them as babies. It is illegal in Bhutan to capture wildlife.

Regarding the rescued monkeys at our rescue centre, Kuensel refers to correspondence from April/May 2013 but omits in its article references to our letter of May 2nd, 2013, to the DoFPS. In this letter we explained that we act out of deep compassion and empathy for the animals.

All our monkeys have been rescued from persons who captured or rescued them as babies. It is illegal in Bhutan to capture wildlife. International documented studies prove that monkeys cannot be reintegrated in the wild and survive, without a sound and long-term rehabilitation program. Some of the monkeys have terrible wounds. Some of their captors removed all of the monkey's teeth or they filed their teeth.

This is so that they could not bite their captor. One of the monkeys is permanently handicapped because people were enjoying throwing stones at him while kept for a long time chained to a tree. When we rescued these monkeys, they were all traumatized by the loss of their mother and by the ill treatments and terrible physical abuse from human beings.

In such a condition, the animal needs to first be rehabilitated, then it has to be re-socialized with other monkeys so they know how to behave in a group and survive in the wild. We developed a programme

for this and we constructed with our own personal finances new re-habilitation and group-formation facilities at our site. With the happiness of those very clever and social animals in heart and mind, why would it not be possible to join efforts to give them an even better life?

In our letter to DoFPS mentioned above, we proposed 6 steps for developing a permanent programme for present and future wildlife in need, especially macaques, through joining forces and collaboration. We are convinced that collaboration is the best way forward. Would "Officialdom with volunteerism" not be the way forward? We would very much welcome official support, guidance and solution to various issues raised.

There were some mishaps with workers not reconnecting the water pipe during construction of our animal rescue facilities back in 2012, for which we apologize again for inconvenience to our neighbors. To inform our neighbors of our activities, we initiated in August 2013 a community meeting where we clarified our work and the precautions we take to secure the animals.

We also support the

community with for example: donation to the community lakhang for the wellbeing of all sentient beings, employment and buying local products. We contributed hardware and our personal time for the repair of the water supply to solve the issue of water scarcity. We have done this with the help, support and knowledge of the Yusipang Tshogpa.

For those who are interested in our work, please visit us at our location at Yusipang. You can also look at our website, which was launched July 16, 2014, on the Iron Monkey and Buddha of Compassion Day (www.pilou-animals.org).

We realize our inadequacies on our humble journey on the path of the Buddha. Our intention, devotion and commitment are sincere. We take this opportunity to thank all of our many friends and supporters who continue to make our work possible out of their own personal interest, time, knowledge, donations in cash and in kind.

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