

## **Volunteer position ‘Born to be Wild’ project – primate rehabilitation assistant**

### **Background**

The IUCN classified the Barbary macaque (*Macaca sylvanus*) as an endangered species in 2008. It is the only surviving primate in Africa north of the Saharan desert. Whilst being a former inhabitant of all Europe and northern Africa, this species is now limited to isolated areas in Algeria and Morocco. Population estimates have shown an overall decline of this species in the last 30 to 40 years. As a result, the population of Barbary macaques in areas where the species was historically abundant, is currently significantly reduced, resulting in fragmented populations and areas where the species has completely disappeared.

In 2017 AAP (Animal Advocacy and Protection) initiated the Born to be Wild project in Morocco. This project follows a holistic approach by addressing the different threats to Barbary macaques (*Macaca sylvanus*), aiming to ensure sustainable conservation of this species and its habitats within Morocco. The project's actions are in line with the existing Conservation Action Plan and focus on the following areas: 1) Control of poaching and illegal trade, 2) Protection of the Barbary macaque habitats and facilitate its restoration, 3) Decrease of human pressure on the habitat by providing sustainable alternatives. For this project AAP works closely together with the Moroccan Department of Waters and Forest (DEF) and other stakeholders to protect the Barbary macaque and its habitats. For more information see also: <https://en.aap.eu/born-to-be-wild/>.

Since the start of the project, there have been many positive results. The decline of the Barbary macaque population in Ifrane National Park has brought to a stop, and recent surveys have shown there is actually an increase in population size. Another positive result is that through training and support, local departments have been given the tools and knowledge to conduct law enforcement with respect to illegal trade. As a result, more than 40 Barbary macaques have been confiscated in the last few years. Enabling to deal with an increase in confiscated animals, one of the aims of the Born to be Wild project has been to develop a Confiscated Animals Strategy. One aspect of this strategy focusses on finding the most suitable option to deal with the confiscated Barbary macaques.

In 2019 the DEF, AAP and other partners started to investigate the option to set up a conservation translocation program for the Barbary macaque. Now, almost 3 years later, we are very happy that this option is very close to becoming reality. The DEF has identified Tazekka NP as a suitable area for such a release. Tazekka NP, situated in the north-east of the Middle Atlas, used to be populated by Barbary macaques until at least the 1930's. Forest degradation was one of the main reasons why the Barbary macaque completely disappeared from this area. Current management of the park endeavours to conserve and restore natural ecosystem functions within the park, and with success. A comprehensive habitat survey in 2019 showed that the current habitat is very well suited for the Barbary macaque with a carrying capacity which could potentially support more than 40 groups.

Within the last 12 months, much work has been done to build a rehabilitation facility in the middle of Tazekka NP. Currently the facility is almost finished and consists of twelve rehabilitation units and a 1-hectare large pre-release enclosure. If all goes well the animals will move to their new facility in May this year.

To support the work in Morocco, AAP is looking for volunteers who can help out with the rehabilitation of the Barbary macaques in Tazekka.

### **Volunteer tasks**

Currently there are about 35 Barbary macaques which have potential to be released in Tazekka NP. Many of these animals are kept in small groups, and individuals have varying degrees of social experience. The aim of the rehabilitation process is to create relatively stable groups of Barbary macaques which have the potential to be released. This will be conducted according to a structured approach which will be developed by a rehabilitation consultant from AAP. As a volunteer your main task will be to support the local staff to conduct integrations and behavioural observations. You will monitor the individual animals, as well as the groups as a whole. The main focus of your observations will be on social relationships, group stability and other behavioural indicators which determine the potential suitability of the animals for release. The daily care is not the primary aim of your work, but where needed you will be assisting the local staff with feeding and providing environmental enrichment. Every day you provide a short report of your observations and send this to the rehabilitation supervisor and the AAP consultant.

### **Your stay**

During your stay you will be housed in a small village called Bab Boudir. This village is ca. 8 km from the rehabilitation facilities in Tazekka NP. Every morning a staff member from the local Forestry department will take you to the rehabilitation site and bring you back at the end of the day. You will stay in one of the Portacabins which is available for student and volunteer housing for this project. The cabins are basically furnished and have each a shower and toilet. Each cabin can house up to two people. Besides that, there is a separate cabin with a communal kitchen and living space. Once or twice a week you will be taken to the nearest town (Taza) for food shopping and anything else you need.

Please be aware that the circumstance you will be working and living in are relatively basic. The rehabilitation enclosures are in a remote area of the park, and electricity is limited (solar). There is however a small office and kitchen which you can make use of during the day. Most local staff only speak Arabic, and some speak French. For your work you will receive all necessary support from the AAP consultant who is in charge of the rehabilitation process. This will be partly in person, and partly on a distance by phone and email. When the AAP consultant is not present in Tazekka, you will also be supported by the local rehabilitation supervisor, who also speaks basic English.

### **Your profile**

For this role we look for candidates with the following profile:

- You have extensive experience working with primates in captivity, preferably with macaques
- You have a good understanding of primate behaviour and their needs
- You are capable and happy to work on your own with minimum supervision
- You do not mind living and working under basic conditions in a different culture
- You are physically fit and able to work in a hot climate
- You speak English, French is desirable but not necessary
- You are available for a period of at least 3 weeks, but our preference goes out to candidates who are available for a longer period of time

We provide:

- Free housing as described
- Daily transport to and from the rehabilitation site
- A contribution to your flight costs, depending on the time you stay
- Substantive and practical support during your stay
- A great opportunity to gain experience working for a primate conservation translocation project

We are currently looking for candidates who are available in the period from the 15<sup>th</sup> of May until the end of August 2022.

When you are interested, please write an email with your motivation and CV and send this to Jasper Iepema: [jasper.iepema@AAP.nl](mailto:jasper.iepema@AAP.nl).