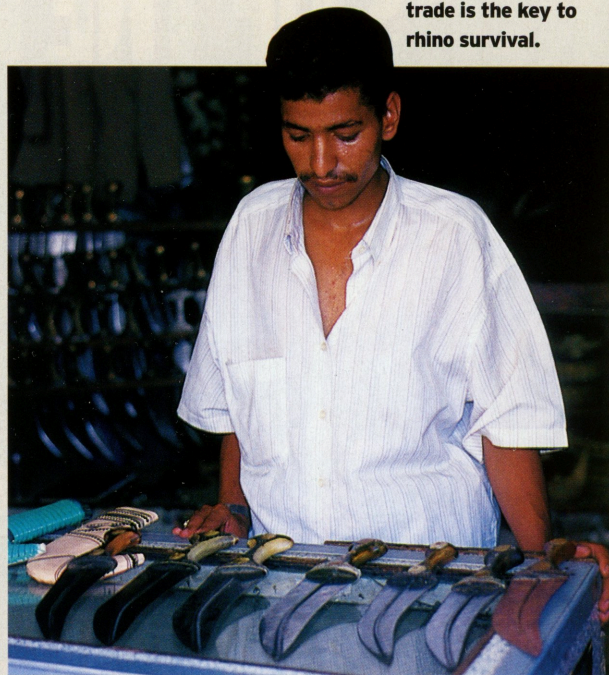


On a knife edge.  
Yemen's dagger  
trade is the key to  
rhino survival.



E. B. Martin

# Camels migrating wildly

**CHINA** Call for sanctuary to be enlarged after expedition shows rare desert camels move out of protected area.

The Lop Nur Nature Sanctuary in China's Gashun Gobi desert, created last March to preserve 550 or so wild Bactrian camels from the cooking pots of Xinjiang's impoverished gold miners, is already one of the world's biggest nature reserves. But John Hare, the campaigner who convinced the Chinese government of the need to protect the 107,353km<sup>2</sup> area (see *BBC Wildlife*, March 1996), now has evidence that it needs to be even bigger. Next month, he returns to China to plead for its expansion.

"We knew some camels migrate southwards from the sanctuary towards the Arjin Shan Mountains that form the northern escarpment of Tibet," says Hare. "They come in search of water and vegetation when the mountain snows start to melt, and to escape the desert's summer heat,

which can reach 64°C. But what we had not realised was where they went or the numbers involved."

Exploring the foothills of the Arjin Shan Mountains this summer, his expedition discovered that as many as a third of the sanctuary's 550 resident camels had headed down there for the snow-melt. And the camels had company: the valleys were also honeypots for other endangered mammals including blue sheep, argali sheep and Tibetan asses.

Hare therefore believes the sanctuary's boundary should be moved further south, perhaps by 100km, to take in the entire area used by the camels. "It's uninhabited and already falls within the Annanba Protected Area, and so I think the chances are pretty good," he says. "And, so far, officials in the State Environmental

Protection Administration have given me nothing but support."

There is another item on Hare's wish-list: Mongolia has a separate population of 350 wild Bactrian camels, also protected in a sanctuary. But there is nothing to stop the camels from wandering over the unfenced border into a populated area of China, where they are often shot and eaten. "There is no ready-made solution, but a conference will now be held involving Chinese, Russian and Mongolians to try to solve the problem," he says. **OLIVER TICKELL**

Wild Camel Protection Foundation: [www.users.globalnet.co.uk/~miserden](http://www.users.globalnet.co.uk/~miserden)

**Campaigner trail.**  
**John Hare and friends**  
**crossing the Desert of Lop.**



## Taken to the hilt

**YEMEN** Demand for rhino horn greater than ever.

A survey in June of the dagger-handle industry in Yemen – one of the main threats to Africa's rhinos – found 100 craftsmen in 59 workshops making and repairing the rhino-horn handles, but only one craftsman was working with new horn.

The survey carried out for the Friends of Howletts & Port Lympne and Global Communications for Conservation reports that the new horn may have come from rhinos poached two years ago in the Democratic Republic of Congo's Garamba National Park.

Esmond Bradley Martin and Lucy Vigne say that the traders are desperate for more horn. One told them, "If you have any quantity, we will buy it." The price of new horn in Sanaa, Yemen's capital, is now £900 a kilogram, 20 per cent more than two years ago – an increase, say Martin and Vigne, that is worrying for rhino conservation. So, also, is the £390 a kilogram that the craftsmen get from the Chinese and Koreans for

leftover chips and powder.

Another alarming trend is that there are now more Yemeni men wearing daggers – traditional badges of masculinity. This is mainly because, before unification of North and South Yemen in 1990, the government of the Marxist south had banned the practice. Now it's legal, and it's coming back, especially to rural areas.

In an interview with the Yemeni Prime Minister, Dr Abdul Karim al-Iryani, Vigne and Martin were told that he had ordered inspections in Sanaa's main souk, where the dagger industry is centred. Though the use of new horn has been illegal in Yemen since 1992, there are effectively no penalties for it. Dr al-Iryani said he would call for penalties and would work to have the whole rhino-horn trade stopped.

But, say Vigne and Martin, he needs help. In 1997, when Yemen joined CITES – the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species – Yemeni officials were promised international finance and law-enforcement training. But so far, very little such help has materialised.

EBM/LV