

Conservationists are not too good at promoting their successes. It's all too easy to get rather overwhelmed with so many species sliding towards extinction and so much wildlife habitat being destroyed. As Mark Rose comments in the Foreword to my new book, *BACK FROM THE BRINK*: "The cumulative effect of all that doom-laden stuff is that we switch off, telling ourselves that we're all going to hell in a handcart whatever we do".

But we are not! It was to show that some of these often seemingly terminal declines can be halted – and the animals concerned put back on the road to recovery – that I wrote it. It's the dedication of organizations such as FFI and its people, the commitment of Governments and Government Agencies, the acceptance and involvement of local communities – and, of course, the necessary resources – that delivers the goods. Sometimes it will take years, decades and more. There will be setbacks and mistakes along the way. But it rarely fails. It's a message that deserves promoting more widely and vigorously than it often is.

Some much depleted animals are recovering naturally; the Humpback Whale, for instance, is approaching its pre-whaling population. Almost all, though, have required substantial help. FFI was at the forefront of the enormous, and eventually successful, efforts to rehabilitate both the Arabian Oryx and the Mountain Gorilla. It is playing a key role in getting the Iberian Lynx – the rarest of the world's cats, a surprise to most people – re-established across its Portuguese hunting grounds.

How such successes have been achieved deserves celebrating.

- The incredible detective work to unravel the complex life cycle of the Large Blue butterfly before it could be re-introduced in England.
- The vital importance of captive breeding and egg manipulation to bolster the Mauritius Kestrel when just four birds survived on the very island where the demise of the Dodo still casts a depressing shadow.
- The need to support local communities to accept that animals such as the Mountain Gorilla and Siberian Tiger should be conserved not exploited.
- The vital role of protection for re-introduced and recovering Black Rhino and Arabian Oryx.
- And the sheer determination and tenacity, the single-mindedness to succeed to bolster the breeding success of a species such as Zino's Petrel on its precipitous mountain slopes.

There's little time for pessimism. There's too much to be done. And *BACK FROM THE BRINK* is intended to show that it will succeed.

Malcolm Smith