

BIODIVERSITY

OUR CHALLENGE

Factors such as population growth, high consumption, pollution, energy production, transportation and water use, all have an impact upon the fragile ecosystems of Abu Dhabi.

OUR POSITION

We assess the health of Abu Dhabi habitats and take appropriate conservation and mitigation measures to conserve biodiversity. We do this through:

- 1) Conducting research and long-term monitoring of biodiversity status and trends.
- 2) Developing conservation management plans to sustain healthy populations of flora and fauna, including the development of a regulatory framework to protect habitats and at-risk species.
- 3) Creation and management of protected areas.
- 4) Developing species-specific plans for important/threatened species which have particular significance for the UAE: e.g. Arabian oryx, Dugongs, Falcons, Marine turtles, Houbara.
- 5) Understanding and managing the impact of invasive species.

KEY MESSAGES

Protected Areas

- 1) EAD manages several Terrestrial Protected areas and Marine Protected Areas which cover 10.5 % of Abu Dhabi's total land area and 13.2 % of Abu Dhabi's total marine area.

13 New Terrestrial Protected Areas

- 1) 13 new designated Terrestrial Protected Areas are awaiting declaration.

4 New Marine Protected Areas

- 1) 4 new designated Marine Protected Areas are awaiting declaration: (Bul Sayeef, Ras Ghanada, Mangrove National Park and Saadiyat Marine National Park).

Al Wathba Wetland Reserve

- 1) Al Wathba Wetland Reserve was established in 1998 as a protected area by HH Late Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan for protecting flamingos and wetland biodiversity.
- 2) Al Wathba Wetland Reserve is an eco reserve destination providing the community the opportunity to better understand and value biodiversity around the world.
- 3) The reserve provides food and shelter to numerous bird ranging from Little stint (*Calidris minuta*) weighing around 25-20g to large birds such as Greater flamingos (*Phoenicopterus roseus*) weighing around 2500-1500g.
- 4) The continued breeding of flamingos at Al Wathba Wetland Reserve is a result of EAD's effective management of this important wetland habitat.
- 5) EAD has invested in drones as part of its Al Wathba biodiversity monitoring programme.

Qasr Al Sarab

- 1) Qasr Al Sarab eco reserve destination broadens our reach and enables us to showcase a flagship species of our conservation efforts - the Arabian oryx.

Migratory Bird Monitoring Programme

- 1) EAD monitors migratory and resident bird populations to determine their numbers, trends and state of habitats within and outside of our protected areas.
- 2) Satellite telemetry is used to understand long distance migration of important species. 12 migratory waterbird and raptor species are currently being tracked.
- 3) Of the 460 bird species found in the emirate 75 % are migratory.

Marine Species Conservation Programmes

- 1) EAD monitors the populations and health of locally and globally threatened species including: Sharks, Dugongs, Turtle, Dolphin species. These flagship sentinel are indicators of the overall health of our Marine ecosystem.
- 2) At 2,800 individuals, Abu Dhabi has the second largest population of Dugongs in the world.
- 3) EAD has established and regulates Marine Protected Areas to preserve biodiversity hotspots including the breeding and foraging grounds of at risk species.
- 4) EAD regularly monitors the health of coral ecosystems which support a wide range of marine biodiversity in Abu Dhabi, evaluating the impact of changes in Marine Water Quality, acidification and climate change.

Managing Ex-situ Facilities and Programmes

- 1) Deleika is one of the facilities that EAD has established to conserve a healthy population of endangered species to ensure their sustainability.
- 2) A planned upgrade and expansion of the facility will include improved animal husbandry, veterinary and teaching facilities.
- 3) An active species management and breeding programme is creating genetically viable herds of several species including: Arabian oryx, Scimitar horned oryx, Arabian sand gazelle.

Hunting Law 2005/22 And Its By Laws

- 1) EAD is the regulator of hunting in Abu Dhabi pursuant of Law No. 22 of 2005. In doing so, EAD collaborates with stakeholders to help protect our cultural heritage and conserve our rich biodiversity.
- 2) EAD recognises hunting as a practice deeply engrained within the living heritage of the UAE. It respects the rights of those who wish to hunt, provided that they do so within the confines of local, national and international legislation, including those set forth by the International Union for Conservation Network (IUCN).
- 3) The hunting law has been created to ensure ethical practices and prevent the depletion of the Emirate's wildlife stock, ensuring their viable sustainability.

Arabian Oryx Reintroduction Programme

- 1) EAD chairs the Coordination Committee for the Conservation of the Arabian Oryx (CCCAO) comprised of a number of member Arab governments, which have committed to unifying and intensifying efforts to conserve the Arabian oryx, which once roamed freely across an area stretching from the south of Syria to the Omani and Yemeni borders with Saudi Arabia.
- 2) Around 40 years ago the late Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan founded several captive breeding programmes to ensure the survival of the species.
- 3) In 2007, Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed Arabian oryx reintroduction programme was launched under the direct support and supervision of President HH Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan and HH Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan.
- 4) The programme, which is overseen by EAD's Terrestrial and Marine Biodiversity Sector; aims to create large sanctuaries within the areas that Oryx lived in the past and create a self-sustaining populations that can roam freely.
- 5) An active breeding programme has seen the number of Oryx in the UAE to swell to in excess of 3,000 individuals, 2,000 of which are in Abu Dhabi.
- 6) The Arabian oryx breeding and reintroduction programme is considered one of the world's most successful conservation programmes. It resulted in the IUCN status of the Arabian oryx upgraded from "Endangered" to "Vulnerable" in 2013.
- 7) Arabian oryx have recently been reintroduced into the wild within the Qasr Al Sarab protected area.

Scimitar Horned Oryx Reintroduction Programme

- 1) The Scimitar-horned oryx reintroduction programme is part of EAD's long-term commitment to sustain biodiversity for future generations, inspired by the late Sheikh Zayed's legacy to protect endangered species and sustain them in their natural habitat.
- 2) The Scimitar-horned oryx reintroduction programme is a part of EAD's successful reintroduction programme strategy. (e.g. Arabian oryx in Jordan, Shk. Zayed Falcon Release Programme) that have been implemented locally, regionally and internationally.
- 3) The Scimitar-horned oryx reintroduction into Chad led by EAD is perhaps the world's most ambitious large mammal reintroduction ever.
- 4) The support of our leadership in the Western Region and Chairman of EAD, has been central to EAD's efforts in conserving endangered species, including the Scimitar horned oryx.

UAE Sustainable Fisheries Programme

- 1) EAD and MOCCE are embarking on a significant change programme in the fisheries sector, responding to declining fish stocks in the Gulf and the need to create a more sustainable fishery.
- 2) The UAE Sustainable Fisheries Programme is evidence-based and follows fisheries management best practice, to allow the fishery to recover.
- 3) The views of the fishing community have been gathered and will be monitored to guide our strategy for a sustainable fishery in the future.
- 4) EAD continues to undertake scientific research to monitor the health of UAE's fish stocks and inform policy making on the management and sustainability of these stocks.
- 5) EAD is engaging the community to play a more active role in adopting sustainable fishing practices
- 6) Stock assessment studies conducted by EAD during the last decade have indicated that the fish stock is over-capitalized.
- 7) The current Fish Resources Assessment (FRAS) will provide precise estimates of fish stocks in the UAE (the last count was 2003).

Fish Resources Assessment