

WHAT'S NEW IN THE LITERATURE

An attack by ratel *mellivora capensis* on pre-release asian Houbara bustards *chlamydotis macqueenii* in central saudi arabia

IN: Small Carnivore Conservation, Vol. 44: 35–37, June 2011.

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Keywords: Honey Badger, MacQueen's Bustard, Mahazat as-Sayd Protected Area, Ratel–human conflict, Reintroduction.

ABSTRACT

On 8 December 2009 a Ratel *Mellivora capensis* broke into a purportedly predator-proof pre-release cage for Asian Houbara Bustards *Chlamydotis macqueenii* in Mahazat as-Sayd Protected Area, Saudi Arabia, and caused the death of 29 of the 75 housed Houbaras. The Ratel ate six of them; 23 more died through panic-stricken collision with the walls. This is the first documented instance of Ratel, one of six predators in the area, attacking the reintroduction Houbaras, but on three occasions Ratels have attacked captured foxes *Vulpes*. Loss of juveniles by predation in the first few weeks after release is the single largest cause of Houbara mortality in the project and radio-tracking studies of Ratel are planned.

POPULATION STRUCTURE OF FARASAN GAZELLE

IN: Mammalia. Volume 75, Issue 2, Pages 157–161, ISSN (Online) 1864-1547, ISSN (Print) 0025-1461, DOI: 10.1515/MAMM.2011.010, May 2011

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Keywords: Farasan Islands, *Gazella gazella farasani*, group size and composition, Saudi Arabia, sex ratio

ABSTRACT

Some aspects of population structure (group size, group composition, sex ratio, female/juvenile ratio) of the Farasan gazelle *Gazella gazella farasani* were studied on the Farasan Islands, Saudi Arabia. The overall mean group size has remained consistent since 1988, indicating a stable population. *G. g. farasani* are mainly observed as single animals with females usually being solitary or in female groups. The largest group of gazelles comprised eight individuals in a mixed herd. The male/female sex ratio of adult animals during summer is skewed towards females with an extremely low juvenile/female ratio. A higher male mortality due to dispersal and related issues with anthropomorphic reasons is suspected. Results are discussed in the light of published and unpublished data from previous studies on the Farasan Islands and other Mountain gazelle (*Gazella gazella*) populations from the Arabian mainland and the Levant.



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TWENTY YEARS OF MONITORING OF THE VULNERABLE FARASAN GAZELLE *Gazella gazella farasani* ON THE FARASAN ISLANDS, SAUDI ARABIA: AN OVERVIEW

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N: Oryx, 45(1), 50–55

doi:10.1017/S0030605310001298

Keywords: Farasan gazelle, *Gazella gazella farasani*, monitoring, Saudi Arabia, status

ABSTRACT

The mountain gazelle *Gazella gazella* in Saudi Arabia is categorized as Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List. On the mainland the species' survival depends on a few remnant populations in the western Mountains and coastal plains and on two reintroduced populations. The largest natural population of *G. gazella* in Saudi Arabia is the Farasan gazelle subspecies *G. g. farasani*, which inhabits the Farasan Islands in the Red Sea. We review and collate the available literature on this subspecies, mainly unpublished reports presenting wildlife census data, and supplement this with the most recent, 2009, count. The number of free-ranging gazelles has remained approximately constant since the first counts in 1988, with an overall density of 0.64 km⁻² and an estimated population of 1,039 on Farasan Kebir in 2009. The populations on two other islands, As Saqid and Zifaf, have not fared as well, possibly because of uncontrolled hunting pressure, competition with domestic stock or poor habitat conditions overall. The population on Qummah Island is extinct. Threats to this subspecies include uncontrolled hunting and uncoordinated development. Continued protection of this apparently stable population of mountain gazelle in Saudi Arabia is imperative to ensure the survival of the species.



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