

NEW NETWORK: BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION IN THE ARABIAN PENINSULA

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INTRODUCTION

The annual Conservation Workshop for the Biodiversity of Arabia was held between the 3-6th February at the Breeding Centre for Endangered Arabian Wildlife in Sharjah. During the last session of the meeting there was a request to find a way to allow participants and the greater scientific and conservation community to continue discussions and interacting beyond the workshop itself. This included a desire to explore ways to facilitate the sharing of data.

THE BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION ARABIAN PENINSULA ONLINE GROUP

(http://tech.groups.yahoo.com/group/Biodiversity_Conservation_Arabian_Peninsula) has been created to address an identified weakness in the communication resources currently available to those with a professional interest in conserving biodiversity in the Gulf. It is an online tool that connects professionals who are actively involved in researching and managing the region's terrestrial biota. Members include (but are not restricted to) regional and international scientists, conservation NGO representatives, officials and researchers from government and educational institutions, as well as environmental authorities.

Members of this group will be able to communicate more widely on the topic of terrestrial biodiversity of the Arabian Peninsula, promoting greater inter and intra-regional collaborations. It will allow members to easily share knowledge (including relevant publications), ideas, data and news. It is also a forum for promoting upcoming events that may be of interest to members including: international meetings and symposia; research funding opportunities; announcements of job vacancies; and announcements of interesting courses and workshops. Messages with commercial business activities or profit-making ventures, political nature, personal and commentary discussions and other messages are not appropriate.

This tool has the potential to be an invaluable resource for all. However, for the group to succeed it needs more members, and to thrive members need to actively participate and take advantage of what the tool has to offer. Once you have joined you have the means of contacting every other member of the group at your fingertips. Additionally, each member can manage his/her account so that unwanted or too frequent emails aren't received.

Files can also be uploaded and several documents are already available, including the Arabian Oryx Regional Conservation Strategy and Action Plan (2010), Strategy for the Conservation of Leopard in the Arabian Peninsula (no date) and Wildlife Middle East Publication author guide/layout instructions.

Links to relevant websites can also be uploaded. For example, there are links to Breeding Centre for Endangered Arabian Wildlife, Al Wabra Wildlife Preservation and Wildlife Middle East News, amongst others.

Photos can be made available for members viewing. Currently there are photos of the recent biodiversity workshop's Kalba Fieldtrip. It would be great if more photos from the workshop were uploaded!

The site has many other features that make this platform excellent for groups, including a tool that allows you to add a 'join to the group' button to your webpage that will promote the site and extend its reach.

It will, with your co-operation, facilitate greater communication and collaboration and I encourage you to join. I also encourage you to promote this group to other parties who may be interested in joining. All feedback is welcome.

I am the group's creator and will act as moderator while I have the capacity to do so (and thus have a little crown next to my name :)). However, if anybody wishes to share responsibility or take on the role I would be happy to relinquish my crown. If you would like further information please contact me via email at sarahamay@gmail.com.

References

Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi (EAD), The Coordination Committee for the Conservation of the Arabian Oryx (CCCAO) and IUCN/SSC Antelope Specialist Group (ASG) 2010. Arabian Oryx Regional Conservation Strategy and Action Plan. Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi (publ), UAE.

Urs & Christine Breitenmoser, David Mallon & Jane-Ashley Edmonds (eds). No date. Strategy for the Conservation of Leopard in the Arabian Peninsula (no date).

* An equivalent network exists for the marine environment (Middle Eastern Marine Science Network) and after some discussion with the administrator of this network it was decided that a separate group for terrestrial species would be better than trying to combine the two - it avoids members confusion and minimises the frustration of receiving emails that are not relevant to the member. The more specific the network the better its functionality.



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