

14TH CONSERVATION WORKSHOP FOR THE BIODIVERSITY OF ARABIA: BIOREGIONAL AND SPECIES CONSERVATION PLANNING & REGIONAL RED LISTING OF THE BREEDING BIRDS

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Biodiversity conservation, Red List, Protected Area planning, breeding birds, Arabian Peninsula, Bioregional planning

The 14th Annual Conservation Workshop for the Biodiversity of Arabia was held at the Breeding Centre for Endangered Arabian Wildlife (BCEAW) in Sharjah, UAE, from 3 to 6 February 2013. This regional forum hosted by the Environment and Protected Areas Authority (EPAA) of the Government of Sharjah, under the patronage of His Highness Sheikh Dr Sultan bin Mohammed al Qassimi, member of the Supreme Council and Ruler of Sharjah, brought together 120 participants representing 16 countries.

The 2013 workshop had two parallel themes. The protected areas and planning theme looked at Bioregional Planning and Strategic Planning for Species Conservation, while a species assessment theme conducted a formal regional Red List assessment for the breeding birds of Arabia; in collaboration with BirdLife International.



Figure 1. 2013 Participants. Copyright BCEAW.

The topic of Bioregional Planning had been introduced at previous Sharjah workshops in 2010, and in 2011, at which time the Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi accepted a mandate to produce a regional biodiversity assessment under the Abu Dhabi Global Environmental Data Initiative (AGEDI). In a series of meetings, workshops, and with extensive data sharing from across the region, the AGEDI team was able to complete the first detailed systematic assessment for the entire Arabian Peninsula. This assessment enabled the development of a comprehensive habitat map for the Peninsula and the identification of 36 priority areas for conservation. As part of the 14th Sharjah Workshop, participants in a series of working group sessions reviewed and ranked these priority areas, identifying key sites for focused action, including a number of potential Transboundary Conservation Areas.

The Species Conservation Planning component used the framework provided by the IUCN Species Survival Commission to examine the key elements of Regional Species Conservation Plans and how these may be translated into National Species Action Plans. Delegates reviewed the status of species planning in their countries, then, with reference to the Regional Plans for the Arabian leopard (*Panthera pardus nimr*) and the Arabian oryx (*Oryx leucoryx*) drafted examples of objectives, targets, and actions that could be applied at a national level, and then assessed the constraints and limitations in drafting such national plans. A final session considered possible candidate species or groups of species or the development of Regional/national plans.

The species focused theme of the workshop entailed a regional Red List assessment of all the breeding birds of Arabia, including the island of Socotra. More than 360 species were assessed,



Figure 2. Dr David Mallon leading one of the working groups carrying out regional red list assessments of the breeding birds of Arabia.



Figure 3. Sean Walls from Biotrack instructing participants in the use of VHF telemetry. Copyright BCEAW.

including all those that are endemic and near-endemic to Arabia, as well as the more widespread species.

First introduced in 2012, the Workshop also included a technical component, with a day and half of hands-on exercises, regional case studies, and equipment assessments relating to the selection and application of VHF, GPS, PTT and geolocator tags for wildlife tracking.

Camera trapping confirms the persistence of Arabian Gazelles, *Gazella arabica*, in the Asir Mountains, Saudi Arabia

Zoology in the Middle East 57, 2012: 03–10.

Ahmed Boug, M. Zafar-ul Islam, Abdullah Al Shehry, Torsten Wronski

Abstract. Arabian Gazelles, *Gazella arabica*, are increasingly threatened by hunting and habitat destruction, and since 2001 no confirmed observations have been reported from the Asir Mountains, a previously known area of occurrence. This study presents camera trapping images of Arabian Gazelles captured in Wadi Tarj, and confirms the persistence of this species in the proposed protected area for the first time since 1997. Images were analysed regarding habitat, time of day, group composition and activity of captured individuals. Moreover, the photographs were used to determine the species/subspecies of the gazelles encountered and are viewed in the light of the disputed taxonomy of Mountain/Arabian Gazelles.

Islam, M. Z., Wachter, T., Boug, A., and Wronski, T. (2011) Population development of re-introduced Mountain Gazelle in the western Empty Quarter (Uruq Bani Ma'arid Protected Area), Saudi Arabia. Pp. 180-184, In: Soorae, P. S. (ed.) (2011). *Global Re-introduction Perspectives: 2011*. More case studies from around the globe. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN/SSC Re-introduction Specialist Group and Abu Dhabi, UAE: Environment Agency-Abu Dhabi. xiv + 250 pp.

Islam, M. Z., Boug, A., Ismail, K., and Shah, M.S. (2011) Status of a re-introduced population of threatened Arabian Sand gazelles in SW Saudi Arabia: management lessons from an aridland re-introduction. Pp 185-189, In: Soorae, P. S. (ed.) (2011). *Global Re-introduction Perspectives: 2011*. More case studies from around the globe. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN/SSC Re-introduction Specialist Group and Abu Dhabi, UAE: Environment Agency-Abu Dhabi. xiv + 250 pp.