

16TH INTERNATIONAL CONSERVATION WORKSHOP FOR ARABIA'S BIODIVERSITY: Human-wildlife conflict, electronic data capture, wild herbivore veterinary management, & marine turtle conservation

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The Sixteenth Annual International Conservation Workshop for Arabia's Biodiversity (ICWAB) was held at the American University of Sharjah, from the 2nd to the 5th of February 2015. This regional forum is 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 Qasimi, Member of the Supreme Council and Ruler of Sharjah.

Organized by the Breeding Centre for Endangered Arabian Wildlife (BCEAW) the 16th Workshop in 2015 brought together over 150 participants representing UAE, Qatar, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Yemen and Oman, as well as experts from the UK, South Africa, Hungary, and New Zealand; who participated in four themes.

The protected areas and planning theme raised the important regional issue of human-wildlife conflict, in particular discussing concerns around predation of livestock by native carnivores. In a series of sessions facilitated by Dr Brandon Anthony of the Central European University, Budapest, Hungary, working groups looked at case studies relevant to the Arabian Peninsula, including livestock predation and perceived threats to humans by leopard, wolf, hyena, caracal and jackal; commensalism by *Hamadryas* baboons; and issues concerning goats in and around protected areas.

During sessions the working groups looked at: identification of stakeholders; environmental and social risk factors; the perceived and real costs of the conflict; policy and management options; contextual challenges; monitoring and evaluation; and research needs.

The species assessment theme conducted a review of the conservation status, threats and management of marine turtles in the Arabian Peninsula region; covering the status and conservation of the five species of marine turtles (four of them breeding) in the Arabian Peninsula. Topics covered included identification of key nesting and foraging sites, a threat assessment at regional and national levels, research needs, identification of stakeholders, and a review of recent and current turtle conservation projects. A vision and a goal for marine turtle conservation were developed along with a set of objectives to provide a conservation strategy framework for integration into existing initiatives, such as the CMS IOSEA (Indian Ocean and South-east Asia) Memorandum of Understanding.

First introduced in 2014, the veterinary theme's main focus was herbivore healthcare and in particular the state of emerging and re-emerging diseases in the region. To this end Prof. Moritz van Vuuren, an eminent veterinary virologist and Dr. June Williams, a pathologist, from the faculty of Veterinary Science, University of Pretoria, gave succinct presentations of these diseases and disease outbreaks in the region which were followed by lectures and interactive sessions on post mortem examination and cytology (Fig 3). The veterinary theme closed with presentations on biosecurity and primary healthcare as well as some pointers on chemical capture.

The Workshop also included a technical theme facilitated by Ms Chenay Simms of the SANParks Scientific Services, South Africa, which examined aspects of electronic data capture including hands-on exercises, regional case studies, and equipment assessments relating to the selection and application of electronic data capture, such as smart-phone apps, GPS, remote sensing, and drones.



Fig 1. Attendees at the 16th International Conservation Workshop for Arabia's Biodiversity.



Fig 2. Participants discussing the important regional issue of human-wildlife conflict.



Fig 3. Attendees participating in the post mortem and cytology workshops.



Fig 4. Presenters at the electronic data capture presentation.