

REVIEWS AND NEWS

What's new in the literature

Sher Shah, M. & Cunningham, P.L. (2008) **Fences as a threat to Sand Cats, *Felis margarita* Loche, 1858, in Saudi Arabia.** *Zoology in the Middle East* 44: 104-106. We report on female Sand Cats becoming trapped in diamond mesh fences – probably because of their bigger skull dimensions – and the potential threats of such fences to the movement of these cats in central Saudi Arabia. (Figure 1).

Cunningham, P.L., Sher Shah, M., Ul-Islam, Z., Robinson, R. & Boug, A. (2008) **Adaptive management a prerequisite for re-introduction of sand gazelle in Saudi Arabia.** *GNUSLETTER* 27(1): 19-21. This note refers to a study on the ecology of reem, *Gazella subgutturosa marica* initiated in the Mahazat as-Sayd Protected Area in central western Saudi Arabia; the importance of determining a realistic stocking rate and carrying capacity and the value of an adaptive management strategy for best management results. (Figure 2).

Cunningham, P.L. (2008) **Group structure and condition assessment for *Gazella subgutturosa marica* (Reem) during spring 2008 in the Mahazat as-Sayd Protected Area, Saudi Arabia.** *GNUSLETTER* 27(1): 21-23. In this note the group size and composition of reem, *Gazella subgutturosa marica* during spring and the effect localized rainfall has on changes in group structure is presented from the Mahazat as-Sayd Protected Area in central western Saudi Arabia. Significant group structure changes 1 to 3 days after rainfall events with mass congregations and movement towards the rains indicate the migratory nature of reem associated with rainfall.

Cunningham, P.L. (2008) **GEKKONIDAE, *Ptyodactylus hasselquistii*, Egyptian fan-footed gecko, Donndort 1789 – Diet.** *African Herp News* 45: 6-8. This short communication comments on the foraging behavior away from naturally accepted habitat for *Ptyodactylus hasselquistii* in times of plenty – termite activity – and the potential cost-benefits associated with such activity as observed in central Saudi Arabia. (Figure 3).

K. Zylan, T. Bailey, H.V. Smith, C. Silvanose, J. Kinne, R. K. Schuster, K. Hyland. (2008) **An outbreak of cryptosporidiosis in a collection of Stone Curlews (*Burhinus oedicnemus*) in Dubai. Avian Pathology.** 37: 521-526. We describe an outbreak of cryptosporidiosis in Stone curlew kept in a mixed species rearing unit in Dubai. *Cryptosporidium* was the predominant intestinal pathogen detected. Nineteen of 29 birds had catarrhal enteritis associated with histopathological findings of numerous *Cryptosporidium* developmental stages at the mucosal surface.

UNESCO WORKS ON A NETWORK OF BOTANIC GARDENS IN THE ARAB REGION, IN COOPERATION WITH BGC I ABD AP SG

UNESCO is engaged assisting the formulation of a network of botanic gardens for education, scientific research, and conservation in the Arab Region. There is a lack of botanic capacity throughout the region, and UNESCO and partner organisations hope to make significant contributions towards botanic capacity building, and the conservation of the Arab flora. This is based on UNESCO's Main Line of Action on enhancing linkages between cultural heritage and biodiversity conservation. The main aim is the ex situ conservation of the indigenous Arabian flora. Significant achievements include the production of a proposal on a Quranic Botanic Garden network, hosting international advisory committee (IAC) meetings in Doha and Sharjah, as well as the production of two master plans, and the participation and presentation of UNESCO's activities at the 2nd International Conference on Arab Botanic Gardens in Jordan, 2007. The latest important step was the external evaluation of the Doha and Sharjah projects by Botanic Garden Conservation International (BGCI), which sheds additional light on the importance of botanic networking in the Arab Region.

The Quranic Botanic Garden philosophy is to establish centres of excellence for botanic research, education, and conservation, and based on the teachings of the Holy Quran, calling for the respect of life, plants, animals, creatures, as well as water. The gardens will also pay homage to the holy book, and focus on symbolism related to Islam, and messages on the conservation of water and plant life. This philosophy has been applied in the cases of Sharjah and Qatar, where Quranic Botanic Gardens are currently being established, and the master plans have been produced.

From Jordan, Palestine, and Lebanon there are concrete requests to assist them with the establishment of botanic gardens, and it was the UNESCO Beirut Office that requested inter-cluster cooperation with the Doha Office, and this materialised, and a planning meeting was organised in Beirut in November 2008. Here the philosophy will also focus on the establishment of a place for research, education, and conservation primarily of the Lebanese flora, and under consideration of the national cultural and natural heritage. The potential gardens in Palestine and Jordan need much more discussion, however, there is already an ongoing dialogue between UNESCO Doha and the concerned authorities, and UNESCO is ready to assist, and hopes this will be major contributions to the conservation of Arab flora.

UNESCO will work under close cooperation with other authorities in this networking process, and will also seek the close cooperation of Kew Gardens-based Botanic Gardens Conservation International (BGCI), as well as with the Riyadh-based Arabian Plant Specialist Group (APSG), that was established in 1996, and with the support of the World Conservation Union (IUCN). More information can be obtained from Dr. Benno Böer, UNESCO, Qatar.

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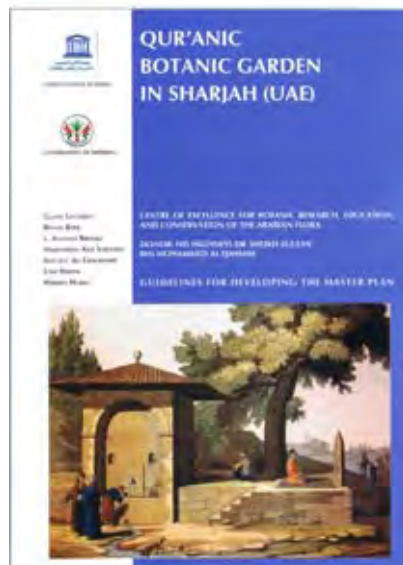


Fig1. Sand Cat dead in diamond mesh fence (© Declan O'Donovan).



Fig2. Female reem (© Peter Cunningham).



Fig3. *Ptyodactylus hasselquistii* (© Peter Cunningham).