

EDITORIAL

Welcome to the latest issue of WME news coming to you at the end of a long, hot summer! This issue sees a variety of topics covered by contributions from across the Middle East and hopefully there will be something of interest here for all readers. In past editorials we have tried to highlight the issues faced by the regions' environment that range from unsustainable development to plastic bag pollution. While these problems should still be in the forefront of public awareness, an article by David Stanton in this issue touches on the global illegal trade in endangered species. While this issue may not affect the lives of many in the Middle East there is no escaping the fact that the region is a global hub of the trade and those involved in the care of animals in the region will no doubt have encountered species that have fallen victim to profiteers and misinformed or uneducated end stage consumers.

Interpol estimates that the global trade in wildlife and their parts, which are used in medicines or for decoration, totals about US\$20 billion (Dh73.4bn) each year. It is the world's third largest criminal activity after drugs and firearms.

There are many reasons for the trade in wildlife (<http://www.traffic.org>) and these vary from country to country and species to species. While Yemen was considered one of the main consumers of rhino horn for ornamental daggers, richer countries may covet wildlife for medicinal reasons or more likely in the Middle East, as additions to private wildlife collections.

While many countries are signed up to CITES (Convention on the International Trade in Endangered species), legislation is only part of the solution. Enforcement of such legislation is governed by a willingness or ability to act on the part of the governments that have signed up to it. It is one of life's great tragedies that many of the countries most blessed with a rich natural heritage are often those most affected by poverty and so easily exploited by the demands of wealthier countries. While it is difficult to blame the poachers/trappers trying to scrape a living for their families it is easier to point the finger at the end user creating demand. Were it not for the unquenchable thirst for pangolin meat in South East Asia, rhino horn in Yemen or exotic animals for collections in the Gulf States then this demand would not exist. As always the solution lies in education.

Recent articles in UAE newspapers (<http://www.gulfnews.com/nation/Environment/10275308.html>) have highlighted the wildlife trade issue in the region and the authorities in Dubai are to be commended on their efforts to tackle the trade but as anyone on the coalface will know, a lot more needs to be done. This feeling was supported by a recent comment by Steven Broad

executive director of Traffic International, an NGO which monitors global trade in wildlife; *"There are anecdotal reports that the number of animals in trade is rising in the Middle East, but regulation of this trade requires a co-ordinated response across the region. The levels of wildlife trade through the Middle East region is an issue of concern that is sure to be thrown under the international spotlight with the forthcoming meeting of CITES, scheduled in Qatar"*

However, this issue is not all doom and gloom. Nancy Papatathanasopoulou gives us a progress report on the outstanding work of the Kuwait Turtle Conservation Project while attempts at conservation and education go on in Iraq with the environmental group "Nature Iraq". Declan O'Donovan reviews a listing of arthropod fauna in the UAE, a vital work in documenting biodiversity in the country. It is through projects like these that we must draw our inspiration and continue to work towards helping what is a remarkable and often overlooked part of the world in terms of natural history.

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WILDLIFE MIDDLE EAST NEWS OBJECTIVES

- Raising awareness of environmental and conservation issues affecting wildlife in the Middle East.
- Distributing information to enable better management healthcare and welfare of wildlife.
- Providing a central contact point for practical advice and information on wildlife management in the region.