

EDITORIAL

In this issue of the newsletter we feature a wide range of articles from across the region; the plight of wildlife in the Sahara; the evaluation of the diets of captive wildlife; an avian influenza outbreak in a rearing unit at a zoological collection, conservation efforts to restore houbara bustards in Saudi Arabia; cause, effects and treatment of algal problems within freshwater ornamental systems and a range of shorter scientific articles and news snippets.

In a region where so much wealth has been generated from the natural bounty of the earth, it is always surprising that so little is invested in protecting the environment and the diverse species that live in the region.

John Newby tells us of the “silent extinction”, the unprecedented conservation crisis that is facing the large bird and mammal fauna of the Sahara and the work of the Sahara Conservation Fund to support the wildlife. It is hard not to be saddened after reading his article and it seems both incredible and shameful that in a region where there is so much accumulated and often wasted material wealth that certain species may just disappear because the resources and will are not there to save them. We cannot resist another paragraph from the Reith lectures that rings true;

“We are weighing so heavily on the Earth's systems, not only through carbon dioxide emissions changing climate but through carbon dioxide emissions acidifying oceans, through destruction of habitat, which is literally driving perhaps millions of species right off the planet. We are over-hunting, over-fishing, and over-gathering just about anything that grows slowly or moves slowly. If we can catch it, we kill it. Our capacity in the Anthropocene is unprecedented, poorly understood, out of control, and a grave and common threat.”

We recommend a visit to the BBC website to listen, download or read the Reith Lectures (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/reith2007/>), because Jonathon Sachs not only reviews the deep threats facing humanity, more importantly he also proposes a variety of (often inspiring) solutions. Interestingly Jonathon Sachs considers that professional organizations that reach across political lines and deepen friendships and understanding between different peoples in places of high tension today are of great value. We thank all our different contributors from our own troubled region who have contributed to WME News over the past 18 months for sharing their experiences of wildlife and the environment to our ever expanding readership that now exceeds 2300 in 73 countries.

To end again with some thoughts by Jonathon Sachs

In the past fifteen years, the world's governments agreed on a set of goals. They agreed amongst other things to protect the environment at the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio. Or consider, finally, the commitment under the Convention on Biological Diversity, “to achieve by 2010 a significant reduction of the current rate of biodiversity loss . . . as a contribution to poverty alleviation and to the benefit of all life on Earth.” This crucial goal, undertaken in the shadow of a massive extinction of species caused by human destruction of habitats, is probably the least known of all our Millennium Promises. But isn't my argument empty then - to propose that we solve the problems of global cooperation by taking seriously the very commitments that we have so far ignored? I think not. The key for us, the world's citizens, is to hold our governments accountable to the Millennium Promises, to understand why governments are paralyzed, and to clear the log jams in our path.

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.

The newsletter aims to contribute to the development of a network between zoo and wildlife professionals working in the Middle East with the objective of being the premier source of regional information on zoo and wildlife management, husbandry and care. The newsletter will publish articles with an emphasis on practical, useful and relevant material. Proposed categories include:

- Conservation education & environmental awareness.
- Husbandry & nutrition.
- Design of zoological facilities.
- Capture and translocation techniques.
- Wildlife diseases and preventive medicine.
- Products, book reviews & research.
- Summaries of recent literature on Arabian animals.
- Letters, news and events.

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