

EDITORIAL

Hands up who knows what a 'Hadra' is? Well done those of you who knew! We certainly didn't before this issue and as part of the continued self-education that is being an editor of WME News (and thanks to the article by Nancy Papathanasopoulou) we now know a 'Hadra' is a traditional fish trap used in Kuwait and the Gulf!

While there are obvious ways that humans impact wildlife, such as through deliberate trapping and trade as is described by Anna Bachmann in Iraq and, or the pointless shooting of migrating bald ibis in Saudi Arabia as reported by Zafar Al Islam, there are other ways where wildlife is accidentally affected as collateral damage through peoples everyday activities. In this issue we see how 'Hadrans' set in Failaka Island to trap fish inadvertently catch and kill turtles in Kuwait, while in Saudi Arabia fences built to protect wildlife reserves have instead become obstacles to the traditional migration of oryx and gazelles leading to mass mortality events during the dry hot summers. The hand of man is everywhere, but just as we cause carnage in one ecosystem, in another ecosystem we bring hope. Husam al Qamy provides an encouraging report from Abu Dhabi of the progress of the Arabian oryx restoration project in the eastern part of the Empty Quarter desert (Ruba Al Khali).

But how much effort is it to maintain and sustain a restoration project? Dr El Qamy describes how the oryx have been monitored every day since their release 3 years ago. The scale of monitoring reveals a depth of commitment to the environment by the Emirate of Abu Dhabi that is to be admired and that one wishes would be emulated in other parts of the region. Conservation needs real, sustained and long term efforts that do not wobble. In another emirate of the UAE we have learnt that commitment to sea turtle rehabilitation has wobbled, because of the economic situation and we would appeal to those who control the purse strings of project budgets to think less like bean counting accountants and demonstrate their green vision that was bandied about in press releases during the 'good' times. Environmental issues do not disappear with the recession and deserve a lot more support than is currently being shown.

An old friend has reared its head again. WME News has long championed the creation of a regional zoological association since an article by Mark Craig, the former Director of Al Ain Zoo. Jonas Livet raises the issue again in his article and we hope that the current management of Al Ain Zoo, probably one of the few institutions in the region capable of resourcing such an initiative, takes note and runs with the idea.

In our news and reviews section we showcase examples of homegrown organisations that are 'doing their bit' to make a difference to the environment of the UAE. As we mentioned in our last editorial it is the actions of communities and their organisations that encourage change in people. We are pleased to highlight two important initiatives – goumbook.com and EMEG.

Tatiana Antonelli Abella and Randala Jishi Anabtawi, co-founders of Goumbook.com, provide us with information on the first Green website for the Middle East. The word goum finds its origins in the classical Arabic terms qum, "stand up", and qawm, a word used in bedouin times to describe a group of people living together according to an ethic of self-help and collective responsibility. Goumbook aims to make all of us stand up for a green ideal uniting towards a better world, sharing facts, ideas and advice on how to live an eco-friendly life in the era of real-time information. Anything we can do to curb pollution, conserve our natural resources and reduce our negative impact on our environment is a good thing for this and future generations. These are important aims and we recommend a visit to their website.

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.

Keith Wilson, from the Emirates Marine Environmental Group, provides us with a profile of a Dubai based non-governmental, non-profit making organization specializing in marine wildlife monitoring and implementing marine environmental projects.

It is positive to learn that EMEG is also involved in empowering local women in conservation efforts and the protection of the UAE's natural heritage. This is accomplished by training women in the basic skills necessary to survey desert flora and fauna as well as how to capture and tag various animal species. This is certainly a region that suffers from the negative effects of an excess of testosterone charged Desert Hooligans and we certainly need an army of Desert Princesses to heal the broken landscape and damaged wildlife. WME News says Go For It Desert Princesses!

A special thanks to Mark Adlington for kindly allowing us to use the wonderful images of Arabian oryx.

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