

EMIRATES MARINE ENVIRONMENTAL GROUP – A PROFILE

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Introduction

The Emirates Marine Environmental Group (EMEG) is a non-governmental, non-profit making organisation. Its headquarters is located at the base of Palm Jebel Ali in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. EMEG was established in 1996 under the patronage of Her Highness Sheikha Manal bint Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum and the leadership of Ali Saqar Sultan Al Suweidi. EMEG specializes in marine wildlife monitoring and implements marine environmental projects.

Given the scale and pace of construction taking place in the UAE and the potential for adverse impacts to fragile marine ecosystems in the region, now is a critical time for action. EMEG believes the environment needs protection and the EMEG team strives to minimize deleterious impacts, associated with anthropogenic activities, by recommending and providing sustainable environmental management solutions. EMEG is motivated by a deep commitment to environmental protection as well as the need to increase public awareness and provide educational opportunities.

Mission

As the first marine environmental group established in the UAE, EMEG provides services and solutions for a variety of projects focusing on marine and terrestrial environmental issues around the country.

EMEG's mission is to preserve biodiversity in the UAE by: -

- ✓ protecting endangered wildlife
- ✓ actively participating in conservation efforts
- ✓ advancing research
- ✓ promoting environmental education and awareness
- ✓ conserving fragile ecosystems for future generations



Fig 3. Pearl Diving activities (©EMEG).

Staff Experience

The EMEG field teams include many Emirati's with local knowledge of the environment and several professional biologists who possess multidisciplinary skills and wide levels of experience. Staff profiles of professional staff are available at EMEG's web site: <http://www.emeg.ae>. EMEG has the tools, techniques and knowledge to successfully tackle a wide range of environmental problems and implement a wide variety of marine conservation projects.

Projects

Over the past 10 years EMEG has implemented numerous studies and projects focusing on: -

- ✓ marine and coastal habitat biodiversity studies and ecological monitoring
- ✓ turtle monitoring and turtle egg relocation when threatened
- ✓ coral reef translocation, formation and monitoring
- ✓ water and sediment quality sampling and monitoring
- ✓ underwater, coastal, and beach clean-ups
- ✓ patrolling to prevent illegal fishing and unauthorized camping activities
- ✓ marine and terrestrial wildlife rescue, translocation and rehabilitation
- ✓ ecological surveys
- ✓ environmental education programmes
- ✓ underwater filming



Fig 1. Major Ali, President of EMEG, explaining EMEG work to Emirati's (©EMEG).

Ghantoot Coastal Reserve

EMEG maintains a coastal sanctuary and reserve on the western border of Dubai, in Ghantoot. The reserve is used as a base to develop and organize educational camps for schools, universities, community and corporate groups to increase awareness and understanding of the different threats the environment faces. Within structured programs, EMEG focuses on the cultural heritage of the UAE and incorporates traditional values and skills into each activity. The activities EMEG organizes at the reserve including; audio-visual presentations on EMEG activities, marine pollution and threatened species; bird watching; role of mangroves presentation and mangrove planting; discussions and presentations on the history of pearl diving in the UAE; beach and dune cleanups; workshops on fish biology, flora and fauna identification, medicinal properties of desert plants; hamour (*Epinephelus coioides*) feeding; canoeing and swimming competitions; traditional games; training in traditional skills including fishing, cooking, dancing, sailing and falconry; art creations from collected waste; and natural history scavenger hunts.

Desert Princesses

EMEG is also involved in empowering local women in conservation efforts and the protection of the UAE's natural heritage. EMEG strives to raise the status of women by encouraging them to participate in meaningful activities that will help them enjoy a better quality of life while contributing to the protection of the local environment. 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. These 'Desert Princesses' have acquired computer skills and are able to successfully manage wildlife translocation projects.

Stakeholders and Sponsors

The group endeavours to work closely with all stakeholders to develop solutions to environmental problems and assist in management strategies. The group has expanded its scope of work and knowledge by collaborating with a range of local and international environmental organizations including World Wildlife Fund (WWF), Save Our Seas, Nakheel, Tourism Development and Investment Company (TDIC) and government agencies including Environment Agency Abu Dhabi (EAD), Dubai Municipality, Environment and Protected Areas Authority in Sharjah (EPPA) and Abu Dhabi Marine Operating Company (ADMA). EMEG's sponsors include numerous members, Zaya and HSBC Bank Middle East.

Membership

Anyone can become a member of the association for free by completing the online form available at www.emeg.ae.

By becoming an EMEG member, you can start making a difference and help to protect marine environment. You will receive information on EMEG's upcoming events such as beach cleanups, wildlife relocation, art creation, mangrove planting, turtle nesting monitoring, and a copy of the EMEG newsletter.

WILDLIFE ART

The Breeding Centre for Endangered Arabian Wildlife has hosted British wildlife artist Mark Adlington for a total of 11 weeks during the past five years during which he filled over 20 sketchbooks. As a result of this residency Mark will hold an exhibition at the John Martin Gallery in London from June 25 - July 24, 2010. To get a preview of the exhibition, download a press release (1.2 MB), and view a short video of the artist at work in Gran Paradiso



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We would like to thank Mark for allowing us to reproduce the oryx images on the front cover of this issue.