

10TH CONSERVATION WORKSHOP FOR THE FAUNA OF ARABIA: PROTECTED AREA SYSTEMS IN THE ARABIAN PENINSULA

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Fig 1. Attendees at the Conservation Workshop.

Review of regional protected area status

Country representatives provided a brief summary of the status of developments within their protected area networks. Reports were presented for 61 sites in Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Oman, Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates. These highlighted the importance of current, active, integrated management plans for all sites within a given network; a general lack of adequate visitor facilities; continued impacts from recreational and harvesting uses, and a continued need for social research to balance the current good standard of biological research to inform area management.

Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT)

An adaptation of the METT was used to explore management effectiveness in seven protected areas drawn from different ecoregions in the Peninsula. The analysis highlighted a need for better management plans with explicit links between monitoring indicators and protected areas objectives. Moreover, there was a general need for more socio-economic information and greater community involvement in protected area planning and management.

Trans Boundary Conservation Areas

Cross-border cooperation emerged as an important theme in the 2007 workshop and in 2008 key sites were identified and prioritized. Delegates at the 2009 meeting reviewed progress towards the creation of TBCAs in their region. Six regional reviews were completed, providing evidence of increasing acceptance of the concept. Concern over the ceding of national authority within jointly managed conservation areas was allayed by reference to examples of successful TBCAs in southern Africa, wherein partner nations maintain their own wildlife regulations within national boundaries, but coordinate compatible habitat and species management actions across those boundaries. Delegates were in agreement that progress would come only with the engagement of political leaders. A small committee of senior conservation managers will be formed to make high-level contacts in an attempt to win champions for the TBCA concept.

Plans are currently underway for the 2010 meeting; enquiries should be directed to:

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The Tenth Annual Conservation Workshop for the Fauna of Arabia was held at the Breeding Centre for Endangered Arabian Wildlife (BCEAW) in Sharjah, UAE, from the 10th - 11th of February 2009. This regional forum is hosted by the Environment and Protected Areas Authority (EPAA) of the Government of Sharjah, under the patronage of His Highness Dr Sheikh Sultan bin Mohammed al Qassimi.

In recent years the workshops have focused on protected areas in the recognition that the identification and protection of suitable habitats was a key conservation issue throughout the Arabian Peninsula. The 10th Workshop in 2009 sought to advance the theme of protected areas by setting three objectives: (1) to review the status of protected areas in the Arabian Peninsula; (2) to apply a management effectiveness tracking tool; and (3) to progress plans for the promotion of Trans Boundary Conservation Areas (TBCAs).



Fig 2. Mr Abdula Aziz al Midfa introducing the Conservation Workshop.