

Biodiversity Conservation in the Arabian Peninsula

edited by

Mike Knight, David Mallon, Philip Seddon

in cooperation with

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Zoology in the Middle East is a journal which publishes original papers and review papers on ecology, zoogeography, animal biology, biodiversity, faunistics, systematics, and morphology of the Middle East. It seeks to further the understanding of the Middle East as a zoogeographic unit and aims at improving the interchange of knowledge and ideas between specialists on different subjects and taxa. *Zoology in the Middle East* publishes additional volumes ("supplementum") on special subjects at irregular intervals. *Zoology in the Middle East* is a peer-reviewed ISI journal covered in the Science Citation Index Expanded (SCIE) and many other review organs.

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Contents

Introduction

Philip Seddon, David Mallon, Mike Knight: Preface	5
Abdulaziz al Midfa, David Mallon, Kevin Budd: Ten Years of Conservation Workshops for the Fauna of Arabia 2000-2009	7

Regional Approaches

David P. Mallon: Global hotspots in the Arabian Peninsula	13
Khaldoun Al Omari: Protected Areas in the Arabian Peninsula	21
Mohammed Shobrak: Bird flyways and stopover conservation sites in the Arabian Peninsula	27
Kay Van Damme, Lisa Banfield: Past and present human impacts on the biodiversity of Socotra Island (Yemen): implications for future conservation ..	31

Species Approaches

Ahmad M. Disi: Review of the lizard fauna of Jordan (Reptilia: Sauria)	89
Jackie Strick, Paul Vercammen, Jacky Judas, Olivier Combreau: Satellite tracking of a rehabilitated Greater Spotted Eagle <i>Aquila clanga</i>	103
Olivier Combreau, Samuel Riou, Jacky Judas, Mark Lawrence: Population structure, migratory connectivity and inference on gene exchange mechanisms in the Asian Houbara Bustard <i>Chlamydotis macqueenii</i> : a summary of recent findings	107
Carlos A. Fernandes: Colonization time of Arabia by the White-tailed Mongoose <i>Ichneumia albicauda</i> as inferred from mitochondrial DNA sequences (Mammalia: Herpestidae)	111
M. Zafar-ul Islam, Khairi Ismail, Ahmed Boug: Restoration of the endangered Arabian Oryx <i>Oryx leucoryx</i> , Pallas 1766 in Saudi Arabia: lessons learnt from the twenty years of re-introduction in arid fenced and unfenced protected areas (Mammalia: Artiodactyla)	125
Jane Budd, Kristin Leus: The Arabian Leopard <i>Panthera pardus nimr</i> conservation breeding programme	141

Methodologies

Kristin Leus: Captive breeding and conservation	151
Mark R Stanley Price: Re-introductions in today's Arabian Peninsula: The first steps for a grander vision?	159
Matthew Hall, Anthony G. Miller: Strategic requirements for plant conservation in the Arabian Peninsula	169
Michael H. Knight, Philip J. Seddon, Abdulaziz Al Midfa: Trans-boundary conservation initiatives and opportunities in the Arabian Peninsula ..	183
Stephen Holness, Mike Knight, Mark Sorensen, Yasser Ramadan Ahmed Othman: Towards a systematic conservation plan for the Arabian Peninsula	197

Foreword

This special issue of *Zoology in the Middle East* was compiled as part of the recognition and celebration of a decade of successful annual conservation workshops hosted by the Sharjah Environment and Protected Areas Authority (EPAA). In early February 2010 the EPAA convened a conference on biodiversity conservation on the Arabian Peninsula, held at the American University of Sharjah, United Arab Emirates. The aim of the meeting was to review past progress and current needs for biodiversity conservation throughout the Arabian Peninsula (see SEDDON, KNIGHT & MALLON, this volume). The conference was opened by its patron, His Highness Dr Sheikh Sultan bin Mohammed al Qassimi, Ruler of Sharjah and Member of the Supreme Council, in a plenary session that featured a review of 10 years of Conservation and Management Planning Workshops for the Fauna of Arabia by Abdulaziz Al Midfa (see article in this volume).

On day one of the conference, invited speakers from regional and international conservation agencies, universities and NGOs in the region, gave presentations designed to highlight the current state of biodiversity on the Peninsula. Topics included reviews of Important Bird Areas, Important Plant Areas, WWF Ecoregions, application of the Hotspot concept, regional conservation agreements, protected area networks, progress towards the development of Trans-Boundary Conservation Areas, and the first results of a systematic conservation assessment for the Peninsula. Day two of the conference had the theme Looking to the Future, with presentations covering the role of captive breeding, habitat restoration, species reintroductions and climate change, and taxonomic reviews including freshwater and marine fish, Arabian leopard, migratory birds, including the houbara bustard, carnivores and small mammals. These talks drew on previous Sharjah conservation workshops and charted a course for a future Regional Red List assessment process. The conference closed with a commitment from all delegates to continue to support the annual Conservation Workshops, and to sustain progress towards integrated conservation strategies and regionally coordinated conservation action.

In this special issue of *Zoology in the Middle East* we have compiled selected peer-reviewed papers dealing with some of the topics covered in the conference. This is not intended to be the conference proceedings, nor is it an exhaustive treatment of regional conservation issues. We have however, taken our lead from the intent of the conference, in compiling contributions that cover a wide taxonomic and regional range, and include a variety of research, planning and conservation management approaches, we have sought to review progress and highlight future directions for biodiversity conservation on the Arabian Peninsula.

Information about past and future Conservation Workshops can be obtained by contacting the Breeding Centre for Endangered Arabian Wildlife, Sharjah, United Arab Emirates (e-mail breeding@epaa-shj.gov.ae).

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