

Contemporary status and distribution of gazelle species (*Gazella dorcas* and *Gazella leptoceros*) in Egypt

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Abstract. Only two gazelle species are currently present in a wild state in Egypt. These are Dorcas Gazelle (*Gazella dorcas*) and Slender-horned Gazelle (*Gazella leptoceros*). The latest information available about the status and distribution of these two species collected during the period 1997–2005 indicates that the population size and range of both species continue to shrink at different rates. The conservation status of the two species is reviewed and a quantitative estimation for the range of the two species is provided using IUCN's Area of Occurrence and Area of Occupancy guidelines.

Kurzfassung. Gegenwärtig kommen in Ägypten in freier Wildbahn nur noch zwei Gazellenarten vor: die Dorkasgazelle (*Gazella dorcas*) und die Dünengazelle (*Gazella leptoceros*). Neue Informationen aus den Jahren 1997–2005 über den Status und die Verbreitung zeigen, dass sowohl die Populationen beider Arten als auch die Größe ihres Verbreitungsgebietes in unterschiedlicher Geschwindigkeit weiter abnehmen. Der Schutzstatus beider Arten wird dargestellt und eine quantitative Analyse des Vorkommensgebietes anhand der von IUCN entwickelten Richtlinien „Area of Occurrence“ und „Area of Occupancy“ wird vorgenommen.

Keywords. Antelopes, gazelles, range, conservation status, distribution, Area of Occurrence, Area of Occupancy.

Introduction

Except for the Mediterranean littoral belt and a few mountain peaks, the Egyptian deserts are classified as hyper-arid deserts receiving less than 100 mm of annual precipitation (AYAD & GHABOUR 1986). These deserts are therefore of very low productivity and many animal populations, especially large mammals, have to cover large distances in the pursuit of favourable habitats and feeding grounds. Unfortunately, anthropogenic factors such as over-harvesting and habitat degradation are adding more stress to animal population in these deserts. SALEH (1987) described these man-made factors rather than other natural environmental factors as being those responsible for shaping the distribution of gazelle species in Egypt.

The deserts of Egypt used to harbour six species of wild antelopes, namely Scimitar-horned Oryx (*Oryx dammah*), Addax (*Addax nasomaculatus*), Bupal Hartebeest (*Alcelaphus buselaphus*), Mountain Gazelle (*Gazella gazella*), Dorcas Gazelle (*Gazella dorcas*) and Slender-horned Gazelle (*Gazella leptoceros*) (OSBORN & HELMY 1980, SALEH 1993, HARRISON & BATES 1991). Most of these could commonly be seen in the wild during the first four decades of the 20th century. Nowadays, however, the first four are considered to be extinct in Egypt in the wild (SALEH 2001), while the latter two are categorised as “vulner-