



BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION ON JEBEL HAFEET (UAE)

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Arabian tahr as a Flagship species

The endangered Arabian tahr was chosen to be the flagship species for a biodiversity conservation program on Jebel Hafeet. This program was developed under the Management of Nature Conservation (MNC) office as part of a conservation strategy to increase the number Arabian Tahr in the UAE.

The project seeks to address the negative influence of manmade transformation of the landscape and associated changes in hydrological regime. Non-sanctioned visits by people into Arabian tahr habitats have been stopped, feral animals have been removed and a system of artificial water-points and forage sites have been established.



Female Arabian tahr at an artificial water-point.



Male Arabian tahr feeding at an irrigated forage site.

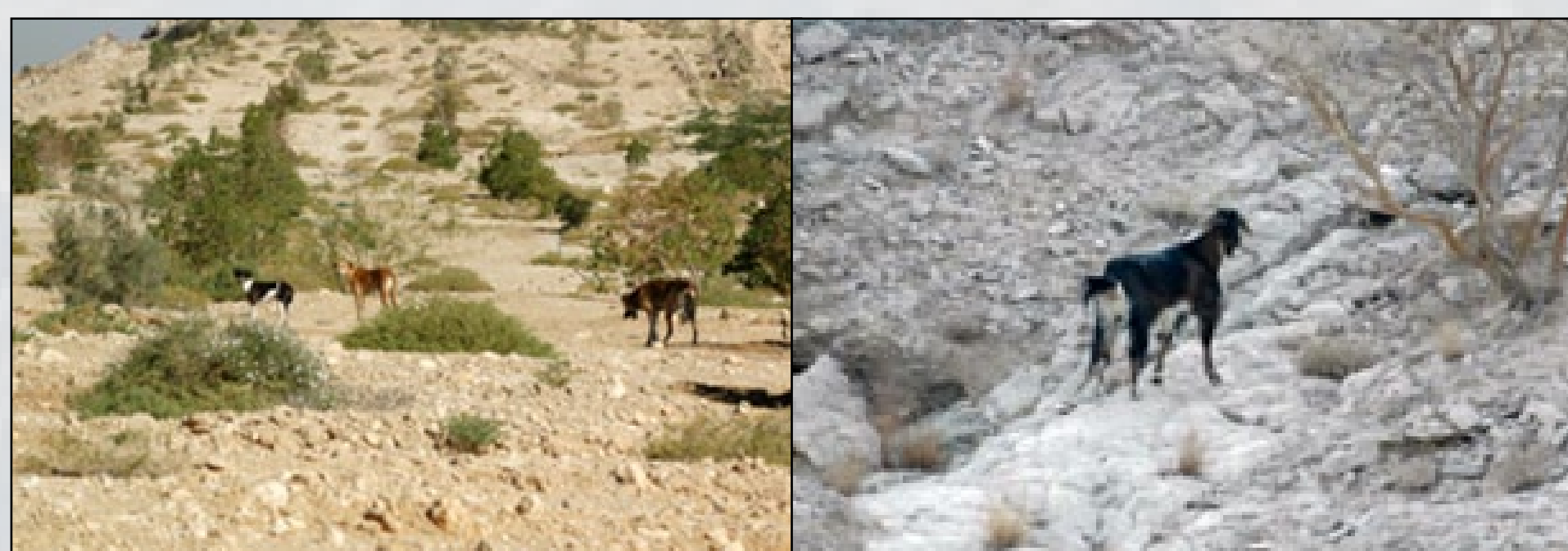


Scattered individuals have congregated and normal population dynamics have been reestablished.

Management during the initial stages have already had a positive effect with an increased number of Arabian tahr and a stable population has formed.



In January 2008 several farms in the southwest of Jebel Hafeet were relocated.



Dogs and livestock which escaped from the farms moved onto the mountain, frightening and competing with the Tahr.



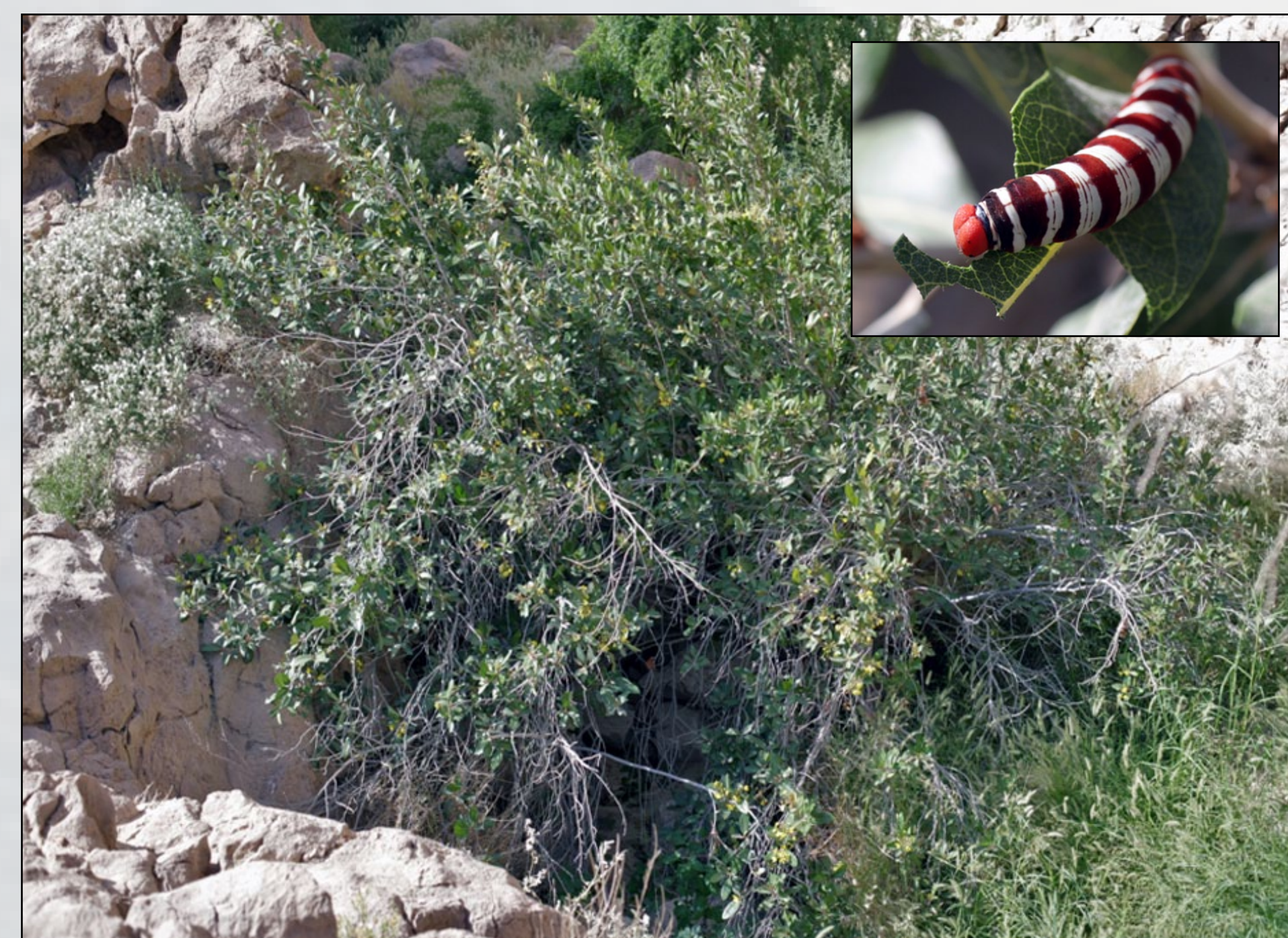
Field surveys carried out on Jebel Hafeet have led to the discovery of several new arthropod species, including *Composobuthus* sp. Further work is still needed.

Arthropods as indicator species

The revival of the biodiversity of the nature complex of Jebel Hafeet has attracted biologists in various specialties, in particular entomologists. It offered the possibility to search for new species, and to detect extended ranges of already known species. Because of the numbers of individuals and the multitude of species, arthropods are a key indicator of the state of an ecosystem's biodiversity. The expressed interest of entomologists in Jebel Hafeet is good example for the other of the specialists.



The giant skipper butterfly (*Coeliades anchises jucunda*) is recorded only from Jebel Hafeet.



The shrub *Acridocarpus orientalis juss* is recorded only from Jebel Hafeet, leaves and flowers are essential for the diet of the larve of the giant skipper butterfly.

Increasing Public Awareness

Man-made transformation of the environment, and a lack of information about the original fauna and flora composition of Jebel Hafeet, has delayed the development of full-scale measures of biodiversity conservation. The absence of a formal nature conservation designation for Jebel Hafeet makes the introduction of rapid changes more complex. Recommended conservation measures are not readily implemented or enforced. In order to promote the idea of Jebel Hafeet as a centre for biodiversity conservation, a public awareness campaign was launched; with the publication of calendars, booklets, posters, books and training programs for schoolchildren and students. This process is ongoing and will be further developed.



Example of a page from a calendar produced for the public awareness campaign.