

Wildlife Middle East News - A New Initiative To Raise The Awareness Of Environmental And Conservation Issues Affecting Wildlife In The Middle East

Tom Bailey¹, Declan O'Donovan², Chris Lloyd³ and Theri Bailey⁴

Affiliation: ¹Dubai Falcon Hospital, PO Box 23919, Dubai, United Arab Emirates, ²Wadi Al Safa Wildlife Centre, PO Box 27875, Dubai, United Arab Emirates, ³Nad Al Shiba Vet Hospital, PO Box 116345, Dubai, United Arab Emirates, ⁴Zayed University, P.O. Box 19282, Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Summary

There are great pressures on the environment and wildlife throughout the Middle East. The rapid pace of economic development, the fragility of the natural ecosystems and low population densities are factors making many indigenous species vulnerable to extinction. The authors describe an information newsletter they have established in the Middle East which is contributing to the development of a network between zoo and wildlife professionals working in the Middle East and aims to be the premier source of regional information on zoo and wildlife management, husbandry and care.



Introduction

Wildlife Middle East News is a high quality information resource on the wildlife and environment of the Middle East and surrounding region. Our printed newsletter and on-line resources are not only available for professionals working with wildlife, they are for anyone who is interested in or concerned about the wildlife and environment of the Middle East. We believe that our newsletter will contribute to the development of a network between wildlife professionals and enthusiasts throughout the Middle East region.

Objectives of Wildlife Middle East News:

- Raise awareness of environmental and conservation issues affecting wildlife in the Middle East.
- Distribute information to enable better management and welfare of wildlife.
- Provide a central contact point for practical advice and information on wildlife management in the region.

When Was Wildlife Middle East News Established?

In March 2006 after attending a regional conservation workshop it became apparent to the four editors that there was a real and urgent need for an independent source of technical information on wildlife management in the Middle East. It was also clear that any information should be distributed in Arabic and English.

Why Was Wildlife Middle East News Established?

We want to show that it is possible for people with an interest and passion for wildlife to make a small difference, even in their spare time. In so many countries it is often grassroots organisations that make a real difference with respect to social and environmental issues. This is because the power of human enthusiasm is such an important, but often overlooked resource. The danger of waiting for government agencies to 'do something' is that we could still be waiting long after the wildlife has disappeared from the deserts of the Arabian peninsula.



What Issues Affect Wildlife In The Middle East (1) ?

There are great pressures on the environment and wildlife throughout the Middle East. The rapid pace of economic development, the fragility of the natural ecosystems and low population densities are factors making many indigenous species vulnerable to extinction. The expansion of human populations and the increasing contact between domestic and wild animals has also increased disease transmission between wild and domestic species, including humans. Some governments have recognized the need to tackle these conservation issues and over the last 10-15 years a number of projects working with both captive and free-living wildlife have been established in the region. In addition to these publicly funded projects there are many privately funded zoological collections, large commercial breeding projects for falcons and houbara bustards and an ever-increasing number of exotic animals kept as pets by the rapidly expanding population of the region.

What Issues Affect Wildlife In The Middle East (2) ?

The Middle East also has great importance as a migration route and wintering area for a large proportion of northern Palearctic birds. In this sensitive area, habitat degradation, oil spills, pesticide use, and infectious disease outbreaks have the potential to cause immense impacts on free-living and captive wildlife populations. In some cases wildlife species, e.g. waterfowl, may carry diseases such as the highly pathogenic avian influenza virus that can cause great economic impact to domestic poultry industries, cause disease in other birds such as falcons, as well as being highly dangerous to humans. There are a number of factors that hinder the ability of the veterinarians, biologists and wildlife managers working in the region to improve the care and husbandry of the species that they look after. Some factors are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Factors hindering the husbandry and care of wildlife in the Middle East.

1. No easily available sources of practical and relevant information on the husbandry, capture and handling techniques, preventive medicine and nutrition for many species that is relevant to the region.
2. Poor communication and interaction between organizations and personnel such as wildlife managers and veterinary professionals working in the region.
3. Insufficient regional training opportunities for veterinarians and wildlife managers who are often working in isolated situations in a specialist field.
4. Poor awareness of wildlife management and health issues by regional government departments and agencies charged with the management of reserves and captive collections.
5. No central contact point for advice, references, recruitment, equipment and food sourcing.



About Wildlife Middle East News

Wildlife Middle East News is produced as a dual language (English-Arabic) quality newsletter and is published quarterly. Wildlife Middle East News contains papers, reports, letters and announcements submitted by veterinarians, biologists, and other animal care professionals working with captive and free-living wildlife in the Middle East region. The newsletter is distributed to biology departments and libraries of institutes of higher education, agricultural and environmental agencies, conservation groups, wildlife projects, zoos, zoologists, vets working with wild animals, vet hospitals involved in wildlife medicine, municipality vets, and pet shops. A PDF format newsletter is e-mailed to a wider circulation of interested readers within and beyond the region. We have a circulation of over 6,000 individuals and institutions in the region and throughout the world.

Where to Find us on the World-Wide-Web

A WME News website (www.wmenews.com) has been developed where previous issues of the newsletter and technical resources and information can be downloaded.

Contact Us and Contribute to Wildlife Middle East News

We are interested to hear from individuals, institutions, zoos and conservation projects working with wildlife within the Middle East region or with wildlife species from the Middle East managed outside the region. Newsletter article categories are listed in Table 2. To request further information from the editors contact us at: <http://www.wmenews.com> and Editors@wmenews.com

Table 2. Wildlife Middle East News article categories.

- Conservation education & environmental awareness
- Husbandry & nutrition
- Design of zoological facilities
- Capture and translocation techniques
- Wildlife diseases and preventive medicine
- Products, book reviews & research
- Summaries of recent literature on Arabian animals
- Letters, news and events



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