

Wardens of Wadi Wurayah

”EWS-WWF is grateful to HH Sheikh Hamad bin Mohammad Al Sharqi, Supreme Council Member and Ruler of Fujairah for signing the decree and officially declare Wadi Wurayah the first Mountain Protected Area in the UAE.”

Issue

In 2006, Fujairah Municipality and EWS-WWF assessed the value of Wadi Wurayah, Fujairah for nature conservation and for its establishment as the country’s first Mountain Protected Area. The area was found to be of great natural, historical and cultural importance, possessing rare and endangered wildlife species, archaeological sites and cultural heritage. A management plan for the proposed Wadi Wurayah Protected Area was prepared, as well as a draft of the legal decree for its designation.

Wadi Wurayah is not without threats, the main ones being overexploitation of water resources, overgrazing of domestic animals, hunting, habitat degradation (littering, fires), quarrying, habitat fragmentation, urbanisation and introduction of invasive species.

Project

The long term aim of the Wadi Wurayah Mountain Protected Area is the realisation of a restored, protected and sustainably managed freshwater ecosystem that would: support rich biodiversity; provide environmental services and socio-economic opportunities; serve as a replicable example of sustainable freshwater ecosystem management; and build local government capacity in designing and managing protected areas.

The Protected Area extends over 129 km² in the northern part of Fujairah emirate between the towns of Khor Fakhan and Bidiyah along the Oman Gulf coastline of Fujairah.

Impact

Through the course of the project, there have been many exciting findings.

- Nine different freshwater habitat types were identified with exceptionally good water quality
- Confirmation of the presence of one of the rarest animals in the world: the Arabian Tahr (*Hemitragus jayakari*); as well as the rare Gordon's Wildcat (*Felis silvestris gordonii*) confirmed by camera- trapping
- 19 species of arthropods have been discovered in Wadi Wurayah, of which 12 have been described for the first time in the wadi
- Discovery of heritage sites from 300 BC as well as 15th – 18th century AD porcelain and 14th - 17th century AD pottery fragments.
- Involvement of local students and schools with field trips

Given the biological and cultural wealth and its vulnerability to anthropogenic pressures, protection to Wadi Wurayah could not have been more timely.



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