

# Conservation news

## 24th Sharjah International Conservation Forum for Arabia's biodiversity

The 24th Annual Sharjah International Conservation Forum for Arabia's Biodiversity was held at Sharjah Safari, United Arab Emirates, during 3–6 February 2025. This Forum brought together over 200 participants from Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen, Australia, Czech Republic, New Zealand, South Africa, Spain, UK and the USA. The Sharjah workshops are hosted by the Environment and Protected Areas Authority, Government of Sharjah, under the patronage of H.H. Sheikh Dr. Sultan bin Mohammed al Qasimi, Member of the Supreme Council and Ruler of Sharjah.

The 24th meeting had two parallel themes: marine strandings and a regional Red List assessment of the reptiles of the Arabian Peninsula. The marine stranding theme focused on marine mammals, particularly dugongs, whales and dolphins, and sought to provide an overview of the status and distribution of marine mammals in the Red Sea, Arabian Gulf and northern Indian Ocean. Sessions looked at rehabilitation programmes for dugongs, methods for diagnostic autopsy of stranded cetaceans, and made the first steps towards the formation of a regional marine stranding response network to collate information and coordinate timely action.

The regional reptile Red Listing sessions, facilitated by Craig Hilton-Taylor, Head of the Red List Unit in the IUCN Biodiversity Assessment and Knowledge Team, and Philip Bowles, Coordinator of the IUCN Species Survival Commission's Snake and Lizard Red List Authority, assessed a total of 260 species, including 10 amphibians and 15 marine reptiles across the Arabian Peninsula

(Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen, along with all associated islands). The last comprehensive assessment of the region's reptiles took place during the Sharjah Forum in 2012, covering 172 species. The new assessment provided an updated and more detailed evaluation, focusing on 10 amphibian species, of which five are endemic, and 140 endemic terrestrial reptiles.

For the first time at the Forum there were dedicated sessions for postgraduate research students. Students had the opportunity to present their work to a plenary session of forum participants and attended a training workshop on writing and publishing a scientific paper, giving a conference presentation, and communicating research to the wider public through media interviews.

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