

THE FASCINATING WILDLIFE OF QATAR

Qatar's rich and unique landscape is home to captivating wildlife that includes a range of wild animal and plant species that thrive in warmer temperatures in and around the terrains of the country. Creating a compelling spectacle for its visitors, the peninsula is home to several hundreds of animal and flowering plant species, some of which are quite rare and an integral part of the country's culture.

THE SIX INCREDIBLE ANIMALS OF QATAR

With lengthy spear-like horns, the Arabian Oryx is considered one of the four species of antelope that lives in Qatar's desert and is native to the Arabian Peninsula. It is also the national animal of Qatar.



FALCON: THE NATIONAL BIRD OF QATAR

Hook beaked and sharp visioned, Falcons are birds of prey, recognised as a species of the hawk family with strong talons.



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Qatar taking all steps to protect, maintain country's wildlife: Hajri

SATYENDRA PATHAK
DOHA

“The way the various entities and people in Qatar are moving forward to stop the deterioration of our planet and taking actions needed to preserve the environment, the country will be a much better place to live as far the natural environment is concerned in the next 10 to 15 years.”

QATAR has turned great attention to wildlife, preserving and developing it to protect it from extinction, Dr Saif al-Hajri, one of the most famous environmentalists of Qatar, has said.

In an interview with Qatar Tribune, Hajri said, “Qatar has issued several laws and regulations and established many nature reserves and conservation areas to protect and maintain ecological systems.”

“The vision for Qatar’s environment focuses on maintaining sustainable wildlife, protected and developed by a discerning society, for a better future for the next generations,” he said.

While the government has allocated a good budget to achieve the goals of protecting, maintaining and improving ecological systems in Qatar, Hajri said, the private sector has also come forward to join and support this mission.

Qatar is now home to several nature reserves equipped with state-of-art technologies and supported by top experts, he said.

The way the various entities and people in Qatar are moving forward to stop the deterioration of our planet and taking actions needed to preserve the environment, he said, Qatar will be a much better place to live as far the natural environment is concerned in the next 10 to 15 years.

Hajri, founder of the Friends of the Environment Centre and head of ‘A Flower Each Spring’ programme, said, “Unlike the times of our forefathers when people were very close to nature, there was a time in the seventies and eighties when the younger people were not very concerned about the environment.

That was the time when we realised that we must come forward to make Qatar’s youth and members of the community aware of the importance of protecting and developing the environment. This led us to establish ‘Friends of the Environment Centre’ in Qatar at the beginning of nineties.”

It is more than 30 years now and during the period we launched several other initiatives to raise awareness about environmental diversity in Qatar, he said.



mental diversity in Qatar, he said.

“We launched a special programme called ‘My Country’s Bird’. The purpose of this distinguished programme is to provide Qatar’s youth and members of the community information about the birds of Qatar and to promote their interest in birds.”

To enable the learning about birds, he said, the programme encourages youth and the community to attract birds for reproduction, feeding and drinking.

“This learning will support the goal to motivate and encourage the monitoring of bird behaviour and their habits, in order to establish a culture that calls for the care and preservation of birds and their living spaces, ultimately contributing to biodiversity. We aim to introduce the birds of Qatar by celebrating a different local bird each year as the ‘Bird of the Year,’” he said.

“Through this initiative, we conduct surveys and field visits to identify and protect important bird habitats. We carry out awareness and education campaigns among youth and in the community to achieve the desired goals. We collect and document scientific information on the birds of Qatar and monitor the database. We also encourage scientific research related to birds of the Qatar Peninsula,” Hajri said.

To attract our children aged 6-14 towards this issue, he said, “We launched an educational, entertaining, and interesting forum ‘EcoKids’. Cognitive and applied concepts that link the lives of young people to their environments, this initiative makes them aware of the relationship between facts, adopting behaviours, and gaining experiences that lead to the achievement of the desired goal. Through discovering the achievements and innovations of our children in multiple countries, and expanding their experiences and perceptions of everything that is useful, we aim to preserve the environment.”

“In order to achieve the objectives of the forum and ensure its success, we ensure youth participation in activities highlighting their creativity and achievements. We also focus on family participation in enhancing children’s efforts in preserving the environment out of the responsibility and partnership in raising young people and instilling sound environmental behaviour,” he said.

“As we all know that the concern for preserving

the environment receives global attention. Discussion on how to stop the deterioration of our planet and the actions needed to preserve the environment is ongoing and considered of great importance at all levels of government. This led us to launch ‘My Country’s Tree’ programme,” he said.

My Country’s Tree programme encourages commitment to daily behaviours that contribute to a clean and beautiful environment by protecting and growing trees. It is imperative that we pay attention to the trees and work continuously to protect and multiply them. Trees are important to the environment as they soften the air, regulate temperature, increase humidity in dry places, and reduce pollution in the environment.

“Trees also have multiple environmental, health, engineering, and aesthetic purposes. The importance of trees highlights the need for us to identify creative ideas for implementing afforestation projects to add to the beauty of Qatar, its cities and its streets,” he said.

“Afforestation and the increase of green areas are among the most important priorities. The importance of plants in modifying and tempering the local climate is especially important to desert areas that experience high temperatures, dust, and sandstorms. Trees and plants also improve the soil and increase its fertility and prevent pollution, dust effects, windbreaks, noise and annoying sounds. The activities of the My Country’s Tree programme include afforestation, cultivation process, an educational activity, and events and festivals to raise awareness,” he said.

My Country’s Tree programme objectives are to increase the green areas of Qatar to support biodiversity, increase community awareness of the importance of vegetation cover in preserving the environment from degradation and desertification, bring more aspects of joy to the environment and beauty to Qatar, its cities and streets, contribute to the treatment of global warming and climate change, define the economic and medicinal benefits of plants and urging their proper utilisation and introduce plant species of trees that are adaptable to Qatar’s environment.

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DR SAIF AL HAJRI



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"Our other initiative, the Qatar e-Nature app was launched in December 2013 in cooperation with Sasol, an educational awareness program supported by the 2015 schools competition. It is available for free download on the App Store, Google Play Store, and Windows Phone Store and on the website www.enature.qa. The information contained in the application and the website is updated regularly," he said.

"The Qatar e-Nature app is a valuable resource for the local community, as it is used in many schools as part of the Qatar e-Nature Interactive School Contest, and strives to raise awareness about environmental diversity in Qatar. The programme also includes a presentation of 12 nature reserves, with an indication of their geographical location and a detailed explanation of each reserve. The application is in Arabic and English, and aims to support the goals of Qatar National Vision 2030 by increasing environmental awareness among the population," he said.

"A slogan was raised in the early stages of the programme on how to promote environmental sustainability to highlight that environmental work includes everyone. The societal benefit is that information on 963 creatures from the natural environment around us in Qatar distributed in six groups in Arabic and English can be accessed on our phones. These groups and the number of creatures in each group are Bird Groups, Plants Group, Insects group, Reptile group, Mammal Group and Marine Organisms Group," he said.

Through this app, Hajri said, "We also create awareness about protecting animals that are subject to hunting and road accidents."

In Qatar, he said, Red Foxes are widely distributed in low numbers. They are subject to hunting and road accidents. "Earlier, foxes were seen in most parts of Qatar. Now they are rarely seen in some parts of the country. Through the app we create awareness to protect such animals," he said.

"The organisms that have been counted and classified undergo a successive process that includes examination, development, checking, addition and deletion to accuracy and reliability. This ensures that this Qatar e-Nature programme shares the most accurate information that can be enjoyed throughout the whole world. The Qatar e-Nature app is Qatar's global ambassador showing our environmental treasures," he said.

The Qatar e-Nature programme has received many awards internally, regionally and internationally, including "The best initiative in the social responsibility of the energy sector in the State of Qatar" during the fourth conference on corporate and institutional social responsibility organised by Dar Al Sharq.

It received appreciation of His Excellency the Minister of Environment in 2015 for its contribution to the definition of environmental resources.

The programme received 'Best Smart Applications for Arab Governments' award for the environment category at the regional level in 2015.

It also won the 'Best Governmental Service via Mobile Phone' award in Kuwait from the same year.

Hajri, also a footballer who used to represent Qatar's football team, said, "Our initiative 'Sports and the Environment' is receiving noticeable attention, as there is a stationary station within the programme 'A Flower Each Spring' beach campsite in Ras Al-Makhatkh. The station presents the opportunity for experiential learning to demonstrate the mutual relationship between sports and the environment," he said.

"Through the use of illustrative panels using the canvas technique with a number of pictures, the station is managed by a specialised volunteer. In the station, a review of the emergence of the Qatar Olympic movement, its investment in sports in co-ordination with sports leaders, and holding them responsible for spreading environmental awareness takes place in this station. Over the visit to this station, cleanliness, care, and greening of the environment and how it supports and keeps pace with the sports renaissance in society are highlighted. The outstanding local, regional, and global contributions which have led to Qatar hosting the largest global sports event in 2022 are showcased," he said.

"Sport's values seek to instil the spirit of fair competition and love of the environment. The goal is to promote the blending of the concepts of sports, culture and environment with the values of peace and justice," he said. "Our other programme 'Protectors of Nature' seeks to prepare a generation that is aware of its environmental issues and practice to achieve the concept of sustainability. Participants in this programme are presented with information on how to confront imminent risks that threaten the environment. They are given the opportunity to obtain the title, "Protector of Nature" after passing a number of theoretical and practical environmental courses. This programme will also provide a wide range of opportunities to participate in environmental events locally, regionally and internationally," he said.

The programme prepares nature protectors in three categories including 'Protector of Nature' for students in primary school, 'Protector of Nature'



"Our 'Friends Of Nature' programme aligns with Qatar National Vision 2030 to link knowledge and awareness concepts in a way that makes people aware and gain experiences in achieving sustainable development. Our other popular programme is Flower Each Spring to educate children and young people about Qatar's plants. A different flower is studied every year, and as of 2021, the programme has celebrated 23 flowers. The programme adopts the concept of learning through enjoyment."

for middle school students and 'Protector of Nature' for high school students.

The Protectors of Nature programme has cognitive, emotional, behavioural skills objectives that enable participants to develop positive attitudes towards nature, through the knowledge gained from practical experiences that the program can build on and refine, gain knowledge present at their appropriate age level and engage in interactive self-learning and learning about nature through courses, workshops, and scientific excursions offered by the programme.

"The learners understand that people are the custodian of the earth and its environment. This responsibility requires one to strengthen their relationship with nature, identify the dangers that threaten the safety of nature, know that the natural resources are the basis for advancing development and to understand the damages of wasteful and excessive consumption of nature's resources," he said.

"Through Protectors of Nature programme, he said, "We encourage people to acquire and adopt attitudes of conservation towards natural resources, demonstrate self-initiative and volunteer work towards nature, believe in the United Nations Sustainable

Development Goals 2030, demonstrate responsible use of natural resources without harming them, refine the scientific and applied skills that support preserving nature and collaborate with colleagues and friends to protect nature from degradation," he said.

"Our other popular programme is Flower Each Spring to educate children and young people about Qatar's plants. A different flower is studied every year, and as of 2021, the programme has celebrated 23 flowers. The program adopts the concept of learning through enjoyment, by organising trips to the permanent programme camp to provide field information to groups of visitors mostly students and their families. The visitors learn about plants in their environment through practical experience, activities, and publications. Visitors are encouraged to share knowledge with their families and others during competitions, exhibitions and media campaigns," Hajri said.

Through this programme, he said, "We aim to increase community awareness of the importance of vegetation cover in preserving the environment from

degradation and desertification, introduce the economic and medicinal benefits of plants, build positive behaviour when growing towards the natural – constructed environment, develop innovative and creative capabilities in the fields of sustainable environmental development, urge economic and industrial institutions to employ the aesthetics of plants in decorating products like jewellery, utensils, furniture, clothes, wall coverings, packages and packaging materials and collect and document scientific information on the plants of the national environment in a database."

The programme also aims to discover the aesthetics of the homeland, a charming natural environment, and an impressive built environment, he said.

"Our 'Friends Of Nature' programme aligns with Qatar National Vision 2030 to link knowledge and awareness concepts in a way that makes people aware and gain experiences in achieving sustainable development. We aim to establish programme activities in commercial complexes, with the aim of transforming them into knowledgeable places, enhancing the community's awareness of nature to achieve the concept of sustainable development, introducing the economic, health and aesthetic benefits of the components of nature, enhancing environmental education to achieve positive behaviour towards nature, showcase the creative talents of young people and identify professions to meet the various environmental challenges," he said.

In another step towards making people aware of the importance of protecting the environment, Hajri said that he launched 'The Green Tent' initiative that hosts scholars of opinion, knowledge of and experience with the environment and societal issues. The Green Tent is held periodically and extensively during the month of Ramadan, he said.

"The Green Tent raises issues of local, regional, and international interest. It hosts specialists from inside and outside Qatar, and represents a public platform for free democratic interaction, through a scientific approach based on the preparation of a proposed title and its analysis. Specialists address each title according to their specialisation. Time is also allowed for questions, dialogue, and interventions. Outcomes of the Green Tent discussion are published in the media through news agencies, television, and the press, in the interest of the citizen and the nation," he said.



In Qatar, Red Foxes are widely distributed in low numbers. They are subject to hunting and road accidents.





FALCON: The national bird of Qatar

HOOK beaked and sharp visioned, Falcons are birds of prey, recognized as a species of the hawk family with strong talons. Undoubtedly a crucial part of the rich heritage and culture of Qatar, Falcons are highly honoured and celebrated as the national bird of the nation.

They are fierce diurnal birds of the avian world and hunt efficiently during daylight hours. With almost 8 times better vision than the sharpest of human eyesight, falcons silently swoop down as soon as they've spotted their prey. The qualities of this wild bird launched the tradition of hunting fresh meat to augment the nutrition of desert nomads, over 5000 years ago in Iran and was spread across the Middle Eastern countries over centuries. The Bedouins introduced the art of this tradition to the State of Qatar.

Falconry is a historic art from the times of the Bedouin tribes where the raptor is highly trained and used to hunt down migratory birds for food. The bond created between the bird and its trainer always results in a great hunting partnership. This solitary bird educates patience, endurance, self-reliance, and valour among other things to its falconers.

Six variant species of Falcons that have distinctive characteristics:

1. AMUR FALCON

The amur falcon is famed for its fascinating migrations it endeavours across the equator for



approximately 22,000 km.

2. LANNER FALCON

They're known for the striped feathers and for a small notch called tooth in their beaks.

3. SAKER FALCON

The Saker Falcon is the second largest falcon that is known for its beauty and strength.

4. PEREGRINE FALCON

The Peregrine falcon is the fastest recorded animal in the world with a flight speed of up to 389km per hour.

5. BARBARY FALCON

Slightly smaller in size, the Barbary falcon is best known for its sharp and fishing hook-like beaks.

6. SOOTY FALCON

Slim and long-winged, the sooty falcons are well known for their long-distance migrations.

Of the list, Saker and Peregrine are the more popular hunters that are conventionally trapped, tamed, and prepared for the traditional quest that are sold at the falcon markets for prices ranging from QAR 30,000 to over a million Qatari riyal.

To experience the authenticity of this tradition and take a closer look at the Qatari Falconry culture visit the Falcon Souq at Souq Waqif while on your holiday in Doha. It makes the perfect place to enjoy spotting falcons, photographing them up close, and even holding them under the supervision of professionals. Closer to the area is also the Falcon hospital run by the government, which tends and cures injured falcons. You are likely to see temporarily blinded or hooded falcons which is a practice pursued as part of the taming process to keep them calm until they're used to their surrounding or falconer.

The falconry and hunting season commences in October and visitors can make the most of this experience as spectators to learn more about the deeply-rooted national obsession of falcons and the tradi

Qataf: The national flower of Qatar

THE Qataf is the official national flower of Qatar. It is also known as Lemonium or Sea Lavender. It grows along the country's coastal line and has beautiful pink and lilac flowers which can also be decorated inside houses and other places. The flowers are decorated almost everywhere around the city to have a beautiful view. Qataf flower can be seen in Qatar from the months of March to May.

Sea-lavenders normally grow as herbaceous perennial plants, growing 10–70 cm tall from a rhizome; a few (mainly from the Canary Islands) are woody shrubs up to 2 meters tall. The leaves are simple, entire to lobed, and from 1–30 cm long and 0.5–10 cm broad. Easy to grow, Sea Lavender performs best in full sun in average, medium moisture, well-drained soils.

Qataf is a genus of about 150 species of annuals, biennials, perennials, and subshrubs grown for their sprays of papery flowers in summer and autumn. The genus has a sub-cosmopolitan distribution in Europe, Asia, Africa, Australia, and North America. They are native to coasts, salt marshes, and deserts around the world, and therefore need sandy or stony soil. Grow in a border, cutting garden, coastal garden, or rock garden, depending on species size.

Qataf symbolises success, beauty, sympathy, and remembrance. The profound meaning of Limonium conveys "I miss you" when you give these flowers to someone you are fond of. Limonium blooms in spring and summer. They come in an incredible range of colours such as blue, lilac, yellow, white, pink, and purple.

The plant has been used in herbal remedies to treat diarrhoea, chronic gonorrhoea, gleet, leucorrhoea, chronic dysentery, atonic dyspepsia, pulmonary haemorrhage, chronic laryngitis, and bronchorrhoea. Limonium flowers are one of the best everlasting and dried flowers. They are long-lasting in the vase, whether fresh or dried and retain much of their colour when dried. The plant has great value both as a fresh-cut flower and in dried flower arrangements.



SIDRA: The national tree of Qatar

THE Sidra tree is the official national tree of Qatar. In the Qatari culture, the Sidra tree is the iconic symbol of the country's heritage. The Sidra has grown in the deserts of Qatar for generations. With roots that reach deep into the earth, fruit and flowers that nourish and leaves that heal, the Sidra became a beacon of comfort in the harsh desert environment, allowing life to flourish.

In addition to its fruits, shade and shelter, the tree is also used by farmers as windbreaks to fight desertification.

The fruits, flowers and leaves of the Sidra tree are rich with nutritional values and used to make traditional medicines. Modern research has shown that compounds extracted from the tree's leaves could be used to decrease severe inflammation.

It is a tree that requires little but provides a lot and it can thrive in the harshest environments.

The Sidra also provided shade and shelter to travellers

and scholars, who would escape the desert heat, gather together and share knowledge.

Over time, the Sidra came to represent nourishment, strength and courage, as well as learning and growth. In the hearts and the minds of the people of Qatar, the Sidra tree exemplifies perseverance, solidarity and determination.

For these reasons, the Sidra is featured as the logo of the Qatar Foundation, a non-profit organisation founded in 1995 to develop people's abilities through investments in human capital, innovative technology, strategic partnerships and state of the art facilities. The Sidra inspired the design of the Qatar National Convention Centre, a signature structure located in Education City, the educational complex built by the Qatar Foundation in Doha. The Sidra structure that fronts the building is 250 meters wide and five stories tall.





The simplicity of Qatari life reflects that of their environment, and the placidness of the land is equally manifested in the moral rectitude of the people, their modesty, the smoothness of their language and the clarity of their expression, qualities which, in turn, reflect on their clothing style and architecture.

What does the Qatar National Day 2021 slogan signify?

FROM time immemorial, Qataris have always maintained a close-knit relationship with their environment. They were brought up on the land that shaped their characteristics, and they explored and coexisted with nature, the colours of its soil and sea and its seasonal changes, to the extent that the environment has become part and parcel of their existence and a major source of influence in the building of their personality and identity.

The simplicity of Qatari life reflects that of their environment, and the placidness of the land is equally manifested in the moral rectitude of the people, their modesty, the smoothness of their language and the clarity of their expression, qualities which, in turn, reflect on their clothing style and architecture.

The intersection of sea and land is a distinctive feature of the Qatari environment, which makes their lives the quintessence of two blessings that enrich their livelihood with their bounties. They went to sea in the summer season for diving and relocated to terra firma in the winter season. They em-

braced the realms of the sea in search of pearls, empowered with wisdom and courage, believing that the meaning of life resides in interaction with others, which is why Qataris welcomed with open arms the ships coming to their shores from far and wide.

In the desert, Qataris found inspiration and acumen despite the difficulty of desert life as reflected in the scarcity of water and lack of grassland. They were, nonetheless, able to tame the desert through patience, and the beauty of the meadows enhanced the beauty of their poetry and creativity.

Qataris roamed the land of which God has made them vicegerents; so, they contemplated it and took care of it, using stones and animal fur to build their homes, but without indulging in extravagance, because they appreciated the blessings of God upon them, and their expression of gratitude towards God was articulated in deed before words.

Qataris became attached and loyal to their environment, and their devotion to the land enhanced their sense of belonging and pride. The environment assumed an important place in

their lives and was celebrated in their songs and poems, as the following verses from the 'Elegy' of the Sheikh, the founding father, illustrate:

"Oh, how many caravans have passed by

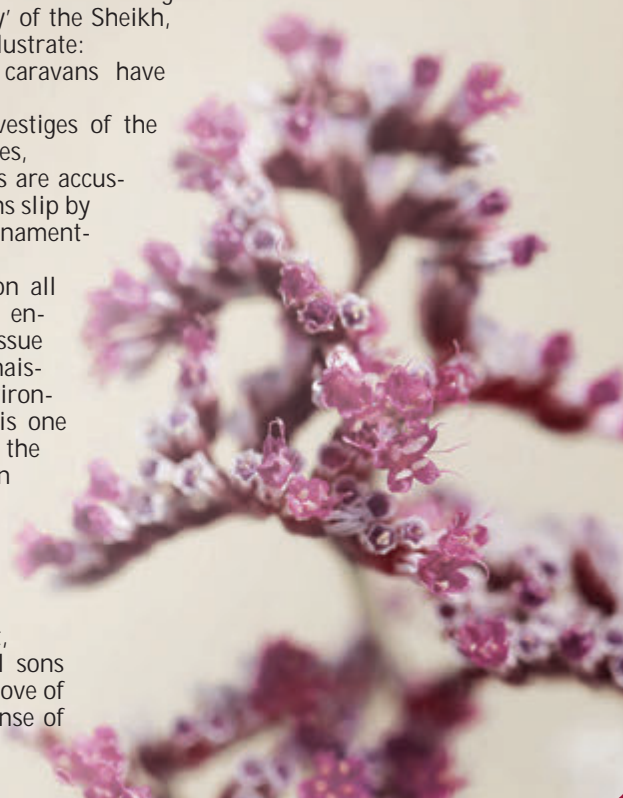
"Leaving behind vestiges of the fluctuations of the times,

"Abodes our sights are accustomed to as the seasons slip by

"Our meadows ornamented with herbs."

The slogan calls on all of us to consider our environment as a core issue in our countries' renaissance. because environmental development is one of the four pillars of the Qatar National Vision 2030.

The slogan expresses that the people of Qatar should adhere to their environment, as a result, they become its loyal sons and daughters. Their love of their land added a sense of belonging and pride.



'Qatar has potential for ecotourism'

Through agricultural tourism, farm owners can achieve multiple benefits including additional income that will help them improve financially. It will also increase the value of the farm that provides agricultural tourism.

MERIAM JELLITI

SINCE its inception, Murooj Qatar has gone through a sea-change, emerging as an initiative that aims to educate the community about the importance of spreading the concepts and culture of loving agriculture, rationalise the consumption of water used in irrigation, as well as creating a moral value of agriculture and afforestation especially in future generations, and expand the green areas in Qatar.

Dr. Latifah Shaheen Al Nuaimi, professor of Hydrogeology and Environment at Qatar University and president and founder of Murooj Qatar initiative, spoke to Qatar Tribune about her long experience and dedication to agricultural initiatives as well as her hopes and plans of ecotourism in Qatar. Excerpts:

How does the Murooj Qatar initiative contribute to preserving the environment?

Murooj Qatar is my latest initiative that I am proud of. Our main purpose is to spread farming and agricultural culture in Qatar, starting with schools.

This is not the first initiative, I started. I started working and participating in the environmental and agricultural work since the '90s'. I had the honor to be part of the executive committee of Green Qatar in 2003.

We have worked and signed deals with Katara and Qatar Voluntary center and Nomads Center, and we are still working hard continuously to help support afforestation.

If every home planted a few trees, Qatar would be green, that is a fact that I believe. Fortunately, the Qatar National Vision 2030 take a great interest in the environment and afforestation which provides me personally with more strength and determination to keep giving my best.

In 2017, Murooj Qatar participated in Darb al Saai and we have proudly given one million shrubs. A simple initiative made it possible to plant a million trees. It is a matter of education and it must start from a young age, that is why the initiative focuses



Dr. Latifah Shaheen Al Nuaimi, professor of Hydrogeology and Environment at Qatar University and president and founder of Murooj Qatar initiative.

mainly on schools. One must be taught at a young age to be fully aware of the importance of the environment.

What are the ways to encourage individuals to pay more attention to the environment?

Besides involving environmental education in school systems, more initiatives and approaches must be taken, starting with official and governmental entities planting more trees alongside roads, especially long roads outside Doha. More cleaning and planting campaigns for people of all ages should be organised. And generally, we must consider greenery a must and as important as infrastructures and buildings.

Tell us about your Green Lands initiative.

I have started Green Lands to put years of experience into practical work, a green company that provides services of plant



nursery, caring for home gardens and plants, horizontal and vertical farming, trading in agricultural materials, training courses, and installing farm houses.

Tell us about your dedication and beliefs.

"I believe in the fact if every home plants a few trees, Qatar would be green. Fortunately, Qatar's top leadership takes a great interest in the environment and afforestation that is reflected in Qatar National Vision 2030. This provides me with more strength and determination to keep giving my best."

— Dr. Latifah Shaheen Al Nuaimi

From a very young age, I loved beauty of all kinds, and I realised that nothing is more beautiful than greenery. Planting trees and watching them grow made me feel content. When I applied for my PHD, I was asked about the reason I chose my major despite coming from a country that is known for hydrocarbon. The reason is simple that petrol does not last, water does. When thinking of the future of our beloved country we must understand that one of the keys to sustainability is water and clean air. We must think of the next generations and how to help them preserve the life and natural resources.

Is Qatar ready for ecotourism?

Qatar is not poor in natural resources as claimed. We have groundwater that would be more than enough to water millions of plants and be an ideal solution for irrigation issue. If we talk about applying the experience of eco-tourism or agricultural tourism in Qatar seriously, we will find that the Qataris' demand for rural tourism in Europe during the holi-

day period is one of the things that would encourage farm owners in the country. Agricultural tourism can be developed to make Qatar as a suitable place to spend long family vacations, as it provides an ideal atmosphere to enjoy nature and the basic services that tourists need due to its natural components.

During the vacation period, most of the people tend to travel to Europe to enjoy the nature and the greenery. I believe, in Qatar we are more than capable of achieving that. Qatar is an ideal place for long family vacations. It provides an ideal atmosphere for enjoying nature.

What benefits can farm owners gain by applying ecotourism?

Through agricultural tourism, farm owners can achieve multiple benefits including additional income that will help them improve financially, as well as increasing the value of the farm that provides agricultural tourism, selling more farm products to tourists and visitors at a better price than selling them in the markets.

Tell us about your efforts in this regard.

I keep seeking, through the initiative, to spreading the culture of agricultural tourism in Qatar, especially in the presence of a large number of Qatari farms. The country has several distinctive features that can serve as means of tourism for citizens, residents, and even visitors from outside. Qatar has the potential and capability of moving at a steady pace in the matter of ecotourism.

Why is the world now heading towards consolidation?

The concept of green cities is no longer just an option, it is the right choice, the only one with which to confront the danger of climate change and environmental challenges

In light of the danger posed by climate change, the world demands to maximise the use of alternative energy, and adopting an integrated system of procedures and solutions that reduces consumption and emissions energy and waste.



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'Caring for the environment and the heritage is a patriotic responsibility'

MERIAM JELLITI

FRIENDS of the Environment Center Director Farhoud Al Hajri expressed his gratitude when talking about the slogan of Qatar National Day of this year, a quote inspired by a verse in one of the poems by the founder of the State of Qatar.

The Qatari people mirror the simplicity of their environment, and the gentleness of their morals and humility is rooted in the gentleness of the land, and it is graceful to link the National Day with the environment. 'Ancestral Meadows: A Matter of Trust' affirms that taking care of the country and its heritage is a patriotic responsibility, which encourages and motivates the importance of preserving the environment and it bears important connotations and meanings.

In an interview with Qatar Tribune, Hajri said that the slogan represents the strong relationship of Qataris to their environment since time immemorial. Excerpts:

How do you evaluate public awareness towards the environment?

I believe that the existence of initiatives that care about the environment indicates the interest of the society in this aspect, and we see lots of cooperation and interaction with these initiatives and campaigns, as well as the interactions with schools and the engagement of the youth with our activities.

What are the main challenges facing Friends of the Environment Center (FEC)?



Farhoud Al Hajri

Most of the challenges are rooted in us as a society in general, we suffer from issues related to encroachment on the environment, in particular with the camping season, and this is one of the most important violations and challenges facing the environment in various forms, wild plants infringement is one of them, an act we strongly reject and strongly condemn.

What initiatives FEC is taking in this regard?

FEC is concerned with environmental awareness especially through activities and events organised alongside governmental entities such as Ministry of Municipality and Environment and Ministry of Education and Higher Education and Qatar Uni-



versity including specialised workshops and courses and environmental seminars.

Our purpose is to spread environmental awareness, and working side by side with such entities always brings out the best of results.

What is your opinion about the current environmental efforts conducted in Qatar?

I believe that the new ministerial for-

mation, and the appointment of Minister of Environment and Climate Change, after the separation of the Ministry of Municipality and Environment, which was one ministry, is a proof of the efforts conducted by the government regarding prioritising the environment as one of the crucial subjects. In addition to the legislations directly pointed to preserving the Qatari environment.

What are the ways to spread local

awareness?

The ways of spreading awareness are limitless, and at FEC we take it upon ourselves to achieve and help come up with solutions through events. One of our strategies is linking the environment with other fields such as sports and education. Relying on social media and other media means is also an advantage that helps us reach to as many viewers and participants as possible.

Fascinating Flamingos

QATAR hosts a unique selection of wildlife experiences. A natural habitat to the Arabian Oryx and Gazelles, Qatar is also constant to some unbelievable marine and bird wildlife migrations that are highly recommended.

Every year during the winter season, hundreds of flamingos flock to Qatar's shores on their annual migration from Europe and Siberia to Africa. From November to April, you can catch a glimpse of the Greater flamingo, the largest living species in the flamingo family, averaging 110–150 cm tall and weighing 2–4 kg, at various spots along Qatar's

563-kilometre coastline.

In recent years, ornithologists have discovered that the Al Thakira Mangrove Forest, one of Qatar's natural wonders, is a favourite resting spot for these elegant birds. In these wetlands, they are able to wade in shallow, salty waters, and can easily feed on fish and other crustaceans. Approximately 50 kilometers north of Doha, near the city of Al Khor, Al Thakira is one of Qatar's oldest and largest mangroves reserves, rich in biodiversity and a green oasis in an otherwise desert area.

The dense mangroves at Al Thakira offer a protected environment for wildlife and are an ideal spot for nature lovers. One of the few trees that can grow and thrive in the high levels of salinity that characterise the Arabian Gulf, Qatar's mangroves are teeming with life, attracting fish and crabs, birds and

other migratory birds including gulls, cormorants and waders, geese, mallard and teal.

Just around the corner from Al Thakira, and another popular resting spot for flamingos on their stopover journey, is Al Khor Island, also known as bin Ghanem or Purple Island. Once a prominent site for dye production, particularly the purple dye for which it earned its moniker, the island formerly served as a temporary campsite for fishermen or pearl divers as early as the beginning of the 2nd millennium BCE.

Qatar has partnered with BirdLife International, the world's largest nature conservation consortium, for conservation of migratory birds and their habitat, identifying important bird areas and encouraging scientific studies. BirdLife International has already identified five islands for the purpose.





مِراجِ الأجلاد... أمانتِ

مِرتِ بِي العِيراتِ عِدِّ ومِزلِ ورَسِمِ لِنامِاغِثِنا الهِبابِ
دِيارِ لِنانِعتادِها كَلِّ مِوسِمِ مِراجِنا لَنزِخِرفِها العِشائِبِ
المُؤسِس



The six incredible animals of Qatar



Arabian Oryx

With lengthy spear-like horns, the Arabian Oryx is considered one of the four species of antelope that lives in Qatar's desert and is native to the Arabian Peninsula. It can also be the nationwide animal of Qatar.

Flamingos

Hundreds of flamingos make the northern Qatari wetlands their dwelling for as much as six months as they migrate from Europe in search of hotter climates. They could also be noticed from the air throughout a flying tour of the Al Thakira Mangroves.

Dugong

Known as the 'sea cow', these weak species are in decline and are labeled as weak to extinction by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature.

Whale Shark

These grand aquatic creatures, sometimes called 'light giants' have been endangered since 2002. As the largest fish in the world, they will develop as much as 20 meters lengthy, and sometimes migrate around the globe in search of tropical waters.

Honey Badger

Don't be swayed by its dimension, the honey badger is considered one of the world's hardest animals. It does not begin fights it couldn't end, and it makes a powerful foe. It has additionally been recognized to tackle hyenas, leopards, lions, and pythons.

Hawksbill Turtle

The 560 km shoreline of Qatar is dwelling to be considered one of the largest and most essential nesting habitats for the hawksbill sea turtle in the area.

On World Animal Day, Qatar Tourism highlighted six animals you didn't know were in Qatar

To rejoice in World Animal Day recently, Qatar Tourism highlighted six sudden animals for guests to see in the nation. Despite its small dimension, Qatar is dwelling in an abundance of attention-grabbing land and aquatic creatures that make up the nation's various ecosystems. Home to many nature reserves, the peninsula places nice emphasis on preserving and growing native wildlife to guard it against extinction. Qatar Tourism Chief Operating Officer Berthold Trenkel said, "Visitors will probably be amazed by simply what number of attention-grabbing and distinctive animals there are right here. Qatar is dwelling to dolphins, falcons, sand cats, and the pink fox, amongst many extras. We are dwelling to a plethora of wonderful animals, birds, and implausible fauna, lots of that are indigenous – guests simply must know the place to search for them." Here is a listing of the six most sudden animals in Qatar and the place to search them out:

ARABIAN ORYX

With lengthy spear-like horns, the Arabian Oryx is considered one of the four species of antelope that lives in Qatar's desert and is native to the Arabian Peninsula. It can also be the nationwide animal of Qatar.

This majestic creature was on the verge of extinction. However, after immense conservation measures taken by means of Operation Oryx, the animals were reintroduced into the wilderness in 1982.

Visitors can go to the Arabian Oryx at the Al-Maha sanctuary, additionally known as the Arabian Oryx Sanctuary. They may also be seen at Al Sheehaniya Reserve, positioned 45 km to the west of Doha, and Al Mashabiya Reserve in south-west Qatar, at the nation's oldest pure reserves.



Azzam Al Mannai, a Qatar-based wildlife photographer, says: "No image can do the Arabian Oryx justice. I've been photographing them for the final three years they usually at all times proceed to amaze. They will be discovered in many pure reserves around Qatar and are often known as 'Al Wudhaihi' attributable to their pure white color. A really lovely creature."

WHALE SHARK

These grand aquatic creatures, sometimes called 'light giants' have been endangered since 2002. As the largest fish in the world, they will develop as much as 20 meters lengthy, and sometimes migrate around the globe in search of tropical waters.

Qatar hosts one of the largest gatherings of whale sharks on the planet, showing from April to September off the northeast coast of the Al Shaheen restricted marine zone.

Brigadier General Mohamed Al Jaidah, the lead whale shark analysis scientist in Qatar, says: "As an endangered species, conservation and safety of the



whale sharks is our primary precedence. We have been learning them extensively for the previous 11 years in Qatar making an attempt to know extra about them and their habitat."

"Every year lots of majestic whale sharks congregate in Qatari waters to fine-dine on tuna eggs, basically caviar. I've seen as many as 360 whale sharks directly. You see the fins, the tails, they're going to be beneath the boat, swimming, subsequent to you, in all kinds of various places."

DUGONG

Known as the 'sea cow', these weak species are in decline and are labeled as weak to extinction by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature.

Home to the second-largest inhabitants of dugongs globally, Qatar's continued efforts to check and defend marine mammals resulted in an uncommon sighting of a bunch of 840 dugongs in 2020. Often seen to collect north of the peninsula's shores between January and early March, these sea mammals will be discovered in giant herds, which isn't widespread behaviour for this sea mammal.

Mehsin Al-Ansi Al-Yafei, Associate Professor of



Environmental Sciences and dugong researcher, says: "What's wonderful about the dugongs of Qatar is we have seen gatherings of over 800 in sooner or later over my previous two years of analysis. Something that hasn't been seen anyplace else in the world. They feed on the seagrass and have been swimming around the Arabian Gulf for greater than 7,000 years. I've been learning marine life in Qatar since 2002 and am at all times amazed by the totally different creatures that decision this nation dwelling."

HAWKSBILL TURTLE

The 560 km shoreline of Qatar is dwelling to be considered one of the largest and most essential nesting habitats for the hawksbill sea turtle in the area. Critically endangered, they're thought about by many to be the most lovely of sea turtles for his or her vibrant shells.

As the hawksbill turtles are popularly recognized to go to Fuwairit seaside throughout their nesting season, the seaside undergoes a cleansing marketing campaign as a part of the turtle safety mission, earlier than the space is closed off to the public for the nesting season. Last year was additionally the first time



the public was allowed to witness the miracle of life throughout the hatching season, beneath the umbrella of Qatar Museums, in collaboration with the Wildlife and Protection Department of the Ministry of Municipality and Environment.

FLAMINGOS

Hundreds of flamingos make the northern Qatari wetlands their dwelling for as much as six months as they migrate from Europe in search of hotter climates. They could also be noticed from the air throughout a flying tour of the Al Thakira Mangroves. BirdLife In-



ternational, which goals to guard the habitats of migratory birds, works actively in Qatar to make sure it's a hospitable atmosphere for these annual vibrant guests.

HONEY BADGER

Don't be swayed by its dimension, the honey badger is considered one of the world's hardest animals. It does not begin fights it couldn't end, and it makes a powerful foe. It has additionally been recognized to tackle hyenas, leopards, lions, and pythons. Its scientific identity is 'ratel', however, it's commonly called the honey badger since it's recognized for taking up a full hive of bees to style its favorite snack. The animal also can flip round in its personal unfastened pores and skin to simply break away from predators, for a fast shock assault.

Sightings of Honey Badger in Qatar have been reported from Zuwair, Ilham, and Al Haym southwest Al Shamal.



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