



Abu Dhabi Wins Global Biodiversity Award

The Environment Agency of Abu Dhabi (EAD) has been named as winner of the “Outstanding Contribution to Biodiversity Global 2020 Award” by Capital Finance International (CFI). As the largest environmental watchdog in the region, EAD was recognised for the outstanding efforts it has made to prioritise conservation in the Emirati capital.

“One of our main strategic priorities and mandates is the conservation of biodiversity in Abu Dhabi and we have worked laboriously since the inception of EAD 25 years ago, towards achieving this goal,” [explained Dr Shaika Salem Al Dhaheri](#), the EAD’s Secretary General. “We have been more than successful in protecting biodiversity and we are honoured to be recognised by an international publication such as Capital Finance International for all the hard work that has been done by the EAD team.”

Champions of conservation

Since its creation a quarter of a century ago, the EAD have been continuing the noble work first undertaken by the Founding Father of the UAE, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan. Much like [the recipients of the 2020 Goldman Environmental Prize](#), the late Sheikh – who was known as the First Environmentalist – made conservation a key component of his life’s work.

The Sheikh expanded the number of conservation areas in the country to 19, including 13 on land (16.9% of all land surface area) and 6 in water (13.9% of marine areas). Since then, the EAD has successfully received International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Green List accreditation for Al Wathba Wetland Reserve, making it the first territory in the Gulf Cooperation Council to receive that recognition.

In total, Abu Dhabi is home to around 3,800 known species, a mere 2% of which are currently deemed “threatened” according to the IUCN. That underlines how the UAE in general, and Abu Dhabi in particular, is proving to be a haven for animals of all kinds – but the Emirates are especially adept at ensuring under-threat species don’t just survive, but thrive, too.

Saving endangered species

Perhaps the most notable achievement of the EAD in recent times has been the biggest reintroduction programme of the Arabian Oryx witnessed anywhere in the



world. Once on the very edge of extinction, the species has now been successfully coaxed back to stability and today, there are over 5,000 of these majestic creatures in Abu Dhabi, spelling out the success of the programme. 60 Arabian Oryx are due to be released into Jordanian territories over the coming two years.

Elsewhere, the waters surrounding Abu Dhabi are teeming with wildlife and biodiversity, as well. There are around 3,000 registered dugongs in marine habitats close to the Emirati capital, making that the largest density per square metre population of those animals in the Gulf and the second biggest population anywhere in the world.

Moreover, there are in excess of 700 dolphins in Emirati waters, many of them living in conservation areas. That population also includes many Indian Ocean Humpback dolphins, alongside 268 Indo-Pacific Bottlenose dolphins and 37 endangered porpoises, as well.