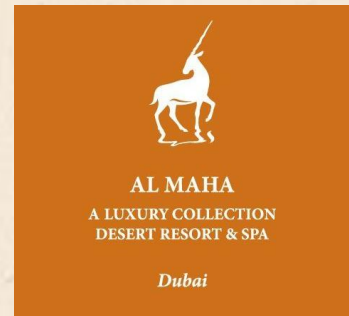




Proceedings of the National Workshop on Arabian Oryx Collections in UAE

Dubai, 17th November 2015





The General Secretariat for the Conservation of the Arabian Oryx (GSCAO) is a regional initiative with a key role of supporting all efforts to protect and conserve the Arabian Oryx, to agree regional criteria and standards, and to coordinate efforts between range states. GSCAO is hosted by the Environment Agency-Abu Dhabi.

Published by Environment Agency- Abu Dhabi (EAD)

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Suggested citation: Environment Agency - Abu Dhabi. 2015. *Proceedings of the National Workshop on Arabian Oryx Collections in UAE, 17th November 2015, Al Maha Desert Resort, Dubai, UAE*. The General Secretariat for the Conservation of the Arabian Oryx /Environment Agency- Abu Dhabi, UAE.

Table of Contents	Page
Acknowledgments	5
Executive Summary	7
Introduction	9
Workshop agenda	12
Welcome speeches	13
Abstracts of oral presentations	16
Roundtable discussions	23
Closing remarks	31
Annex 1: List of participants	33

Acknowledgments

The General Secretariat for the Conservation of the Arabian Oryx (GSCAO) would like to thank H.E. Razan Khalifa Al Mubarak, Secretary General of Environment Agency - Abu Dhabi (EAD) for her continuous support to the GSCAO. Thanks are also due to Dr. Shaikha Al Dhaheri, Executive Director of Terrestrial & Marine Biodiversity and Dr. Majid Al Qassimi, Director of Terrestrial Biodiversity for their support and encouragement to conduct this national workshop. Dr. Majid Al Qassimi facilitated the afternoon session of the workshop. Special thanks also go to Nessrine Alzahlawi and Yassir Al Kharusi for coordinating technical and logistical requirements of this workshop and writing the Proceedings. The National Workshop for Arabian Oryx Collections in the UAE was hosted by the Dubai Desert Conservation Reserve (DDCR) and sponsored by Al Maha, a Luxury Collection Desert Resort and Spa. Greg Simkins (DDCR) and Linus Saberón from Al Maha Desert Resort deserve special thanks for the setup of the workshop venue and other logistical and hosting arrangements. Last but certainly not the least; thanks go to all participants for their presentations, inputs and active discussions which have certainly enhanced the workshop agenda and its outcomes.



Figure 1. Participants of the National Workshop for Arabian Oryx collections in the UAE.

Executive Summary

The General Secretariat for the Conservation of the Arabian Oryx (GSCAO) in collaboration with the Dubai Desert Conservation Reserve & Al Maha, a Luxury Collection Desert Resort & Spa, organized a National Workshop for Arabian Oryx Collections in UAE. The workshop was held on 17th November 2015 at the Al Maha Desert Resort & Spa in Dubai. The principal aim of this workshop was to assemble all concerned agencies and experts in Arabian Oryx management and conservation in the UAE to present to them the outcomes of the 5th Meeting of the Coordination Committee for the Conservation of the Arabian Oryx (CCCAO), carry out a data gathering and gap analysis exercise, and agree on a systematic mechanism for information sharing at the national level, in order to be able to gather information on key issues and challenges of Arabian Oryx management in the UAE on an annual basis. The workshop format was based on oral presentations in the morning, followed by a hands-on exercise in the afternoon to review the UAE national reporting template. The workshop was concluded by calling for more collaboration and coordination between Arabian Oryx collections in the UAE. It also recommended that national standards, protocols and guidance related to husbandry, measuring management success and setting management plans need to be developed. Equally, workshop participants called for more engagement of private collectors in conservation planning of Arabian Oryx at the national level.



Figure 2. An Arabian Oryx herd in one of the UAE's reserves.

1 Introduction

The 5th Meeting of the Coordination Committee for the Conservation of the Arabian Oryx (CCCAO), held on the 12th of May 2015 in Abu Dhabi, called upon Arabian Oryx range states to facilitate information sharing between Arabian Oryx collections at both the national and international levels. To implement this action, the General Secretariat for the Conservation of the Arabian Oryx (GSCAO) recommended at this meeting an annual reporting template as well as a terms of reference for national coordinators. In October 2015, the annual reporting template was endorsed by all range states. The template requests information on various conservation and management activities that are carried out in the country and is to be submitted to the GSCAO by 1st March of every year in order to measure progress towards achieving the targets set out in the Arabian Oryx Regional Conservation Strategy and Action plan (2010). As an initiative to implement the recommendations of the 5th Meeting of the CCCAO, the GSCAO organized a national UAE-level workshop for Arabian Oryx collections.

The workshop was held on 17th November 2015 at the Al Maha Desert Resort in Dubai. The principle aim of this workshop was to assemble all concerned agencies and experts in Arabian Oryx management and conservation in the UAE to introduce them to the GSCAO and its regional conservation strategy, carry out a data gathering and gap analysis exercise, and agree on a systematic mechanism for information sharing at the national level, in order to be able to gather information on key issues and challenges of Arabian Oryx management in the UAE on an annual basis. The following details the specific objectives of the workshop:

- Inform and update conservation managers of Arabian Oryx collections in the UAE about the GSCAO and its mission and

- the Arabian Oryx Regional Conservation Strategy and Action Plan;
- Present the outputs of the 5th Meeting of the Coordination Committee for the Conservation of the Arabian Oryx (CCCAO) to Arabian Oryx collection managers in UAE;
 - Present in detail the five year work plan and the annual reporting template to conservation managers of Arabian Oryx collections in UAE;
 - Provide collections and conservation managers with the opportunity to present and share information about their populations;
 - Identify what data is currently available on Arabian Oryx across all collections in the UAE, and determine what forms of monitoring/collection management records are available;
 - Identify key issues and challenges in relation to Arabian Oryx conservation and collection management in the UAE;
 - Identify an appropriate communication and reporting mechanism amongst Arabian Oryx collections in the UAE that would help complete the annual report as well as enhance information sharing between different collections in aspects related to Arabian Oryx management in captivity and in the wild;
 - Identify a UAE national coordinator for the GSCAO; and
 - Urge conservation managers in the UAE to collaborate & communicate through the UAE national coordinator and by utilizing the GSCAO'S website as an information hub, sharing

Proceedings of the National Workshop on Arabian Oryx Collections in UAE

their conservation activities including initiatives, events, stories and Arabian Oryx data in the UAE.

The workshop was attended by a total of 32 conservation managers representing 16 Arabian Oryx Collections in the UAE (Annex 1).



Figure 3. The Workshop was attended by representatives of 16 Arabian Oryx collections in UAE.

2 Workshop agenda

Table 1 presents the Agenda of the National Workshop.

Table 1. Agenda of the National Workshop for Arabian Oryx Collections in the UAE.

Agenda	Time
Registration	09:00-09:30
Welcome speech Dr. Majid Al Qassimi (Director of Terrestrial Biodiversity- EAD) Mr. Greg Simkins (Conservation Manager- Dubai Desert Conservation Reserve)	09:30-09:35
Overview talk about the workshop, objectives, expected outputs and forward actions Dr. Majid Al Qassimi	09:35-09:45
Update on the GSCAO: Mission, Regional strategy, Five year strategic work plan and national reporting template Yassir Al Kharusi	09:45-10:45
Coffee Break	10:45-11:00
Presentations by collection managers (10 minutes each)	11:00-12:15
Lunch	12:15-13:15
Roundtable discussion (facilitated by Dr. Majid Al Qassimi) A trial hands-on exercise for completing the national reporting template Identifying appropriate communication and reporting mechanisms Other proposals from attendees	13:15-15:30
Closing remarks Dr. Majid Al Qassimi	15:30-16:00

3 Welcome speeches

Delivered by Dr. Majid Al Qassimi (Director of Terrestrial Biodiversity- EAD).

Dear Conservation managers,



It is my pleasure and honor to welcome you today to this National Workshop for Arabian Oryx Collections in the UAE and say a few words about its significance. The General Secretariat for the Conservation of the Arabian Oryx (GSCAO) has been established to coordinate and support Arabian Oryx conservation efforts on both the national and regional levels. In line with this mission, GSCAO has been actively working on several regional initiatives that mainly aim at facilitating the sharing of information and supporting capacity building in the range States. Examples of these initiatives include formulating the Arabian Oryx Regional Conservation Strategy and Action Plan in 2011, surveying Arabian Oryx diseases in range States every two years, and developing the GSCAO's website www.arabianoryx.org launched in 2014.

At the fifth meeting of the Coordination Committee for the Conservation of Arabian Oryx (CCCAO), held earlier this year in May 2015 in Abu Dhabi, representatives from all of the Range States agreed to adopt the five year strategic plan (2015-2019) and a national reporting template to monitor progress made by Range States towards implementing the Arabian Oryx Regional Conservation Strategy and Action Plan. In this workshop, our aim is to bring all key collections in the UAE together, to present to you the outcomes of this meeting, listen to the key issues that you face in the daily management of collections, and most importantly create a platform for all of us to learn from each other's experiences. Hopefully by the end of this workshop, we

can agree on a way forward for information sharing at the national level, which would allow us to gather information on the Arabian Oryx each year, and allow the UAE to complete its annual national reporting commitment to the GSCAO. More importantly, this workshop is a chance to all connect, communicate and work together to conserve this iconic species.

Before, I conclude I would like to thank Dubai Desert Conservation Reserve and Al Maha, a luxury collection desert resort & spa for hosting and sponsoring this workshop in this beautiful location. Thank you.

Delivered by Greg Simkins (Conservation Manager, Dubai Desert Conservation Reserve)



On behalf of Dubai Desert Conservation Reserve, I would like to welcome you all to our workshop today. It was a real honor for us to be asked by the General Secretariat for the Conservation of the Arabian Oryx to host this workshop. I would just like to say that I am hoping from this workshop we are here to share both our positive stories but also

look at problems that we face with managing Arabian Oryx within this region. Hopefully, we can share some of those and come to some solutions or guidelines to enable us to move forward from today onwards with our conservation of the Arabian Oryx in UAE. Thank you.



Figure 4. An Arabian Oryx in the UAE desert

4 Abstracts of Presentations

4.1 GSCAO Achievements and future Strategic Plan (2015-2019)

Update on the General Secretariat for the Conservation of the Arabian Oryx (GSCAO): Mission, regional strategy, five year strategic work plan and annual reporting template

Yassir Al Kharusi, Environment Agency- Abu Dhabi (EAD)



The General Secretariat for the Conservation of the Arabian Oryx (GSCAO) was established in 2001 to coordinate the work of the Coordination Committee for the Conservation of the Arabian Oryx (CCCAO). The strategic role of GSCAO, hosted by EAD, is to establish a communication network that can facilitate information sharing and capacity building of conservation professionals and expertise in the Arabian Oryx range states. Key GSCAO initiatives have so far included developing the Arabian Oryx Regional Strategy and Action Plan, surveying Arabian Oryx diseases in the range States, launching GSCAO's website www.arabianoryx.org as well as organizing technical workshops for veterinarians as well as other conservation managers in the range states. GSCAO's five year strategic work plan was presented, in which herd management, small population and genetic management, disease and reintroduction were recognized as four priority areas for research in the Range States.

4.2 Presentations by managers of Oryx collections

Conservation of Arabian Oryx at Management of Nature Conservation

*Dr. Md. Nazrul Islam Pathan, Management of Nature Conservation (MNC),
Department of the President's Affairs, Abu Dhabi*



Management of Nature Conservation (MNC) was established in 2003 under the Department of the President's Affairs. Conservation of Arabian Oryx at MNC started with 217 individuals scattered in three different locations that include Abu Al Abyad, Al Rawdah and Al Wathba. MNC follows various management strategies to minimize mortalities by disease screening, preventive and clinical medication. Measures adopted to improve Oryx population productivity at MNC include provision of balanced nutrition, removal of surplus males and nonproductive individuals as well as habitat development.

Management of Arabian Oryx at Al Ain Zoo

Mohammed Al Faqeer & Hessa Al Qahtani, Al Ain Zoo



The establishment of the Arabian Oryx population in 1969 in Al Ain Zoo had been an essential trigger for the establishment of Al Ain Zoo. Over the 46 years of Al Ain Zoo's age, plenty of development and conservation initiatives have been carried out, and significantly the latest ten years have witnessed various improvements in all aspects of the zoo management aiming to improve animal welfare and standardize the

practices of both animal husbandry and veterinary management regimes up to the international levels. However, in this presentation we will shed the lights briefly on these developments which all have rendered the zoo's population of Arabian Oryx as one of the recognized collections. Finally, results of the genetic research on the Arabian Oryx of Al Ain Zoo as well as other local and regional collections, as shown in this talk, gives the demonstration that exchanging/translocation of Arabian Oryx among the UAE and/or the regional zoological facilities are a valid option to maintain and improve the genetic diversity of the species.

Arabian Oryx at Sir Bani Yas Island

Abid Mehmood, Barari Forest Management



Barari in 2013 entered into a contract with Tourism Development and Investment Company (TDIC) to provide all round services for the management and conservation of flora & fauna on Sir Bani Yas Island. The island is well renowned eco-tourism destination in UAE, with a collection of more than 13,000 animals of 19 ungulate, 3 ratite and 4 carnivore species. It is also a reserve for one of the world's largest herds of endangered Arabian Oryx & scimitar-horned Oryx. The objective of the Arabian Oryx conservation program at Sir Bani Yas Island is to have a genetically healthy population of Arabian Oryx that can serve the future conservation initiatives and can be a part of any *in-situ* and *ex-situ* conservation program in the region. Wildlife at Sir Bani Yas is the result of the visionary leadership of H. H. Late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, who started bringing animals to the island in 1971. There are 5 separate populations of Arabian Oryx at Sir Bani Yas Island With a current total of 731 individuals. The key challenge now is bringing a new bloodline as most of the Arabian Oryx in UAE are closely related to

Sir Bani Yas population. The future strategy of Arabian Oryx conservation in the island is to have controlled breeding and set up quality standards for the gene pool rather than just increasing the numbers.

Arabian Oryx in the Dubai Desert Conservation Reserve

Greg Simkins, Dubai Desert Conservation Reserve



The Dubai Desert Conservation Reserve (DDRC) was initially established in 1999. The reserve, now totaling 225 square kilometer, is representative of Dubai inland desert ecosystem and is characterized by sand dunes interspersed with gravel plains. Goals of Arabian Oryx reintroductions in DDCR include establishing a viable breeding population, improving the biodiversity of DDCR through an effective eco-system management as well as providing an opportunity for visitors to the reserve to observe Arabian Oryx in their natural, desert habitat and to do so in a sustainable manner. Currently, DDCR accommodates some 450 Arabian Oryx, including 75 calves born in 2015. In order to have an eventual end to supplementary feeding, future management of DDCR aims to introduce population control mechanisms that can drastically reduce the herd size so that a well-adapted reintroduced population which displays "wild" behaviors can be achieved.

Non-Invasive Arabian Oryx Data Capture: Using Object Based Image Analysis to map animal distribution and dynamics

Meyer de Kock, Al Bustan Zoological Gardens



Mapping of animal distribution usually entails the visual observation, radio frequency tracking or Global Positioning System (GPS) collars tracking. The last mentioned require the restraint of the animal, physical or chemical to attach a device. In the last few decades, invasive techniques were adopted, for gathering ecological and conservation data from animal species. This invasive procedure is a health risk for the target species. This presentation aims to provide a customizable GIS based toolset to determining the geographical distribution of the Arabian Oryx, the species are identified using non-invasive remote sensing data and Object-Based Image Analysis methods. A comparison on the use of GPS collars and OIBA was also presented.

Arabian Oryx management at Al Reef Farm

Manie Grobler, Al Ajban Wildlife Hunting and Desert Safari

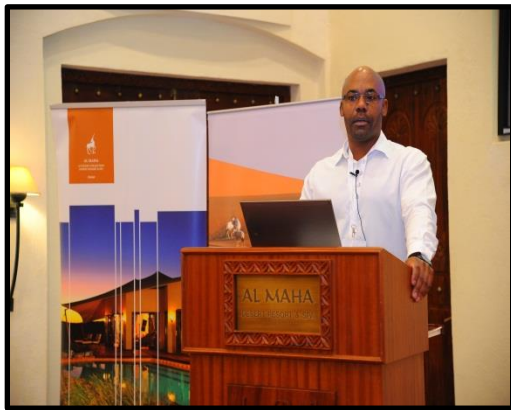


The aim of the management of the Arabian Oryx herd on Rawdat Al Reef is closely tied with the primary objective of the management of all the wildlife on this extensive farm. Available historic data on this collection does not provide answers to all the questions though it is sufficient to serve as a solid foundation to

future management policies. With the healthy population of 341 animals at the moment with a high percentage of male - a separation of the sexes was necessary to aim for optimum breeding success. The management actions provide for increased animal health through treatment and vaccinations, selective breeding, record keeping and provision of sufficient food and space to ensure free movement. Results of this management approach indicate that there is a significant increase in the calving rate and the infant survival rate. The future proposed approach includes the implementation of a health protocol, upgrading of facilities and annual vaccination programs coupled with a male rotation program.

Arabian Oryx Management by the Environment Agency-Abu Dhabi (EAD) at Deleika Animal Facility

Ricardo Pusey, EAD



EAD's Arabian Oryx management programme aims to maintain a healthy and genetically sustainable population. This is achieved by routine disease screening, health assessments and by increasing genetic diversity through the introduction of new blood lines. EAD currently has three sites with Arabian Oryx including

Deleika animal holding facility. Deleika is located between Abu Dhabi and Al Ain and is 350 hectares. It houses five species including 175 Arabian Oryx. The Oryx are housed in three pens sized 100 x 200m and fed a diet of 90% blue grass and 10% dried alfalfa and pellet. Due to the large enclosure size a system of capture cloth and alleyways has been set up to help manage the animals during annual vaccinations and health screening. Plans have been developed to divide the current pens into smaller, more manageable sizes. Major achievements in EAD's Arabian

Oryx program include the translocation of 20 Oryx to Wadi Rum, Jordan and the establishment of the population at Umm al Zamool (Arabian Oryx Protected Area). Future goals include further reintroductions within native range, whenever possible, and the establishment of new captive populations. Greater institutional collaboration throughout the region will be a key to the achievement of these goals.



Figure 5. A male Arabian Oryx.

5 Roundtable discussions

5.1 Trial session on completing the UAE National Reporting Template

In this hands-on exercise, participants were divided into three groups and each group had a moderator and a notetaker. Each group was tasked to complete specific sections of the national reporting template. For each question in the national report, each group moderator was supplemented with additional background so that each question can be answered with as much information and evidence as possible. The notetaker of each group was provided with a notebook for note recording of the group discussion. The national report questions were developed to measure progress towards achieving the objectives of the Arabian Oryx Regional Strategy and Action Plan:

- Objective 1: Complete legislative process in all range states and enhance enforcement of wildlife legislation;
- Objective 2: Enhance and increase wild Oryx populations;
- Objective 3: Establish a regional species management plan;
- Objective 4: Secure public support for, and participation in, Arabian Oryx program;
- Objective 5: Build adequate region-wide capacity for all aspects of Arabian Oryx conservation;
- Objective 6: Secure coordination between range states.



Figure 6. Group discussions during the afternoon session of the workshop.



Figure 7. Dr. Majid Al Qassimi facilitating one of the group discussions.



Figure 8. Workshop participants discussed various aspects related to Arabian Oryx conservation in UAE.

5.2 Discussion topics and recommendations

The following three tables provide some key topics and recommendations resulting from group discussions.

Table 2. Discussion topics and recommendations of Group 1 for Objectives 1 and 2 of the Arabian Oryx Regional Strategy and Action Plan

Group 1	Key topics and recommendations
<p>Objective 1: Complete legislative process in all Range States and enhance enforcement of wildlife legislation</p>	<p>UAE needs a structure to oversee and coordinate the implementation of the Arabian Oryx Regional Strategy and Action Plan.</p> <p>More guidance should be given to Oryx collections in the UAE on how they can contribute towards implementation of the Arabian Oryx Regional Strategy.</p> <p>Laws are required to regulate grazing by camels and livestock to conserve desert habitat and vegetation.</p> <p>Private collectors need to be engaged and provided with full information concerning Arabian Oryx conservation efforts at the national level.</p>
<p>Objective 2: Enhance and increase wild Oryx populations</p>	<p>Current measures of Oryx conservation success are mostly based on breeding and numbers. Oryx conservation programs need to move away from this perception and hence it is important to develop a set of standards for success at the national level.</p> <p>Herd quality is more important than quantity</p> <p>Collections are urged to work towards the objectives of the GSCAO's regional strategy.</p> <p>Minimum required standards for husbandry need to be developed.</p> <p>National protocols for wildlife releases should be also developed.</p> <p>There should be a centralized databank of genetic</p>

	<p>samples and a standardized protocol amongst collections in UAE for collecting these samples. A reintroduction program is never over, there is always a need to monitor.</p>
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Table 3. Discussion topics and recommendations of Group 2 for Objectives 3 and 4 of the Arabian Oryx Regional Strategy and Action Plan.

Group 2	Key topics and recommendations
<p>Objective 3: Establish a regional species management plan</p>	<p>No demographic assessment of Oryx collections in UAE have been carried out</p> <p>Access to private collections is one of the obstacles for assessing captive-bred individuals</p> <p>A few Oryx collections have carried out genetic assessment but this assessment needs to be updated and also increase the sampled individuals</p> <p>Every collection manages its own Oryx independently and there is no unified management plan for Arabian Oryx at the national level</p> <p>No written guidelines for Arabian Oryx management in UAE</p> <p>Concerns were raised about writing guidelines which might turn into rules and policies that cannot realistically applied by most of Arabian Oryx collection owners</p>
<p>Objective 4: Secure public support for, and participation in, Arabian Oryx programs</p>	<p>Most of private Oryx collections in UAE do not sufficiently contribute to the educational value of wildlife</p> <p>Local community involvement in Arabian Oryx programs such as what is observed in other countries where locals are dependent on wildlife resources does not exist in UAE, probably due to the UAE human population structure and the land ownership system.</p> <p>UAE has some ecotourism projects (e.g. DDCR, hunting programs and Qasr Al Sarab)</p>

Table 4. Discussion topics and recommendations of group 3 for Objectives 5 and 6 of the Arabian Oryx Regional Strategy and Action Plan

Group 3	Key topics and recommendations
Objective 5: Build adequate region-wide capacity for all aspects of Arabian Oryx conservation	<p>Genetics needed but also basic husbandry guidelines are more important.</p> <p>Training should be set for smaller collections on basic standards for husbandry</p> <p>- a challenge exist as most of Oryx staff are foreign laborers.</p> <p>Larger collections need stringer genetic control</p> <p>GSCAO should consider developing an international studbook for Arabian Oryx.</p> <p>Training is needed on identification of calve births and tagging calves for the sake of basic parentage/ sire.</p>
Objective 6: Secure coordination between range states	<p>Centralized coordinator for national information sharing is needed.</p> <p>Coordinator should be granted an access to Oryx collection so that he can assess their capabilities in relation to regional exchange of Oryx individuals.</p> <p>Incentivize lower standard collections to learn by promising extra surplus animals.</p> <p>The UAE coordinator and GSCAO should take advantage of other workshops and summits where many national members attend.</p>

5.3 Reporting and communication amongst Arabian Oryx collections

It was agreed at the workshop that GSCAO should contact as many Oryx collections as possible in the UAE to collate data on their locations, contact persons, contact addresses as well as the appropriate correspondence mechanism (e.g. e-mail, official letter or phone call). In this context, workshop participants can assist GSCAO to accomplish this task through providing it with contact addresses of other national Oryx collections which they know.

5.4 Next steps

Collection managers are to provide GSCAO with information, reports and necessary data about their Arabian Oryx collections that can be used to complete the UAE national report by March 2016. For the purpose of updating the GSCAO's website, collection managers are also to provide GSCAO with any data, release events, photos and videos that can be shared with the website visitors.

6 Closing remarks

Dr. Majid Al Qassimi concluded the workshop by urging conservation managers of Arabian Oryx collections in UAE to collaborate more with the GSCAO. Specifically, they can enhance the GSCAO'S website www.arabianoryx.org with needed materials such as Oryx photos, films, scientific data, articles and highlighted stories that can be shared with the website visitors. Dr. Al Qassimi also thanked and awarded the Dubai Desert Conservation Reserve and Al Maha, a Luxury Collection Desert Resort and Spa, for hosting and sponsoring this national workshop.



Figure 9. Dubai Desert Conservation Reserve was awarded for hosting the National Workshop for Arabian Oryx Collections in UAE.



Figure 10. Al Maha Desert Resort was awarded for sponsoring the National Workshop for Arabian Oryx Collections in UAE.

Annex 1: List of participants

Name	Organization	E-mail
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Proceedings of the National Workshop on Arabian Oryx Collections in UAE

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Proceedings of the National Workshop on Arabian Oryx Collections in UAE

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