



**Proceedings of the 5th
Meeting of the Coordination
Committee for the
Conservation of the Arabian
oryx (CCCAO)**

*12 May 2015, Abu Dhabi,
United Arab Emirates*

www.arabianoryx.org



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SUMMARY OF THE 5TH MEETING OF THE COORDINATION COMMITTEE FOR THE CONSERVATION OF THE ARABIAN ORYX (CCCAO)

Attendees:

Hosted by the Environment Agency-Abu Dhabi (EAD) at the Dusit Thani in Abu Dhabi, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on 12 May 2015, this meeting was well-attended by 26 delegates from the following countries: Bahrain; Iraq; Jordan; Kuwait; Oman; Qatar; Saudi Arabia; Syria and United Arab Emirates. An apology from Yemen was noted.

Progress since the 4th Meeting of the CCCAO:

The following key achievements were reported on:

- Surveying Arabian oryx diseases in the Range States, 2011 and 2013;
- Organizing a regional workshop "Veterinary Management of Arabian oryx in the Range States", 2011; and
- Launching the General Secretariat for the Conservation of Arabian oryx (GSCAO) website - www.arabianoryx.org.

Range State Updates:

Poaching, reserve management, genetic analysis, lack of capacity building, ecotourism and communicating with private collections were key themes outlined by Range States during the Range State Reporting Session.

GSCAO Proposals at the 5th Meeting of the CCCAO:

The following proposals were tabled by GSCAO:

- **Proposed a Five Year Strategic Work Plan (2015-2019)** based on priorities identified in consultation with Range States.
 - Overall objective is to have made recognizable and measurable progress against the eight objectives of the Arabian oryx Regional Strategy (2007);
 - Two new key initiatives have been proposed for the five year strategic Work Plan:
 - **1) Annual National Reporting.** The GSCAO has developed a national reporting mechanism to gather information from Range States annually on national initiatives and projects. This will enable GSCAO to become an information hub for Arabian oryx conservation in the region.
 - **2) Technical Capacity Building Workshops.** The GSCAO proposed to facilitate four technical workshops over the next five years with the

objective of enhancing Range State technical capacity. Member states are encouraged to play a more active role in the implementation of this strategic Work Plan by hosting these technical workshops.

- o The Technical Workshops to address defined and agreed priorities are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Proposed Capacity Building Technical Workshops

Proposed Technical Workshops	Timeframe
Technical workshop focuses on herd management of Arabian oryx collections in the Range States	2016
Disease surveys of Arabian oryx collections in the Middle East	2016
Technical workshop on "genetic and small population management"	2017
Technical workshop focusing on capacity building of veterinarians	2018
Technical workshop on "Reintroduction and rehabilitation case studies and mapping of potential sites	2019

- **Roles and responsibilities of national coordinators** were proposed and should be in accordance with his or her national department and with provisions of national law.

Summary of Consensus and Forward Actions:

There was consensus from the Range States on implementing these proposals, with national coordinators to complete national reports on progress against the Regional Strategy and new Arabian oryx Five Year Strategic Work Plan (2015-2019) and consider hosting technical workshops.

In addition, the following were key points of discussion in the afternoon Roundtable session:

- **Technical Workshop Manuals:** It was agreed that at the conclusion of a technical workshop, manuals that can guide practical management of that technical capability should be prepared and shared with Attendees.
- **Contribution to international conservation:** Delegates proposed GSCAO to have an effective contribution to international conservation decisions concerning the Arabian oryx, through collaboration with worldwide conservation organizations.

- **Knowledge Sharing:** All Range States were encouraged to share knowledge via the website on priority issues. E.g. Saudi Arabia is to provide GSCAO with a document summarizing its successful handling of overpopulation problems of Arabian oryx in Mahazat As-Sayd.

The following National Level Commitments were made at the Meeting:

- **Adopt Five Year Strategic Work Plan:** To adopt the Five Year Arabian oryx Strategic Work Plan (2015-2019) (Appendix A);
- **National Reporting Template:** To annually report to the GSCAO through the National Reporting Template (Appendix B);
- **National Range States** were encouraged to take active roles in facilitating the mission of GSCAO through hosting proposed technical workshops and regular meetings of CCCAO.
 - o Range States willing to host proposed technical workshops and regular meetings of CCCAO should send an official letter to H.E. Secretary General of EAD.
- **It was agreed that the 6th Meeting of CCCAO is scheduled for 2017.**



FOREWORD

Arabian oryx (*Oryx leucoryx*) or Al Maha Al Araby is a high profile species for conservation on the Arabian Peninsula. Its eyes and white color inspired many Arab poets who wrote about their beauty. In the 1970s, the oryx became extinct in Arabia due to overhunting. Thanks

to international collaboration driven by the commitment of Range States, Arabian oryx has been successfully returned to Arabian deserts. We at EAD are proud to host the GSCAO which via its Regional Strategy (2007) aims to establish free-ranging populations of Arabian oryx throughout its historic range in the Arabian Peninsula. The 5th meeting of the CCCAO signifies a further forward step to meet the strategic objectives of the CCCAO and the Regional Strategy. We are grateful to all representatives of Range States whose experiences, discussions, remarks, ideas and above all - commitment - led to measurable conservation outputs for the next five years and beyond.

We look forward to having Range States playing a more active contribution in the regional mission of GSCAO through hosting future workshops and meetings as outlined in the 5th meeting of CCCAO. GSCAO's success in fulfilling its objectives is based on our shared efforts and commitment - together we will ensure that the Arabian oryx continues to be a symbol of what we can achieve when working together.

Thank you for your contribution and knowledge sharing.

Dr. Shaikha Salem Al Dhaheri

**Executive Director, Terrestrial & Marine Biodiversity Sector
Environment Agency- Abu Dhabi**



1 INTRODUCTION

The 5th Meeting of the Coordination Committee for the Conservation of the Arabian oryx, held on 12 May 2015, Abu Dhabi, the UAE, was organized by the General Secretariat for the Conservation of the Arabian oryx in partnership with EAD. The meeting aimed to present past and future initiatives of GSCAO to Range State representatives, in striving to achieve the Secretariat Vision of:

- VIABLE, SUSTAINABLE AND FREE-RANGING POPULATIONS OF ARABIAN ORYX OCCUR IN NATURAL HABITATS ACROSS THEIR HISTORIC RANGE AND IN HARMONY WITH LOCAL COMMUNITIES.

In total some 26 delegates attended the meeting representing the Arabian oryx Range States including Bahrain; Iraq; Jordan; Kuwait; Oman; Qatar; Saudi Arabia; Syria and United Arab Emirates. Appendix C presents a list of participants.

Key achievements presented included surveying Arabian oryx disease in the Range States; organizing a workshop on veterinary management of Arabian oryx in the Range States and launching the GSCAO website www.arabianoryx.org. Proposed future initiatives included agreement on a future Five Year Strategic Work Plan (2015-2019), a national reporting template for states to share knowledge and to annually report progress towards the plan; as well as reviewing the roles and responsibilities of GSCAO national coordinators in the Range States.

Appendix D presents the press clippings that covered the meeting.

2 AGENDA

Table 2 presents the Agenda of the 5th Meeting of the CCCAO.

Table 2: Agenda of the 5th Meeting of CCCAO

Agenda	Time
Registration	08:30-9:00
Opening of meeting: Welcome and Introduction Dr. Shaikha Salem Al Dhaheri (Executive Director, Terrestrial and Marine Biodiversity Sector, EAD, UAE)	9:00-10:00
Coffee break	10:00-10:30
Presentation session Key presentation include:	10:30-12:30
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Future roadmap and strategic initiatives of the GSCAO - (Yassir Al Kharusi, GSCAO coordinator) 2. Introduction to the website of GSCAO www.arabianoryx.org - (Rajeyah Binkulaib, GSCAO Administrator) 3. Surveying Arabian oryx diseases in the Middle East- (Yassir Al Kharusi, GSCAO coordinator) 4. Update on Arabian oryx conservation programmes in the Range States (representatives of Range States) 	
Lunch	12:30-13:30
Discussion session - Facilitated by Dr. Shaikha Salem Al Dhaheri, Executive Director-Terrestrial and Marine Biodiversity Sector, EAD) Key discussions include	13:30-14:15
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Proposed 2015-2019 Work Plan of GSCAO 2. Proposed National reporting template 3. Proposed roles and responsibilities of national coordinators in the Range States 	
Closing remarks - of the 5 th Meeting of the Coordination Committee for the Conservation of the Arabian oryx Dr. Shaikha Salem Al Dhaheri (Executive Director, Terrestrial and Marine Biodiversity Sector, EAD, UAE)	16:15-16:30

Figure 1 presents the attendees of the 5th Meeting of the CCCAO.



Figure 1: Attendees at the 5th Meeting of the CCAO. **Bottom left to Right:** Salim Al Rabiee, Oman; Fawaz Al Baroudi, Saudi Arabia; Talal Al Naimi, Qatar; Ahmed Boug, Saudi Arabia; Dr. Shaikha Salem Al Dhaheri, UAE; Dr. Zainab Khaleel, Iraq; Jassim Boftain, Kuwait; Belal Al Hayek, Syria; Dr. Adel Al Awadhi, Bahrain. **Top left to right:** Nessrine Al Zahlawi, EAD, UAE; Mohammed Al Remeithi, EAD, UAE; Maher Kabshawi, EAD, UAE; Dr. Carlos Solis, EAD, UAE; Justin Chuven, EAD, UE; Dr. Majid Al Qassimi, EAD, UAE; Dr. Louis Lignereux, EAD, UAE; Nasser Al Zawaideh, Jordan; Richardo Pusey, EAD, UAE; Myyas Al Qarqaz, Al Ain Zoo, UAE; Winston Cowie, EAD, UAE; Jamal Al Zaidaneen, EAD, UAE, Pritpal Soorae, EAD, UAE; Yassir Al Kharusi, GSCAO Coordinator; and Mohammed Zarour, Jordan.

3 Opening Speech

Delivered by Dr. Shaikha Salem Al Dhaheri, Executive Director, Terrestrial & Marine Biodiversity Sector, EAD.

Representatives of the member states in the Coordinating Committee for the Conservation of the Arabian oryx,

Ladies and gentlemen,

At the beginning I would like to welcome you to the UAE and thank you for accepting the invitation to attend the Fifth Meeting of the Coordinating Committee for the Conservation of the Arabian oryx.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Arabian oryx represents a cultural symbol and a natural landmark in our region. It is also part of our literature, Arabian poets and writers wrote a lot about the beauty of the Oryx. Its extinction from the wild was a great loss, not only to biodiversity in the Arabian Peninsula, but also on the cultural heritage level. As a result of cooperation efforts between the Range States in the region and in coordination with the international environmental organizations, the Range States made a miracle by breeding Arabian oryx and reintroducing it in some states of the region. We achieved an outstanding success in 2011 when IUCN re-classified the Arabian oryx as 'Vulnerable' after it had been listed as Extinct in the Wild.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The establishment of the Coordinating Committee for the Conservation of the Arabian oryx was one of the important steps taken by its member states. It aims at coordinating the efforts to conserve and breed the Arabian oryx sustainably and release them into the wild. The Environment Agency - Abu Dhabi, representing the UAE, is honoured to host the General Secretariat of the Coordinating Committee for the Conservation of the Arabian oryx. Since its establishment, EAD works in line with the vision of the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan to increase and sustain all forms of wildlife, in addition to enhancing cooperation with the concerned environmental bodies regionally and internationally to exchange and integrate experiences, as well as supporting the international efforts for the success of wildlife and biodiversity conservation programs.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The General Secretariat for the Conservation of the Arabian oryx urges the member states in the Coordinating Committee to implement the objectives of the Regional Strategy and proposed Work Plan developed to preserve the Arabian oryx. The general

secretariat worked for years to coordinate and cooperate with the member states to enhance the efforts of protecting this animal. It organized a workshop for the veterinarians and conducted a periodic statistic on the most important disease that could afflict the Oryx in the region, in addition to, developing the website of the General Secretariat to enhance communication with the concerned parties in the Range States and the other environmental organizations. We look forward to providing the environmental researchers with accurate information on protecting Oryx in the region.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Due to the challenges faced by the member states on implementing the Regional Strategy for the Conservation of Arabian oryx, the General Secretariat will, in coordination with the concerned parties in the member states, focus during the next stage on facilitating knowledge and data exchange on Arabian oryx in the member states, which will actively help the concerned parties and environmental researchers access to the accurate data on conserving Arabian oryx in its Range States. This will also participate in building national capabilities in these states. Through this platform, I call all the member states to facilitate the mission of the General Secretariat for the Conservation of the Arabian oryx by providing it with the needed data, information and studies.

Thank you again for attending today. I wish these meeting results and valuable findings and recommendations will enhance our efforts in breeding and protecting the Arabian oryx.

4 PRESENTATION ABSTRACTS

This section details the presentation abstracts for the morning session (10:30am-12:30pm).

Future roadmap and strategic initiatives of the GSCAO.
Yassir Al Kharusi, GSCAO Coordinator, hosted within the Terrestrial & Marine Biodiversity Sector, EAD.

This presentation provides a historic background on the formation of the CCCAO. It presents obstacles facing CCCAO and GSCAO to accomplish its mission and the proposed forward initiatives outlined in the proposed Arabian oryx Five Year Strategic Work Plan (2015-2019) (presented in Appendix A) - the national annual reporting template and proposed technical workshops.

Introduction to GSCAO' website.

Rajeyah BinKulaib, GSCAO Administrator, hosted within the Terrestrial & Marine Biodiversity Sector, EAD.

GSCAO launched its website www.arabianoryx.org in June 2014. The website aims to communicate the mission, vision and the objectives of GSCAO. Range States were encouraged to enhance the website through providing GSCAO with materials such as publications, initiatives, photographs and videos that highlight the Arabian oryx conservation efforts on the national level.

Surveying Arabian oryx diseases in the Range States.

Yassir Al Kharusi, GSCAO coordinator, Terrestrial & Marine Biodiversity Sector, EAD.

GSCAO presented the results of the historic Arabian oryx disease surveys (1999, 2000, 2002, 2011) and the results of the 2013 survey. It was noted that few collections carry out regular annual prophylactic procedures and most health problems refer to accidental trauma, subcutaneous abscesses and digestive disorders. The next disease survey of Arabian oryx will be carried out in 2016.

5 RANGE STATE UPDATES

Representatives of the Range States provided GSCAO with an update on the status of Arabian oryx conservation programmes at the national level in their respective countries. Figure 2 provides an image of Range States' Representatives at the 5th Meeting with a summary of Range States' Updates following in Table 3.



Figure 2: Range State Representatives at the 5th Meeting of the CCCAO.

Table 3. A summary update of Arabian oryx conservation programmes in the Range States

Range State	Arabian oryx Conservation Update
Jordan	<p>Shaumari Wildlife Reserve: Fifty Arabian oryx are currently found in Shaumari Wildlife Reserve; over the past two years, a group of Arabian oryx were received from Saudi Arabia for genetic enhancement; a study was carried out to assess carrying capacity of the Shaumari Wildlife Reserve; new enclosures were designed for selective breeding of oryx individuals; genetic analysis was conducted and results showed no inbreeding effects amongst the oryx herd in the reserve; a Plan is underway to establish a tourist centre and safari trips for tourists to view Arabian oryx in the Shaumari Wildlife Reserve.</p> <p>Wadi Rum Protected Area: In May 2015 the Arabian oryx herd numbered 65; high birth rates were observed; artistic engravings belonging to various civilizations have been discovered in the reserve and one engraving is of an Arabian oryx; in 2011 the Protected Area was inscribed amongst UNESCO sites; poaching of Arabian oryx represents a challenge to the reserve management; The reserve management will focus in future to establish further community engagement efforts particularly in aspects related to ecotourism.</p>
Bahrain	Arabian oryx in Bahrain are located at the Al Areen Wildlife Reserve and Hawar Islands. There are currently 190 Arabian oryx in Bahrain.
Syria	Arabian oryx numbered 200 in March 2011 throughout Syria; sadly due to war - in 2015 the oryx numbers have significantly dropped to 71 individuals (31 government collections and 40 private collections); new individuals are needed for genetic enhancement; capacity building programmes are needed for oryx management and veterinary staff.
Iraq	No Arabian oryx are currently found in Iraq but reintroduction plans have been initiated. In 2010, an environmental MoU was signed with EAD to discuss reintroduction options in Iraq; Range States are encouraged to contribute to collaborate with Iraq.
Oman	The current conservation strategy is focusing on securing Arabian oryx individuals for the Al Wusta Wildlife Reserve; in total, there are currently 562 Arabian oryx in Al Wusta Wildlife Reserve; a fence

	covering an area of 2,800 sq. km of the reserve has been built; new wildlife biologists and veterinarians have been recruited; Oryx rangers have been provided with military training; a future plan to collaborate more with GSCAO particularly with regard to release programmes of Arabian oryx.
Qatar	Arabian oryx is the national logo of Qatar; total numbers of Arabian oryx in Qatar are currently in the region of 2500 individuals; efforts have been initiated to restructure of wildlife law in Qatar; openly accessed protected areas in Qatar have been established where people can visit for oryx viewing.
Kuwait	Kuwait was one of the Range States that contributed to establishment of the "World Herd" of Arabian oryx in 1960; the total number of Arabian oryx in Kuwait zoo is five individuals with an un-estimated number in private collections; it is proposed to enhance oryx breeding in the zoo.
Saudi Arabia	A recent survey estimates that 450-500 oryx are found in Mahazat As-Sayd Reserve in Saudi Arabia; Wild oryx are also found in Uruq Bani Ma'arid where some 100 individuals are estimated to occur in this reserve; since 2006, the Mahazat As-Sayd Reserve has become a source population to other release programmes in Saudi Arabia and the region; a plan has been proposed to release Arabian oryx in the northern parts of Saudi Arabia; a new department has been established by Saudi Wildlife Authority to focus on Arabian oryx and other wildlife species in private collections in the Kingdom; tourist lodges have also been established in some protected areas to support ecotourism programmes of wildlife conservation in the Kingdom.
UAE	In 2013, total recorded numbers of Arabian oryx in the UAE were in the region of 6000, most of which are found in private collections; some 400 Arabian oryx are found in Arabian oryx Protected Area in the western part of Abu Dhabi; 40 individuals of Arabian oryx were also imported from USA for genetic enhancement; some 178 oryx are found in Al Ain zoo; a genetic analysis of the oryx herd has been established; a population management plan has also been initiated to select fit males for breeding.

6 ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSIONS

The following proposed Agenda items were tabled for discussion at the afternoon roundtable session:

- Arabian oryx Strategic Five Year Work plan (2015-2019) (presented in Appendix A);
- National Reporting Template on the implementation of the Regional Strategy (2007) (presented in Appendix B) and new Five Year Work Plan; and
- Roles and responsibility of national coordinators in the Range States (presented in Appendix B).

Figure 3 presents the layout of the afternoon discussion session.



Figure 3: Afternoon Roundtable Discussion Session

6.1 Arabian oryx Five Year Strategic Work plan (2015-2019) .

Discussion was opened on the Arabian oryx Five Year Strategic Work Plan (2015-2019), as presented at the morning session.

The following points summarize the key discussions concerning the proposed Work Plan and its proposed associated workshops:

- **Consensus on Arabian oryx Five Year Strategic Work Plan:** There was consensus amongst Range States to adopt the Five Year Strategic Work Plan as proposed, with its focus on Technical Capacity Building Workshops, and annual national reporting to enhance knowledge sharing.
- **Technical Workshop Manuals:** It was agreed that at the conclusion of a technical workshop, manuals that can guide practical management of that technical capability should be prepared and shared with Attendees. These will be published in the website of the General Secretariat for Conservation of the Arabian oryx (www.arabianoryx.org) and will enhance regional capacity building in Range States.
- **Local and International experts to be invited:** To enhance discussions and outcomes, participants proposed to invite local and international wildlife experts to attend the proposed technical workshops.
- **Proceedings Responsibility:** The task of writing up the Proceedings of these workshops will be a shared effort amongst attendances, so that everyone can make his or her own input.
- **Other Livestock Diseases:** Disease of other wildlife and livestock species should be incorporated into the main themes of the proposed technical workshop focusing on capacity building of veterinarians.
- **Reintroduction Workshop:** For the reintroduction workshop, it was agreed that it was crucial to discuss the reality of establishing free-ranging populations in the region. This is owed to the fact that many development establishments in the Range States act as barriers to have shared, natural protected areas. It was raised that IUCN criteria for establishing free-ranging populations are unrealistic from a regional point of view and these criteria need to coincide with conservation reality in the Middle East.
- **International Conservation:** Delegates proposed GSCAO to have an effective contribution to international conservation decisions concerning Arabian oryx through collaboration with conservation organizations worldwide. Specifically, it was encouraged that GSCAO can provide international conservation organizations such as IUCN with accurate information about Arabian oryx populations in the Range States.

6.2 National Reporting Template on the implementation of the Arabian oryx Conservation Strategy and Action Plan.

A proposed template for the national reporting by Range States to GSCAO was presented (Appendix B). Delegates discussed the proposed template and a summary of their inputs are as follows:

- **Lessons' Learned:** A section on lesson learned should be added to the proposed template of the National Reporting.
- **Implementation Success:** It was proposed that at the final year of the proposed Work Plan to have a different set of questions of the National reporting template to assess the implementation of the existing regional strategy and preparing for the next strategy as well.

6.3 Proposed roles and responsibility of national coordinators in the Range States.

A proposed document identifying roles and responsibilities of national coordinators in the Range States was discussed at the meeting (Appendix B). Attendees recommended the following inputs:

- **In accordance with national law:** The working mechanism of national coordinators should be in accordance of his or her national department and with provisions of national law.
- **National Coordinator Qualifications:** Other related academic backgrounds (such as agricultural studies) should be added amongst the nomination conditions of national coordinators.

6.4 Other themes discussed.

An open discussion session was held resulting in the following actions:

- **Regional Arabian oryx studbook.** This topic should be included as one of the themes to be covered at the proposed technical workshop focusing on genetic and small population management.
- **Standards for Private Collections:** The Saudi Wildlife Authority is to provide GSCAO with criteria and standards of private Arabian oryx collections in Saudi Arabian which can be posted in GSCAO'S website for knowledge sharing.

- **Overpopulation Knowledge Sharing:** Saudi Arabia is to provide GSCAO with a document summarizing its successful handling of overpopulation problems of Arabian oryx in Mahazat As-Sayd.

6.5 National level commitments.

The following were National Level Commitments at the Meeting:

- **Adopt Five Year Strategic Work Plan:** To adopt the Five Year Arabian oryx Strategic Work Plan (2015-2019);
- **National Reporting Template:** To annually report to the GSCAO through the National Reporting Template;
- **National Range States** were encouraged to take active roles in facilitating the mission of GSCAO through hosting proposed technical workshops and regular meetings of CCCAO.
- **Range States willing to host proposed technical workshops** and regular meetings of CCCAO should send an official letter to H.E. Secretary General of EAD.
- **It was agreed that the 6th Meeting of CCCAO is scheduled in 2017.**



