



ARABIAN ORYX CONSERVATION

Factsheet



الأمانة العامة لصون
المها العربي
General Secretariat for
the Conservation of the
ARABIAN ORYX



هيئة البيئة - أبوظبي
Environment Agency - ABU DHABI

Al Kharusi, Y.
Alzahlawi, N. &
Binkulaib, R. (Eds.) (2022)

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www.arabianoryx.org

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for the purpose of raising awareness about
Arabian Oryx conservation.

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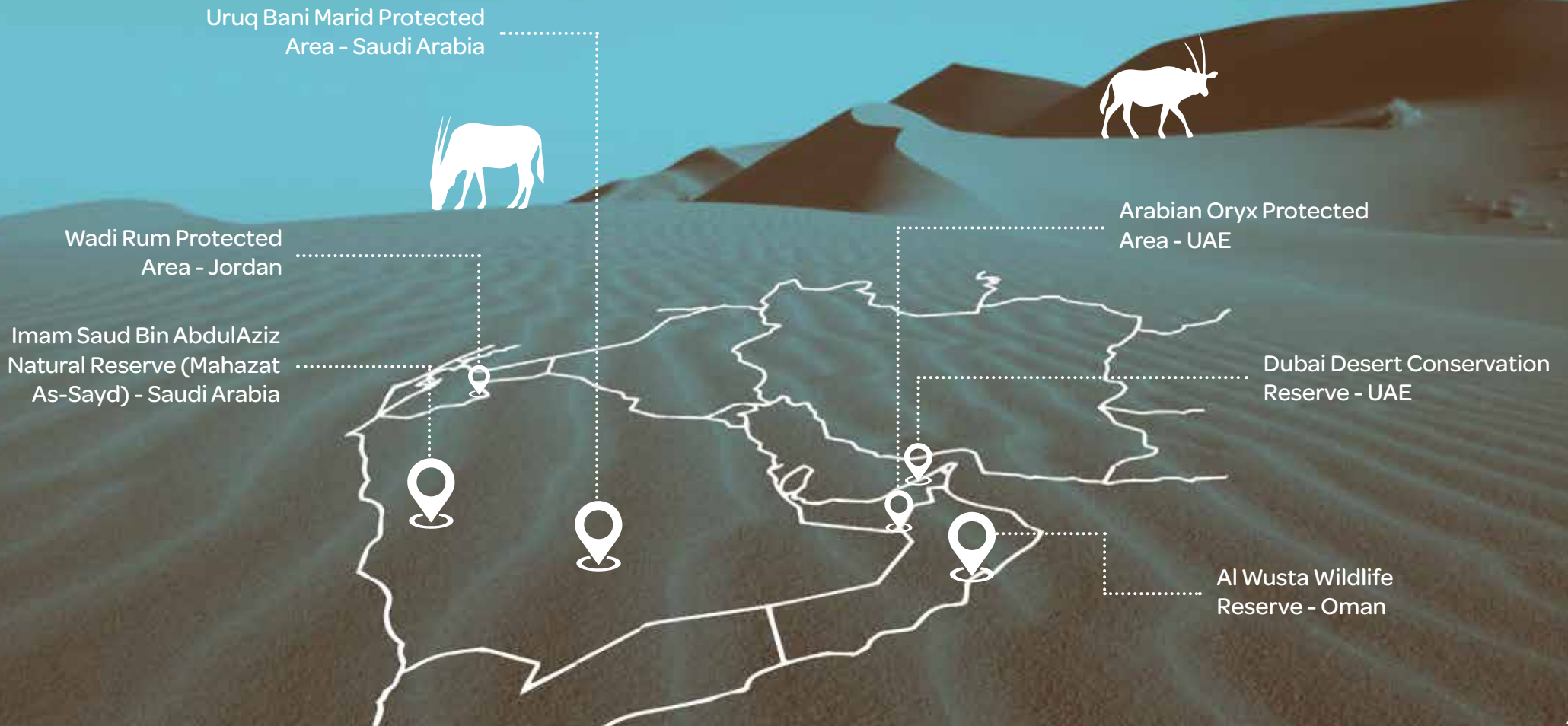
- Environment Agency- Abu Dhabi (EAD)
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- Ahmed Al Dhaheri

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WHERE DOES THE ARABIAN ORYX LIVE?

Arabian Oryx live in the Arabian Peninsula. It once roamed the entire deserts from Iraq in the north to Yemen in the south. The Arabian Oryx populations are now found in protected areas, zoos, and some in private collections.



BIOLOGICAL FACTS



Arabic Oryx inhabit gravel plains, open wadis, sand dunes and stony inter-dunal depressions



They move into the sands after rain and in the winter. They return to the plains in hot seasons where they can find more shade

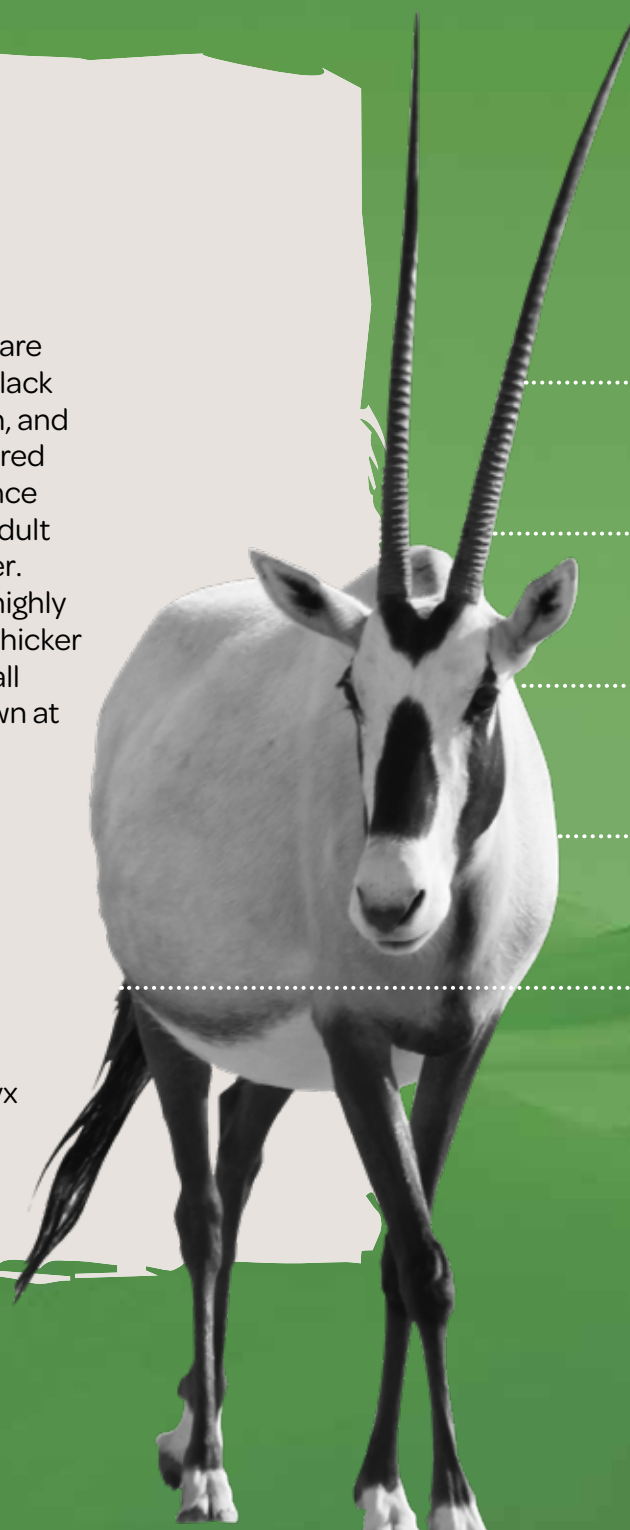


BODY DESCRIPTION

The Arabian Oryx is white in color and its legs are brown or black. The tail is white in color with black hairs at the end. The face appears dark brown, and the area of the cheeks and lower neck is covered in black, down to the chest area. The prevalence and intensity of the darker coloration in the adult Arabian Oryx varies during winter and summer. The adult summer coat is short, sparse, and highly reflective. In winter, the fur grows longer and thicker and the areas of black on the leg spread and all markings darken. Young animals are light brown at first, gradually acquiring the white adult coat.



Arabian Oryx may be conspicuous from a great distance in bright sunlight but are much less so when resting in the shade. Arabian Oryx are considered to be the smallest of the four species in the genus Oryx.



50-64 CM

Horns length



133-165 CM

Head-body length



70-85 CM

Height at the shoulder



54-90 KG

Average weight



19-25 CM

Tail length

BREEDING

- Males spar when competing for females and these fights may end in injury or death.
- Females usually give birth to a single calf, rarely to twins. There is no fixed rutting (breeding) season.
- In captive facilities such as zoos, female gives birth for the first time at 2.5-3.5 years.
- New-born calves can join the herd within a few hours after birth.



255-273
Days of gestation



2.5-3.5
years old when females
have first birth

LIFE SPAN



19-20 years



Lives up to 19 years in the wild and in some breeding programmes exceeds 20 years.



DIET

Oryx mainly eat grasses and the shoots of trees and bushes and may wander long distances in search of pasture



They can survive for long periods without drinking



They meet their water requirements from succulent plants and occasionally from dew, but they drink freely when water is available



They feed mainly in the early morning, evening and possibly at night

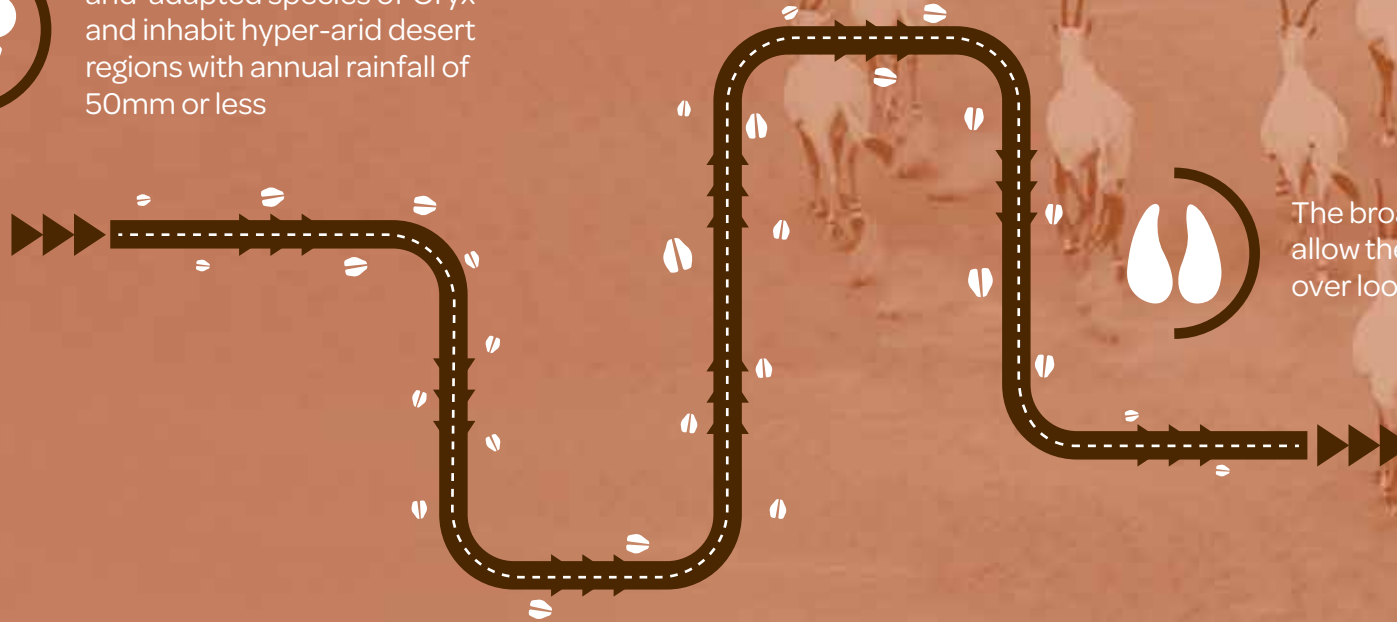
ADAPTATION



Arabian Oryx are the most arid-adapted species of Oryx and inhabit hyper-arid desert regions with annual rainfall of 50mm or less



The brain is kept cool by a heat exchange system: warm arterial blood on the way to the brain is cooled in the enlarged sinus cavity by venous blood returning from the nasal passages



The broad rounded hooves allow them to move easily over loose sand



The light-coloured coat is reflective, but in cooler winter conditions Oryx erect the guard hairs and expose the darker skin to promote heat absorption



BEHAVIOUR

The Arabian Oryx is a social animal that lives in herds. Males may sometimes fight to compete for the dominance of the herd. Fights between males can sometimes cause serious injury. The dominant male Oryx is characterized by its physical strength. The dominant male is able to obtain food and water more readily and in return, he defends the herd and repels any intruder Oryx which may try to join the herd. The dominant male also controls the movements and behaviors of other males in the herd to maintain its social unity.



10 Oryx

Live together in mixed herds



100 Oryx

In mixed herds used to be reported



Hot Seasons

Oryx seek shade, trees or bushes, and may dig or scrape out in the side of a dune



Herd leadership

The dominant male undertakes the task of protecting and caring for the herd, including mating with females, determining the numbers in the herd, defending it against any external threats, and regulating the behavior of individuals. The older female usually leads the herd to places where there is shade and grass



Herd size

The number of individuals of the Arabian Oryx herd increases after the rain and the abundance of pasture, and this increase in the herd size means an increase in the responsibility of the dominant male



BEHAVIOUR



60 km/h

Is the speed they can reach



90 km

The distance from which they can detect rainfall



PREDATORS



Wolves (*Canis lupus*) would appear to be the only potential predator of an adult Oryx



Caracal (*Lynx caracal*), Jackals (*Canis aureus*) and large raptors, principally eagles (*Aquila spp.*) could also prey on younger calves



Arabian Oryx are strong animals and there are reports of Oryx impaling potential predators (caracal, wolves) on their horns



KEY THREATS

People must not approach Arabian Oryx and visitors to Zoos and protected areas where Arabian Oryx are found are requested to adhere to safety and health regulations set by management authorities.



Poaching (illegal hunting) for meat, trophies and live-animal trade



Overgrazing



Habitat destruction through development projects



Droughts



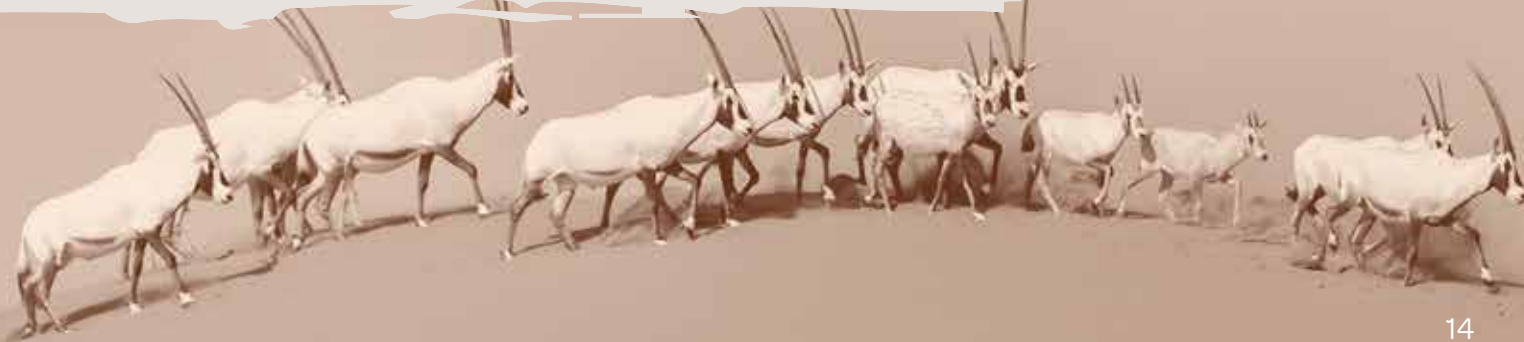
CULTURAL IMPORTANCE

The beauty of this species has enabled it to feature in literature as well as become a national icon for many governmental as well as private institutions in the countries of the Arabian Peninsula.

- The Arabian Oryx is famous and well known amongst the inhabitants of the Arabian Peninsula
- Arab poets have often been mesmerized by the beauty and the breadth of the Arabian Oryx eyes, and its bright colour, as well as its agility
- They began to sing and describe their beloved through the aesthetic characteristics of the Oryx
- Found in the sculptures of some antiquities of the Arabian Peninsula (for example, on the Grand Tomb at the Hili Archaeological Park, part of the Al Ain UNESCO World Heritage site)



يقول أبو تهمام في مطلع قصيدة له يمدح فيها
عمر بن طوق بن مالك بن طوق التغلبي:
أحسب بآيام العقيق وأطيب
والغيث في أظلالهن المعجب
وصيفون المستظل بظله
سرب الكهف وزبيعون الصيب



CULTURAL IMPORTANCE

There are several synonymous names given to the Arabian Oryx by the inhabitants of the Arabian Peninsula:



Al Wadhihi (*The Clear*)

This name derives from the fact that the Oryx can be seen clearly in the desert due to its colour, even from a far distance



Bin Solaa or Alsolaey

Locally in the Sultanate of Oman and the United Arab Emirates



WHY DID THE ARABIAN ORYX GO EXTINCT?



In 1945, 4WD vehicles and the use of modern firearms enabled hunting parties to reach inaccessible areas and sealed the Oryx's fate



Their highly visible appearance, and the open terrain they inhabit makes them very vulnerable



Heavily hunted during 1950s and 1960s for meat and private collections. By 1972, the last wild Oryx was hunted



HOW WAS THE ARABIAN ORYX SAVED?



1962

To capture the remaining in the wild, a recovery plan called Operation Oryx was initiated



1978

Four heads (2 males: 2 females) were transferred from Al Ain to Sir Bani Yas Island of Abu Dhabi

1968

The Late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, founder of the UAE, established the first conservation breeding programme of Arabian Oryx in Al Ain - UAE

2011

The Red List Committee of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) concluded that Arabian Oryx was no longer Endangered

2015

Arabian Oryx populations in the Arabian Peninsula numbered more than 12,000 individuals, of which 10,000 Oryx were found in the UAE

1982-2007

Arabian Oryx reintroduction efforts in Oman, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and United Arab Emirates

2020

GSCAO supported by EAD continued to lead coordination and successful initiatives that ensures the survival and viability of Arabian Oryx in the Arabian Peninsula

POPULATION CATEGORIES



Reintroduced into the wild

The herd is free-ranging and lives independently on natural resources (no supplementary food and water are provided)



Managed population

The herd lives in natural habitats and feed on natural resources which may require supplementation (food and water)



Captive-bred population

A population bred under controlled unnatural conditions

RECORD NUMBERS



9,654

Total number of Arabian Oryx in the Arabian Peninsula in 2018 as part of the periodic surveys carried out by the General Secretariat for the Conservation of the Arabian Oryx (GSCAO)

30 %

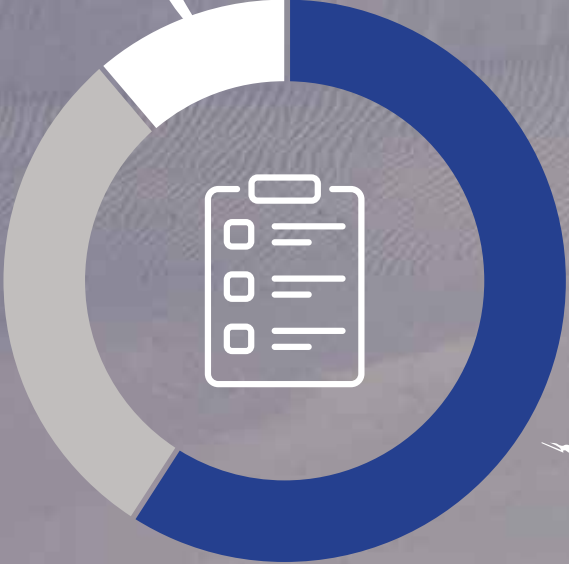
Managed population

11 %

Reintroduced into the wild

59 %

Captive-breed population



GSCAO 2018 data

WHY SAVE THE ARABIAN ORYX?



Has a great significance in Arabian culture and heritage, celebrated for its beauty and courage



Arabian Oryx is an umbrella species for conservation, this means that protecting its habitats can provide protection for other wildlife species



The natural geographical range of Arabian Oryx is only limited to the Arabian Peninsula



Arabian Oryx has a large habitat size and can travel great distances: one Oryx is known to have covered 93km in 18 hours



SUCCESSSES

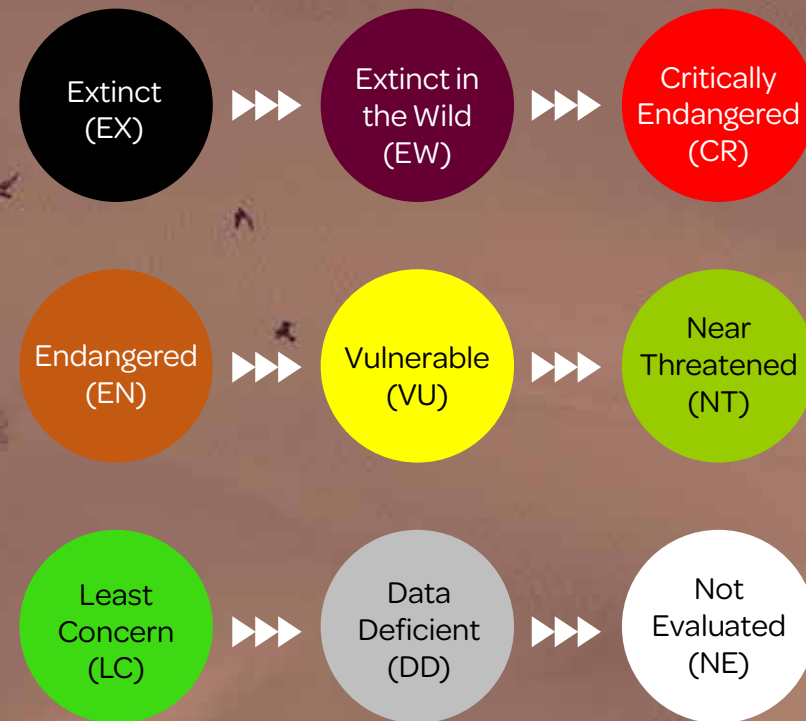
The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species



The IUCN Red List measures the performance of species in its natural habitats and provides guidance on conservation actions to ensure its long-term survival



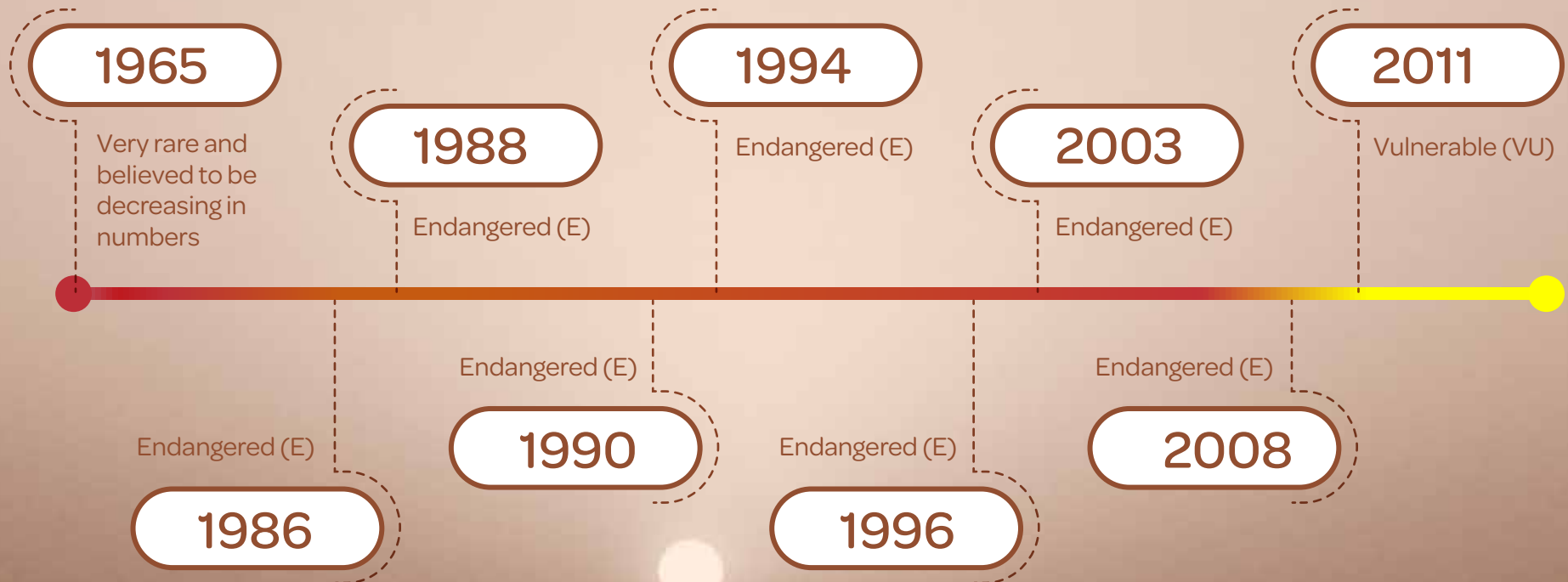
9 Categories ranging from Not Evaluated to Extinct



ARABIAN ORYX ON THE IUCN RED LIST

This listing is important to prohibit poaching and illegal trade in the species.

Arabian Oryx is listed in Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).



ENVIRONMENT AGENCY - ABU DHABI (EAD) EFFORTS TO CONSERVE ARABIAN ORYX

Successfully invested in several programmes to breed and restore Arabian Oryx in its natural habitats in UAE and the region

Breeding program success: Oryx reintroduction efforts at both national and regional levels

EAD has supported Oryx releases in Jordan and Oman. It leads regional efforts through hosting and funding the General Secretariat for the Conservation of the Arabian Oryx



All these programmes have been inspired by the environmental vision and legacy of the Late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan founder of the UAE

In 2007, EAD released a group of 98 Arabian Oryx in Arabian Oryx Protected Area (AOPA) at the south-eastern corner of Abu Dhabi Emirate under the generous patronage of His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan

KEY RESEARCH AREAS OF GSCAO INCLUDE:



Herd management



Genetic management



Captive breeding



Veterinary management



Reintroductions



Conservation education and ecotourism



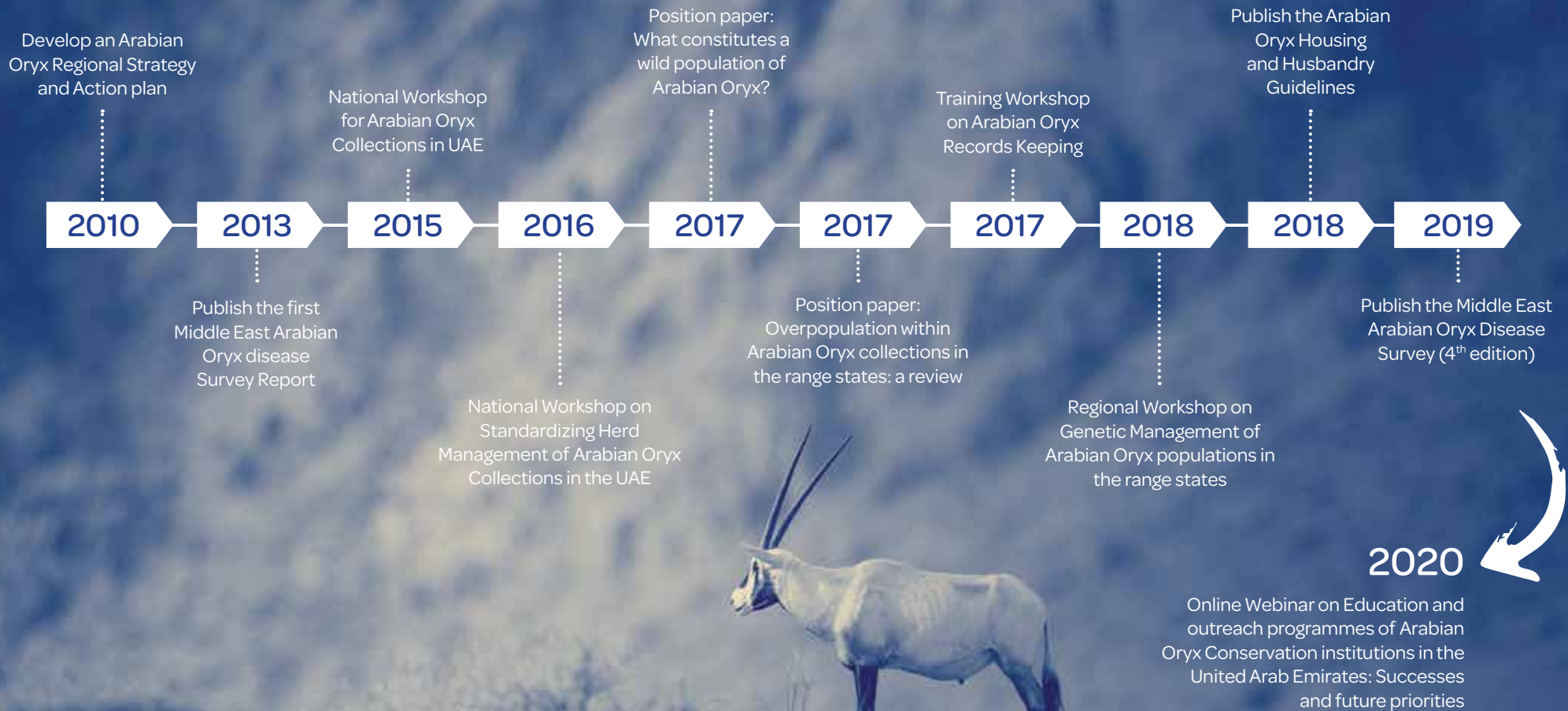
Habitat management and restoration



Records keeping and population modelling



GSCAO REGIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS



WHERE CAN I SEE ARABIAN ORYX?

There are several places where you can visit to see the Arabian Oryx. In the UAE, for example Arabian Oryx can be seen in the following conservation institutions:



WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP PROTECT ARABIAN ORYX?



Look, but do not touch

For safety and environmental reasons, never try to approach or touch Arabian Oryx



Regulations

Learn about the regulations of the zoos or protected area you are visiting to see Arabian Oryx



Research your destination

Find out about the area you are visiting, its key features, characteristics, wildlife and the best time of year to visit



Protect cultural and archaeological artefacts

If you come across a site, artefacts or structures that may be historically and culturally significant, take photographs, record their location on your phone or GPS and consult with the relevant cultural authority. Never collect or modify any structures of confirmed or suspected historic value



Leave only footprints

Take away what you bring. Try to avoid plastic water bottles and take reusable containers with you for food. Never burn or bury trash

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP PROTECT ARABIAN ORYX?



Do not feed any animals

Wild animals, by definition, are able to survive on their own in wild environments. Do not feed or provide water to them as this may alter their behaviour, lead them to become accustomed to humans and expose them to danger or predators



Respect local culture and customs

Before going out plan your route and be aware of local communities along the way. Be respectful and courteous to all people you encounter



Encourage responsible behaviour

Respect the rights of other users to the outdoors environment and report any irresponsible behaviour. If you live in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, call 800-555 anytime you find an Oryx either dead or injured. Do not try to handle it or touch it. Take a picture and record its GPS location on your phone



WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP PROTECT ARABIAN ORYX?



Tour guides

If you select to go on guided trips with tour operators, be demanding of your tour guides, communicate your concern and require them to behave responsibly towards the environment



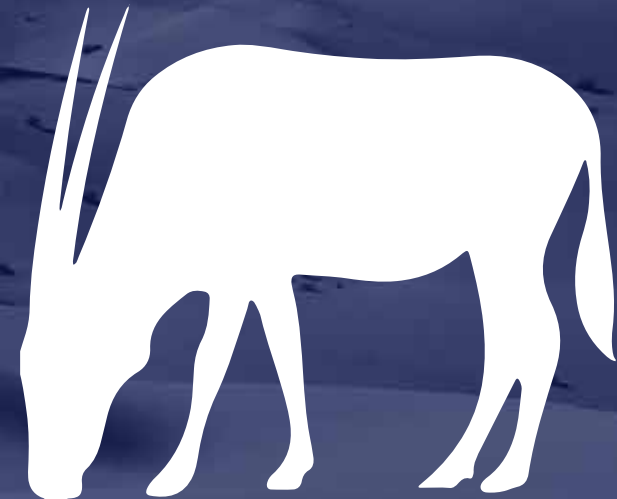
Watch out for wildlife

Watch out for bird nests, vegetation and any animals you may notice ahead of you. Always give animals the right of way and ensure you slow down and stop



Drive on tracks

If you have to drive in the desert or wadis and go off-road, drive on existing tracks, do not try to make new ones, navigate carefully and slowly, avoiding plants even those that appear dead. Desert plants help to stabilize dunes and are essential shelter and food source in a harsh environment



FIRST RELEASES OF ARABIAN ORYX REINTRODUCTION PROGRAMMES IN THE RANGE STATES

Country	Year of first release	Number of Arabian Oryx during first release	Name of the protected area	The executing agency
Oman	1982	10	Al Wusta Wildlife Reserve	Office for Conservation of the Environment
Saudi Arabia	1990	17	Imam Saud Bin Abdulaziz Natural Reserve (Mahazat As- Sayd reserve)	National Centre for Wildlife
	1995	24	Uruq Bani Ma'arid Protected Area	National Centre for Wildlife
United Arab Emirates	1999	38	Dubai Desert Conservation Reserve, Dubai	Dubai Desert Conservation Reserve
Jordan	2002	10	Wadi Rum	AQABA Special Economic Zone Authority
United Arab Emirates	2007	98	Arabian Oryx Protected Area, Abu Dhabi	Environment Agency - Abu Dhabi (EAD) The first release of Arabian Oryx in Abu Dhabi was carried out under the patronage of His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan

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