



# Ramsar Sites Information Service

## Annotated List of Wetlands of International Importance

# United Arab Emirates

10 Ramsar Site(s) covering 39,166 ha

### Al Wathba Wetland Reserve

Site number: 2,142 | Country: United Arab Emirates | Administrative region: Emirate of Abu Dhabi  
Area: 500 ha | Coordinates: 24°15'41"N 54°35'08"E | Designation dates: 25-04-2013

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

Al Wathba Wetland Reserve. 25/04/2013; Abu Dhabi; 500 ha; 24°15'41"N 54°35'08"E. Protected Area. A complex of natural and human-made surface water bodies located approximately 40 km southeast of Abu Dhabi city. Formerly a salt flat ('sabkha' in Arabic) that used to flood only during winter rainfall, it is now maintained by a regular supply of tertiary treated freshwater from a nearby sewage treatment plant. This regulation of the water level results in hypersaline, brackish and freshwater habitat of varying depths, providing an ideal site for many wetland dependent species within a hyper-arid biogeographic region. The area was declared as a reserve after the first successful breeding of the Greater Flamingo (*Phoenicopterus roseus*) there in 1998, marking the first known successful breeding of this species in the Arabian Peninsula since 1922. Threatened wildlife can be seen, including the critically endangered Sociable Lapwing (*Vanellus gregarius*) and the vulnerable Eastern Imperial Eagle (*Aquila heliaca*) and Greater Spotted Eagle (*Aquila clanga*). The site also regularly supports breeding populations of the Kentish Plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus*) and Pied Avocet (*Recurvirostra avosetta*). Access to the general public is currently limited to educational tours and bird watching groups; however, a future visitor centre is being planned to encourage tourism. Ramsar Site no. 2142. Most recent RIS information: 2013.

### Al-Zora Protected Area

Site number: 2,309 | Country: United Arab Emirates | Administrative region: Ajman Emirate  
Area: 195 ha | Coordinates: 25°25'33"N 55°28'58"E | Designation dates: 27-09-2016

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The Site is a protected area covering 195 hectares at the end of the one-kilometre Ajman Creek which flows into the Gulf. It is dominated by mangrove forests but also includes a number of other coastal and inland wetland types such as intertidal mudflats, lagoons and creeks. Al-Zora Protected Area is recognised as one of the Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBAs) in the region; it supports 87 bird species including the vulnerable greater spotted eagle (*Aquila clanga*) and Socotra cormorant (*Phalacrocorax nigrogularis*). It is also an important area for migrating birds such as the broad-billed sandpiper (*Limicola falcinellus*), and the greater flamingo (*Phoenicopterus roseus*) in winter. The Site is significant locally as it is the only protected area and the largest mangrove area in Ajman city and the Emirate of Ajman; and more widely for the species which it supports.

## Bul Syayeeef

Site number: 2,293 | Country: United Arab Emirates | Administrative region: Abu Dhabi Emirate  
Area: 14,504.5 ha | Coordinates: 24°18'11"N 54°20'59"E | Designation dates: 27-09-2016

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Bul Syayeeef is a coastal wetland covering over 14,500 hectares in the west of the Musaffah channel, about 20 kilometres outside Abu Dhabi City. The international importance of the Site is due to its highly diverse wetland habitats including mangroves, salt marshes and seagrass beds, and the large number of species which they host. Its tidal mudflats are home to over 80 migratory and resident birds. In 2009 it hosted one of the largest breeding events of the greater flamingo (*Phoenicopterus roseus*) with a record of 2,000 breeding pairs and 801 hatchlings. The Site also supports globally threatened species such as the critically endangered hawksbill turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) and the endangered green turtle (*Chelonia mydas*). The greater spotted eagle (*Aquila clanga*), the Socotra cormorant (*Phalacrocorax nigrogularis*) and the dugong (*Dugong dugon*) are all classed as vulnerable. Potential threats within and around the Site are related to the growth of housing and commercial and industrial areas, transportation and fishing activities.

## Hatta Mountain Reserve

Site number: 2,368 | Country: United Arab Emirates | Administrative region: Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Area: 2,100 ha | Coordinates: 24°45'45"N 56°06'45"E | Designation dates: 09-01-2019

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

The Hatta Mountain Reserve is located in the Hajar mountains at the northern tip of the Arabian Highland Woodlands and Shrublands, a WWF Global 200 Ecoregion. This mountain range is part of the Oman-United Arab Emirates ophiolite, which is the largest and the best-preserved complex in the world of this geological feature. The Hajar mountains receive about 30% of the total annual rainfall in the country, and heavy rainfalls recharge the shallow aquifer, and produce large flood discharges that replenish two major reservoirs downstream at the Hatta and Al Ghabra dams. Given the scarcity of freshwater wetlands in the region, the Site represents a rare and representative mountain freshwater ecosystem which is home to a large number of species. It supports 19% of all the plant species recorded in the country, 79% of its dragonflies, 27% of its birds, 44% of its mammals and 30% of its reptiles and amphibians. Some of these are globally threatened, such as the critically endangered Arabian leopard (*Panthera pardus nimr*); the endangered Arabian tahr (*Hemitragus jayakari*) and Egyptian vulture (*Neophron percnopterus*); and the vulnerable aoudad (*Ammotragus lervia*) and greater spotted eagle (*Aquila clanga*). The Site is one of the very few along the mountain range with breeding habitats for waterbirds, fish and amphibians.

## Jabal Ali Wetland Sanctuary

Site number: 2,364 | Country: United Arab Emirates | Administrative region: Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Area: 2,002 ha | Coordinates: 24°56'55"N 54°56'03"E | Designation dates: 25-10-2018

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Located in the Emirate of Dubai, Jabal Ali Wetland Sanctuary falls within the Jabal Ali Marine Sanctuary (JAMS), which is recognized by the Convention on Biological Diversity as an Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Area (EBSA). This coastal and marine wetland comprises areas of coral reefs, mangroves, shallow lagoons, seagrass beds, oyster beds and sandy shorelines, which maintain a healthy and diverse wetland habitat that provides shelter for over 500 marine species. Among these are many globally threatened species such as the critically endangered hawksbill turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*); the endangered mottled eagle ray (*Aetomylaeus maculatus*) and green turtle (*Chelonia mydas*); and the vulnerable dugong (*Dugong dugon*) and Indo-Pacific humpback dolphin (*Sousa chinensis*). The extensive seagrass beds serve as an important fish nursery and feeding ground for the green turtles and dugong; the sandy beaches provide the only breeding grounds in the Emirate for the hawksbill turtles (with 30 nests recorded in 2017). Given the rapid development of coastal areas in the Emirates, there are very few such sites remaining that support a relatively diverse set of habitats and rich biodiversity, and conserving this ecosystem is crucial for the survival of the species it supports.

## Mangrove and Alhafeya Protected Area in Khor Kalba

Site number: 2,125 | Country: United Arab Emirates | Administrative region: Sharjah Emirate  
Area: 1,494 ha | Coordinates: 24°59'53"N 56°21'45"E | Designation dates: 10-03-2013

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Mangrove and Alhafeya Protected Area in Khor Kalba. 10/03/2013; Sharjah; 1,494 ha; 24°59'54"N 56°21'45"E. National Protected Area. Located in the far east of the country near the border with Oman, the site comprises coastal subtidal, intertidal (sand beach, mangroves, mud and tidal channels), supratidal sand, salt marsh and saline flats, as well as encompassing a narrow alluvial plain dominated by Acacia woodland. The *Avicennia marina* mangrove trees found in Kalba are the tallest and comprise the most extensive mature woodland in the biogeographic region; they provide breeding, nursery and feeding grounds for several fish and invertebrate species, besides protecting the coastline from storm damage and erosion while trapping sediments washed off the land. The critically endangered Hawksbill turtles (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) and endangered Green turtles (*Chelonia mydas*) can be observed near the mouth of the mangrove's inlet, entering the creeks at high tide to feed on sea grasses and algae. The area is of great ornithological interest, and an endemic subspecies, the White-collared Kingfisher *Todiramphus chloris kalbaensis*, breeds almost exclusively at this site, which is also one of just two breeding localities in the region for Sykes's Warbler *Hippolais rama*. The management and monitoring of this site is carried out with the involvement of the local residents, and an educational visitor centre is planned. Ramsar Site no. 2125. Most recent RIS information: 2013.

## Ras Al Khor Wildlife Sanctuary

Site number: 1,715 | Country: United Arab Emirates | Administrative region:  
Area: 620 ha | Coordinates: 25°11'30"N 55°19'19"E | Designation dates: 29-08-2007

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Ras Al Khor Wildlife Sanctuary. 29/08/07; Dubai; 620 ha; 25°11'30"N 055°19'20"E. National Protected Area. Located at the end of the 14 km-long Dubai creek within the northern part of the Emirate of Dubai. A rare site in the arid Gulf region, this natural coastal wetland consists of low-lying saline flats, lagoon, intertidal mud and sand flats and mangrove swamps that serve as an important habitat for more than 450 species of fauna and 47 species of flora. During winter, it regularly supports more than 20,000 waterbirds belonging to 67 species and acts as a critical staging ground for migratory waterbirds along the East African-West Asian Flyway. A number of globally threatened species such as the Sociable Lapwing *Vanellus gregarius* and Greater Spotted Eagle *Aquila clanga* are seen in the area; more than 3,000 Greater Flamingoes *Phoenicopterus ruber* have been counted, and more than 1% of the regional population of Broad-billed Sandpipers *Limicola falcinellus* migrate through in autumn and spring. Located in the heart of Dubai city, the site receives an average of 10,000 visitors annually and is a valuable conservation and educational center. A visitor center that will serve as the Regional Center for Excellence in Communication, Education and Public Awareness (CEPA) is planned with the goal of promoting awareness of wetland ecosystems and wetland management in the Arab region. Ramsar Site no. 1715. Most recent RIS information: 2012

## Sir Bu Nair Island Protected Area

Site number: 2,191 | Country: United Arab Emirates | Administrative region: United Arab Emirates  
Area: 4,964 ha | Coordinates: 25°13'54"N 54°13'09"E | Designation dates: 02-12-2013

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Sir Bu Nair Island Protected Area; 02/12/2013; Sharjah; 4,964ha; 25°13'55"N and 54°13'09"E; National Protected Area. Located some 110 km from Sharjah, this offshore island has a terrestrial area of 1,333ha. Geologically, the site is a salt dome formed from regional tectonic activities, and is rich in minerals. Despite its small size, the site supports a high biodiversity for the biogeographic region. A total of 40 coral species and 76 reef fish species have been recorded, including seven coral species that are Red Listed as Vulnerable. The site is an important nesting site for the Critically Endangered Hawksbill turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*), and supports more than 1% of the regional breeding population of the Sooty gull (*Larus hemprichii*). The island is of historical importance as pottery has been found dating back to about 3,500 years ago. It also used to be a meeting point for fishermen and a base for pearl divers. The island was declared as a National Protected Area in 2000 and visits are permitted only for environmental surveys and studies. There is a plan to develop a limited area of the site for commercial tourism.

## Wadi Wurayah National Park

Site number: 1,932 | Country: United Arab Emirates | Administrative region: Emirate of Fujairah

Area: 12,700 ha | Coordinates: 25°24'N 56°15'E | Designation dates: 10-07-2010

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

Wadi Wurayah National Park. 07/10/2010; Emirate of Fujairah; 12,700ha; 25°24N, 56°15E. Wadi Wurayah National Park is also a Protected Area. The area's geology has created a unique hydrogeological system that allows run-off water to emerge between impermeable and permeable rock creating fresh water streams, pools and waterfalls, all of which are uncommon in an arid region. The diversity of fresh water habitats provide important spawning ground for fish such as *Garra barreimiae* (Cyprinidae) which is threatened and endemic to the Arabian Peninsula, including seven newly discovered insect species of which four (Order: Ephemeroptera) have water dependent larval stages. The site supports 11 threatened species of mammals, such as the Arabian Tahr (*Hemitragus jayakari*). In 1978 the total world population of Arabian Tahr was estimated at ca 2000 (Munton,1985), today, the population is estimated to be at least 20 individuals. So far, 73 species of birds such as the endangered Egyptian Vulture (*Neophron percnopterus*) have been recorded. The Wadi Wurayah National Park hosts 17 reptile species such as the Bar-tailed Semaphore Gecko (*Pristurus celerrimus*) and at least two amphibian species, all which are endemic to the UAE and Northern Oman. The Wadi Wurayah National Park is a rich archaeological site with 29 heritage sites such as, Islamic graveyards, petroglyphs and settlements dating as far as the Iron Age (1,300-500BC). The last local family left the area in 1981. Occasionally, locals venture to the site to collect medicinal plants, wild honey and fodder for livestock. Threats to the site include water exploitation, rock extraction and wild life poaching. The Wadi Wurayah National Park is owned by the ruler of Fujairah Emirate, the local tribes and families. The Environment Protection and Development Department of Fujairah Municipality is responsible for managing this site. Ramsar site no.1932. Most recent RIS information: 2010.

## Wasit Nature Reserve

Site number: 2,386 | Country: United Arab Emirates | Administrative region: Sharjah City

Area: 86 ha | Coordinates: 25°21'57"N 55°27'51"E | Designation dates: 09-05-2019

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

Located some 15 kilometres from the coast and the city of Sharjah, the Reserve is a complex of natural inland lake and wetland habitats with a total area of 86 hectares. It is a unique lake which represents a part of the remaining endangered coastal habitats: it was formerly a tidal lagoon, providing important evidence of the evolution of the coastline. The Site supports a rich diversity of wetland species. Its mudflats, lakes, dunes, reed beds and woody thickets support a range of plants, and at least 144 bird species including many migrants. There are several near-threatened species such as curlew sandpiper (*Calidris ferruginea*), bar-tailed godwit (*Limosa lapponica*), black-tailed godwit (*Limosa limosa*), Eurasian curlew (*Numenius arquata*) and the globally vulnerable Socotra cormorant (*Phalacrocorax nigrogularis*). The reserve, owned by the government of Sharjah Emirate, was declared as a National Protected Area in 2004. A visitor centre was established in November 2015 for education, public awareness and eco-tourism.