CHAPTER III. BIODIVERSITY
الفصل الثالث - التنوع البيولوجي

Forests and protected areas
الغابات والمناطق المحمية

About 7 per cent of the surface area in ESCWA member States was covered by forests in 2011, with the highest percentage in the Sudan (23.2 per cent), followed by Lebanon (13.4 per cent). In 2000, the total forest area was around 8 per cent. This decrease indicates the loss of 106,948 square kilometres of forest, mostly in the Sudan (table III.1).

Terrestrial and marine protected areas in ESCWA member States have increased over time, reaching 982,711 square kilometres in 2010 (table III.2). The largest percentages of terrestrial and marine protected areas in 2010 were in Saudi Arabia, at 29.95 per cent of the country area, and in the United Arab Emirates, at 15.47 per cent (table III.2).

Terrestrial protected areas increased by 14 per cent between 2000 and 2010. The largest terrestrial protected areas are found in Saudi Arabia and the Sudan with 689,819 square kilometres and 170,395 square kilometres, respectively, by 2010. The highest rate of increase was recorded in Iraq, with protected areas expanding from 218 square kilometres in 2000 to 1,610 square kilometres in 2010, followed by Morocco with protected areas expanding from 3,910 square kilometres to 17,487 square kilometres (table III.3).

Marine protected areas in ESCWA member States accounted for approximately 28,000 square kilometres in 2010, increasing from only 10,093 square kilometres in 2000 (table III.4).

6 This figure refers to the Sudan before separation.
Box 3. Biodiversity in the United Arab Emirates

The Abu Dhabi Environment Agency’s management of protected areas has shown positive results for a number of habitats and species. For example, the population of dugongs has stabilized due primarily to the establishment of marine protected areas (MPAs). By the end of 2013, 13.5 per cent of the total land area of Abu Dhabi was MPAs, and 14.6 per cent was terrestrial protected areas.

The Agency’s conservation plan strengthened the Arabian oryx gene pool after becoming extinct in the wild in the early 1970s; Abu Dhabi is now home to 3,000 Arabian oryx. It has also supported the conservation of falcons across the region and the world, by decoding the entire genetic make-up of the Peregrine and Saker falcons.


Species status

The status of animal and plant species threatened with extinction in 2014 in ESCWA member States was as follows: 177 species of mammals; 142 species of birds; 97 species of reptiles; 6 species of amphibians; 377 species of fish; and 241 species of plants (table III.5).