

# United Arab Emirates designates Jabal Ali Wetland Sanctuary

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Jabal Ali Wetland Sanctuary

On the occasion of the 13th meeting of the Conference of Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention (COP13), the United Arab Emirates has named Jabal Ali Wetland Sanctuary as its eighth Wetland of International Importance.

Located in the Emirate of Dubai, the Site (**Ramsar Site no. 2364**) 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.