United Arab Emirates names Hatta Mountain Reserve as a Ramsar Site

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The United Arab Emirates has designated Hatta Mountain Reserve as its ninth Wetland of International Importance. The Reserve (Ramsar Site no. 2368) 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.

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