

Celebrating World Wetlands Day and the 40th Anniversary in the South Hammar Marsh, Iraq

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A big celebration was held in South Hammar Marsh, specifically Al-Sallal Marsh on the 21st of March 2011, to celebrate the fortieth anniversary of the founding of the Ramsar Convention. This celebration was held under the auspices of the Provincial council in Basra; in cooperation with Nature Iraq Organization and relevant Iraqi ministries including the Ministry of Water Resources, Ministry of the Environment, Ministry of Agriculture in addition to the Centre for Marine Sciences and the presence of large numbers of representatives of civil society, the local population and the media.

The celebration included many speeches which commemorated the event and shed a light on the importance of the Ramsar convention in the countries that are adopting it including Iraq. Also they portrayed the importance of the convention in creating a national network of wetlands and its main functions both in the environmental sense and in regards to water resources, also its importance in the preservation of biodiversity.

Many presentations were given by specialists and law makers regarding subjects like The Iraqi Marshes, Biodiversity, Ramsar and the Huwaiza Marsh along with other topics related to Wetlands.

Parallel to the celebration above, many exhibits were set to celebrate the event and showcase the projects and efforts made by the various institutions to further the cause of the Iraqi Marshes in general. A large Photography exhibition was present depicting life in the Iraqi Marshlands and its Biodiversity, in addition, a book and other publications exhibition relating to wetlands was set including a number of publications for the Secretariat of the Ramsar Convention in English and Arabic. Nature Iraq had one the largest exhibits which included in addition to the large Photo exhibit, maps and plans of the Green villages and Mesopotamian National Park in central marshes in Iraq under construction through cooperation between the Italian government and the Iraqi Ministry of Environment. Nature Iraq was also strongly present in the organization of the whole event and had a couple of presentations in it.

It is worthy to note that the attending officials and law makers felt the importance of the event when they continuously heard the locals mentioning the word Ramsar in a positive manner and with high hopes for better future to the Iraqi Marshes when the Ramsar Convention is adopted fully.