

DUBAI MUNICIPALITY
ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENT
MARINE AND ENVIRONMENT AND WILDLIFE SECTION



World Wetlands Day 2012
Wetland Tourism: A Great Experience
Activity Report

Introduction

2 February each year is World Wetlands Day. It marks the date of the adoption of the Convention on Wetlands on 2 February 1971, in the Iranian city of Ramsar on the shores of the Caspian Sea. Each year since 1997, government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and groups of citizens at all levels of the community have taken advantage of the opportunity to undertake actions aimed at raising public awareness of wetland values and benefits in general, and the Ramsar Convention in particular.

This year the Dubai Municipality (DM) through its Environment Department is highlighting the role of tourism in the conservation of wetlands in congruence with the World Wetlands Day theme for 2012, "Wetland Tourism: A Great Experience". This theme is linked to the theme this year's meeting of the Conference of the Parties, COP11: Wetlands, Tourism and Recreation, which will take place in July 2012, in Bucharest, Romania.

The theme for the year suits comfortably with the goals and vision of the Emirate of Dubai as tourism is one of its main economic industry. Although not a major player in the tourism field, wetland tourism in Dubai is taking its stance and is continually being recognized as a destination.

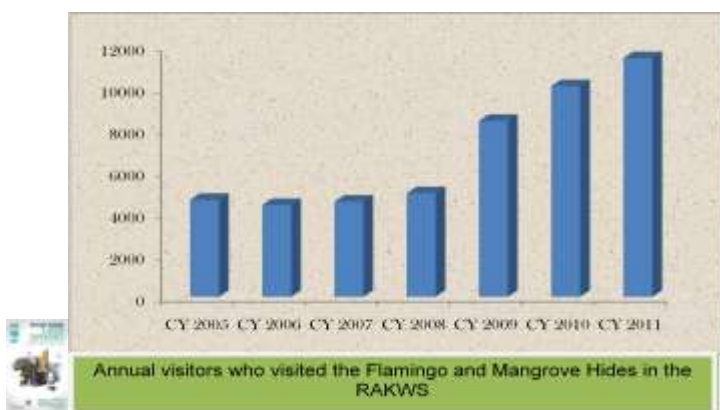
Wetland Tourism in Dubai

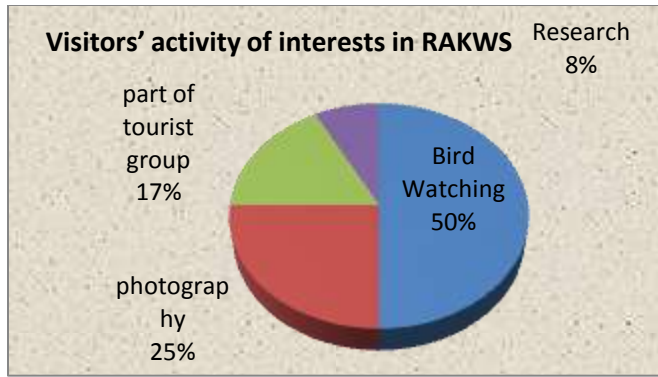
The Ras Al Khor Wildlife Sanctuary is a landmark in the Emirate of Dubai. Since its establishment in 1985 and its declaration as a Protected Area in 1998, the sanctuary has become a testament of the emirate's strong commitment to the conservation of its natural resources.

Through the years the environmental condition and the facilities of the sanctuary have improved, along with it is the increase of visitors in its hides. A steady increase was observed from the year the hides were opened in 2005.

The RAKWS hides have received almost 50,000 visitors from 114 countries. From 4,646 in 2005, the hides now receive an average of 10,000 visitors annually for the last three years.

In 2011, it catered almost 12,000 visitors from 86 countries. It has the most visitors during November with almost 3,000 individuals, 20% of which during the Eid Holidays. Most of the visitors come from India, the United Kingdom, Germany and Southeast Asia.





Cyberspace also has its share of visitors to the RAKWS. The sanctuary's website, www.wildlife.ae was launched in 2009. Since then more than 75,000 visitors have visited the site.

In 2010, the website was visited by 8,548 individuals. The frequency of visits gained momentum in 2011 with 34,235 visitors scanning its pages 5,000 times on an average per month.

The website is being visited more frequently when 2012 started. As of January 31, 2012 it has already been visited by more than 14,313 new individuals (based on IP registered).

Visitors spent at least 3 minutes on the site. Most of the surfers are from the United Arab Emirates, Vietnam, the United States of America, India, the United Kingdom, Czech Republic, Romania, Turkey, and Russia.

The pages that were viewed the most are the web cameras that capture in real time the wildlife activities in the sanctuary.



14,313 visits came from 106 countries/territories

Country/Territory	Visits	Pages/Visit	Avg. Time on Site	% New Visits	Bounce Rate
United Arab Emirates	1,800	8.91	00:04:02	87.34%	31.42%
United States	1,324	1.41	00:02:35	43.52%	77.18%
Vietnam	1,277	1.37	00:02:57	58.47%	77.52%
Czech Republic	828	1.35	00:02:00	29.71%	81.47%
India	803	1.41	00:02:19	46.42%	76.12%
Romania	579	1.27	00:02:11	30.82%	80.14%
United Kingdom	572	4.25	00:03:55	45.23%	66.61%
Russia	544	1.35	00:03:07	29.89%	76.12%
Turkey	520	1.35	00:03:24	43.02%	80.02%

World Wetlands Day 2012 Activities

Wetland Seminar

Instead of conducting the seminar on the 2nd February, the seminar this year was done on the 1st of



February at the Falcon Heritage Center, Dubai. The attendance to this annual event has grown steadily since it was held 5 years ago and the interest of the different sectors has also grown. With four secondary schools attending this year, this event has gradually gained consciousness in the environmental programs of the different academic institutions in Dubai.



The seminar was opened by Mr. Mohd AbdulRahman Hassan Abdulla by sharing the developments of the wetland tourism in Dubai, particularly the Ras Al Khor Wildlife

Sanctuary experience. He highlighted the gradual prominence of the sanctuary not just a landmark in the emirate but as a perfect example of how tourism can be a positive medium in promoting conservation.

The resource persons for this year highlighted the tourism industry of Dubai and its environmental programs. Social or corporate responsibilities of the industry players were also shared as well as potential wetlands that could in the future be one of the destinations in the United Arab Emirates.

Ms. Shaikha Ebrahim Al Mutawa, Director of Business Development in the Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing (DTCM), shared the efforts of the Government of Dubai in making tourism in the emirate as environmentally friendly as it can be. With the implementation of the Dubai Green Awards, players and stakeholders in the industry are complying with international environmental standards in running their respective activities.



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Tourism in Dubai will not be successful if its players do not do their corporate responsibilities relative to keeping to the environment.



Corporate responsibility was also one of the topics discussed in the seminar. With the establishment of “The Aquarium” in the Burj Al Arab, the Jumeirah Group of Companies is one the key players in the tourism industry that is serious in giving back to the environment. One of the programs of the Burj al Arab is the Marine Turtle Rehabilitation Project in collaboration with the Wildlife Protection Office (WPO). Mr. Warren Baverstock, Manager of the Aquarium, along with Mr Kevin Hyland of the WPO shared the goals, significance and the different activities of the program. The program received much

interest with the secondary students of the seminar.

The final speaker of the seminar was Ms Elizabeth Stewart of the Ras Al Khaimah Wetland Trust



(RAKWT). She shared the process of Khor Muzhami which is considered to be an Important Bird Area (IBA) in the UAE to be recognized as a Ramsar Site. The RAKWT, which she is managing, envisage that the wetland will be one of the wetland tourism destinations in the very near future, thus further promoting the importance of wetlands in this part of the region.

Painting Competition



A painting competition was held this year to encourage visitors of the Ras Al Khor Wildlife Sanctuary to display their impressions of the sanctuary in a creative manner. Ten entries participated which are now part of the exhibit materials of the environment Department of the Dubai Municipality



Sanctuary Field Visit

Dubai Municipality personnel had the chance to visit the Ras Al Khor Wildlife Sanctuary on the 06 February. Most of the participants are first time visitors to the sanctuary and they were quite fascinated by the natural beauty of the area given that it is in the middle of the city.



Exhibit

An exhibit of confiscated wildlife by the Dubai Police and Dubai Customs were also done. The objective of the said activity is to showcase the different species that are prohibited for trade in the Emirate. The UAE is a signatory to the Convention for the International Trade of Endangered Species (CITES).

