



## Activity Report **World Wetland Day 2013** Wetlands Take Care of Water

## Introduction

In a region where water is a valued commodity, the theme of World Wetland Day 2013 is quite appropriate. "Wetlands Take Care of Water" is a theme that resonates the need of the times. With the population increasing and the continuous project development in the region, water is indeed a resource that we should be keen on making it available for the generations to come.



Students from local schools participated in the event

The celebration this year was commemorated on the 10<sup>th</sup> February instead of the usual 2<sup>nd</sup> of February. It was attended by more than 70 participants from different sectors. Participants from different sectors attended the event - from the government, private, scientific, RAKWS stakeholders, international media company (CCTV-ME) and academic institutions. The uniqueness of the attendees this year is that more than half are students coming from Emirati secondary schools which was quite a turn out relative to the past

years.

## The Seminar

The seminar proper was opened by Mr. Mohammad AbdulRahman Hassan Abdulla, Head of the Marine Environment and Wildlife Section. In his opening statement He stressed the importance of water and its relevance to wetland management. He showed the connectivity of a natural ecosystem to its direct influence in the daily lives of human existence, from using water in domestic activities to a driving force of a nation's economy. He also discussed the importance of wetlands as an important component in the water cycle. He further elaborated the need to be conscious in the utilization of water. For in any way we use water its impact, may it be the lack of it or abundance of it, can have adverse effect on our existence. He discussed the importance of global and local efforts to make sure that natural processes, i.e. a healthy wetland, exists and functions effectively to continually provide water.



Mr. Mohd AbdulRahman addressing the challenges in water management

He concluded his talk emphasizing the need for



all of us to be aware that we are the managers of water and our natural resources. Our contribution, may it be big or small, connects the success of having a sustainable environment for the next generation.



Mr. Al Zaabi discussing resources effectively used

The next speaker of the seminar was Mr Sultan Al Zaabi of the Dubai Electricity and Water Authority (DEWA). He is the engineer in-charge of the Conservation and Outreach Engagement Section of the DEWA. *(In a nutshell, DEWA is the government institution that manages the power and water supply for the Emirate of Dubai.)* Mr. Al Zaabi's presentation was quite interesting, particularly to the young generation in attendance. He discussed ways and means on how to sustainably manage our water. In an urban setting where water is one of the driving force of its economy, Mr. Al Zaabi stressed the amount of energy and efforts needed to make water available for all the

residents of Dubai. He further discussed the importance of utilizing the water available wisely and efficiently. Mr. Al Zaabi further emphasized the importance of using appliances that are energy efficient.

To conclude his presentation, Mr. Al Zaabi provided valuable tips on how to conserve water. The following are among the suggestions that he strongly recommends:

- Wash your car with a bucket of soapy water and use a nozzle to stop the flow of water from the hose between rinsing.
- Clean driveways and sidewalks with a broom instead of the hose.
- Check for leaks in outdoor faucets, pipes and hoses.
- Prevent the creation of leaks by shutting off and draining water lines to outside spigots in the winter.
- Take a quick shower rather than a bath and save an average of 20 gallons (76 liters) of water.
- Install a water-efficient shower head with a flow rate of less than 2.5 gallons (9.5 liters) per minute. (Replace an existing shower head if a one gallon bucket placed under the flow takes less than 20 seconds to fill.)
- Turn off the water when brushing your teeth or shaving and save more than 5 gallons (19 liters) per day.
- Clean vegetables in a sink or pan partially filled with water rather than running water from the tap.
- Reuse the water that vegetables are washed in for watering houseplants or for cleaning.
- If you wash dishes by hand, rinse them in a sink partially filled with clean water instead of under running water.

Ms. Shaikha Hassan Ali AlShehhi was the next presenter of the day. She is the Head of the Environment Protection Section, Planning Department of the Municipality of Ajman. She presented one of the treasured wetlands in the Emirate of Ajman, Al-Zawraa Protected Area, a potential Ramsar Site.

Al-Zawraa Protected Area is located on the peninsula within Creek Ajman. It has a total area of approximately 3000 hectares. It is dominated by *Avicennia marina* which suitably provides an inviting environment for both resident and migratory birds and helped protect the coast from erosion, in addition to being breeding grounds for endemic shrimp and fishes.



Ms. Shaikha presents the dominant species found in the Zowra Protected Area

Ms Shaikha further elaborated the legal framework of the protected area and the rules and regulations that governs it. She also encourages the scientific sector to involve themselves in the assessment of the area. She ended her presentation with the future plans to further enhance the ecology of the Zowra Protected Area which she summarized in the following:

- Provide a number of monitoring stations for bird researchers and hobbyists to open the way for recreational and scientific horizons.
- Develop eco-tourism in the park.
- Increase the area of protected mangrove.
- Enhance the protected fish stocks by preventing fishing, and restocking fingerlings.



Dr. Ada Natoli presenting the objectives of the research initiative

The last presenter of the day was Dr. Ada Natoli. She is an Adjunct Assistant Professor of the Al Ain University. She presented her research titled "UAE Dolphin Project". It is an ongoing dolphin research initiative that seeks to determine (1) the species occurrence, (2) the frequency of each species and (3) estimate their population size and their habitat use. The ultimate goal of this initiative is to promote the conservation of dolphin species and the local marine environment. It entails the collaboration of national and international, public

and private institutions and organizations. She summarized in her presentation the importance of dolphins relative to the determination of the health of the marine environment. She further introduced the different species of dolphins found in the Arabian Gulf. She stresses that the success of the project depends highly on the participation of the public, since most of the data will be generated from sightings. She encouraged the audience to participate in the research by reporting any sighting to her.

At the end of her presentation, she encourage the audience to be SMART:

- S - Stay back 50 meters from dolphins
- M - Move away cautiously if dolphins suddenly change behavior
- A - Always put your engine in neutral when dolphins are near
- R - Refrain from feeding, trailing or swimming with them
- T - Teach other to be DOLPHIN SMART

## Recognition of Partners

In the conservation of our biological diversity it takes the efforts of many. As part of the celebration of the World Wetland Day 2013 edition we gave recognition to our partners who have collaborated with us. These organizations and individuals significantly contributed much of their time and effort to make Ras Al Khor Wildlife Sanctuary (RAKWS) one of the best well-managed protected area in this part of the world.

- **Ministry of Environment and Water** – for producing Nationally adapted WWD 2013 celebration poster.
- **ETA Star International LLC** – for providing the logistics and manpower in implementing wader scrape project in RAKWS.
- **Omar Ibn Al-Khattab Secondary School for Boys** – for participating in the WWD 2013 event
- **Zaabeel Secondary School for Girls** – for participating in the WWD 2013 event
- **Al Rashed Al Saleh Secondary School for Girls** - participating in the WWD 2013 event
- **Waste Management Department, Dubai Municipality** – provided manpower to waste management inside the sanctuary area, and for providing new trash bins for RAKWS visitors.
- **Wildlife Protection Office** – for collaboration in implementing wader scrape project in RAKWS.
- **Advertising Section, Dubai Municipality** – for providing and installing the necessary signboards for the protected areas
- **Mr. AbdulRahman Olais, MEWS** – for constructing a bird watching tower in the RAKWS
- **Mr. Ali Jamali, Photint Venture Group** – for maintaining the RAKWS website.



Umar Farook of the ETA Star International receiving a token of appreciation from Mr. Mohd AbdulRahman of MEWS



## Distribution of CEPA Materials



Materials being distributed to the participants and attendees

Participants were given educational materials during the event. Wetlands Posters, bookmarks, pamphlets and leaflets were distributed to attendees. This year's poster was provided by the Ministry of Environment and Water and was distributed in the whole country.

## Photo Gallery



Government personnel attentively listens to the speakers



Participants discussing talking points after the seminar



Majority of the participants and attendees of the WWD 2013

