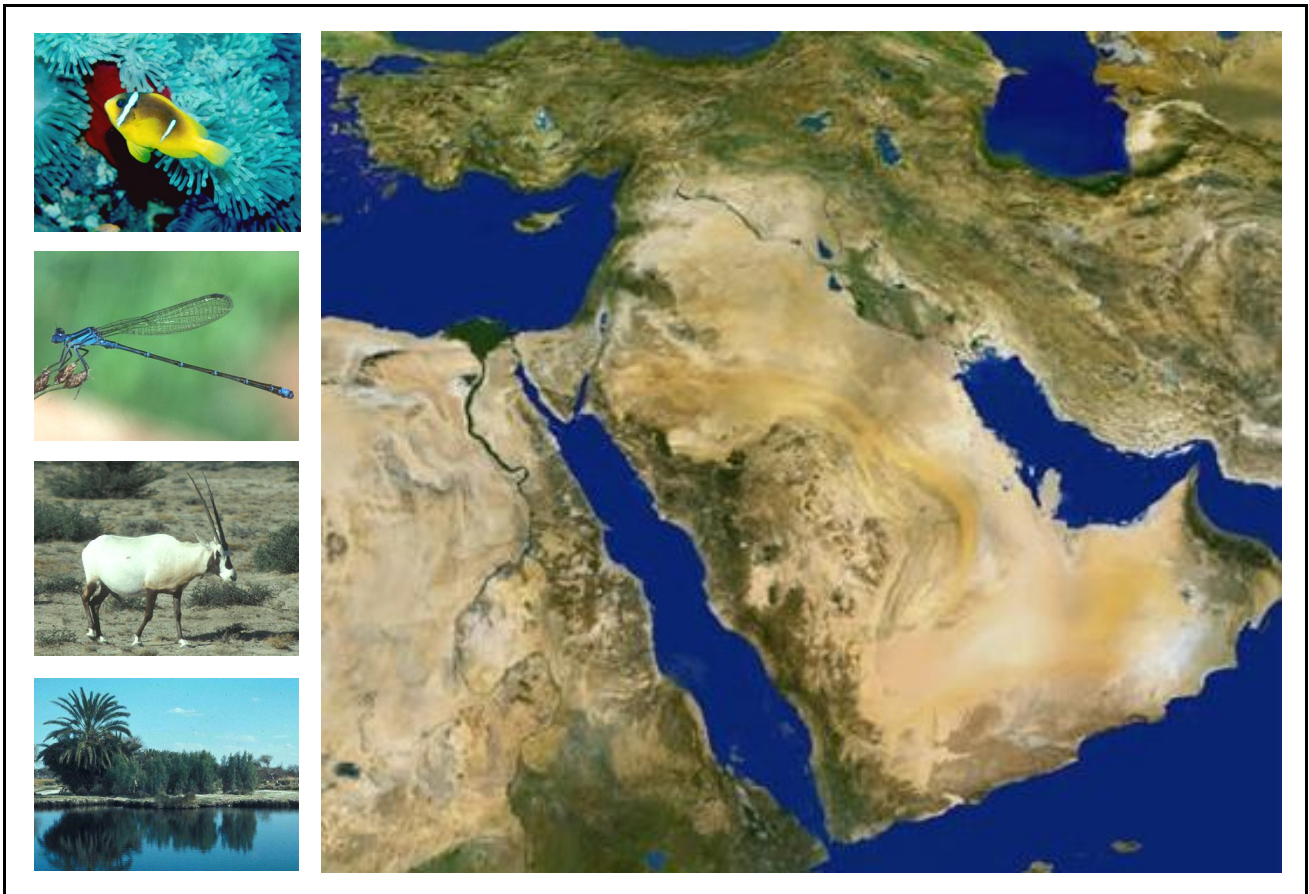


Establishment of a Middle Eastern Biodiversity Research, Training and Conservation Network



FIRST CIRCULAR

International Symposium

Documenting, Analysing and Managing Biodiversity in the Middle East

20-22 October 2008 – Amman, Jordan

Sponsor: German Academic Exchange Service - Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (DAAD)

Dear Colleagues

We take pleasure in inviting you to attend a Symposium on “Documenting, Analysing and Managing Biodiversity in the Middle East”, which will be held from 20 to 22 October 2008 in Amman, Jordan. The conference is being co-organised by the Senckenberg Research Institute and Natural History Museum, Frankfurt, Germany and the Marine Science Station, Aqaba, Jordan, and hosted by the University of Jordan, Amman.

At a global scale, the Middle East is the only transition zone between three major biogeographic units, the Palaearctic, the Afrotropical and the Oriental Realms, resulting in an outstanding biogeographic significance and a unique biological diversity. The region is bordered by the north-western Indian Ocean and surrounded by three semi-enclosed seas with the highest marine biodiversity on a global scale. Biodiversity, which is part of our life-support system, is of outstanding economic, ecological, spiritual, cultural and aesthetic importance and receives increased attention world-wide, including the Middle East. The countries of the region have signed and ratified the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, which includes a number of obligations in documenting and conserving biodiversity. Over the last decades, a wealth of research on Middle Eastern biodiversity has been carried out, both inside and outside the region. We feel it is timely for scientists specialising in biodiversity research to get together, to present and discuss scientific findings, identify future research priorities, and opportunities for regional and international cooperation. Given the transboundary nature of biodiversity issues, networking and information sharing are pivotal in addressing major global challenges, such as biodiversity loss due to uncontrolled development and climate change.

The first conference of its kind was held in 1951 in Istanbul, Turkey, organised by then late C. Kosswig, H. Steinitz and H.A.F. Gohar, followed by the “Symposium on the Fauna and Zoogeography of the Middle East” held in 1985 in Mainz, Germany, and organised by R. Kinzelbach, F. Krupp and W. Schneider. While building on this tradition, the present conference is wider in scope, addressing scientific research, academic education and transfer of results for resource management and conservation. It is being held in the framework of the project “Establishment of a Middle Eastern Biodiversity Research, Training and Conservation Network”, which is supported by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) with funding from the German Federal Foreign Office. The geographical scope of the conference includes Turkey, Iran, the countries of the Levant, the Arabian Peninsula and surrounding seas.

We hope that you and your colleagues will be able to attend this important symposium and look forward to a lively exchange of views and information, and opportunities to strengthen and extend the Middle Eastern Biodiversity Network, which we have jointly built over the past two years.

The Co-chairs of the Organising Committee

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Please visit the project website for further details: www.senckenberg.de/biodiversity_symposium

Conference Secretariat

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Objectives

The objectives of the symposium are:

- To present and discuss results of recent research on Middle Eastern biodiversity
- To present results of the Middle Eastern Biodiversity Project to a wider audience, and to discuss them in the light of other regional research and educational activities
- To review the present status of biodiversity research and education in the Middle East
- To link up with scientists in the region, in Europe and in other parts of the world, reviewing the status of Middle Eastern biodiversity research in a global context
- To identify opportunities and priorities for future biodiversity research and education
- To identify opportunities and priorities in transferring biodiversity research results to applied fields, such as renewable resources management and conservation

It is planned to publish proceedings of the symposium and of specialized workshops, preferably as special issues of international, peer-reviewed journals.

Symposium Themes and Specialised Workshops

Topics for oral and poster presentations include:

- Patterns and processes of continental biodiversity
- Patterns and processes of marine biodiversity
- Plant diversity
- Animal diversity
- Microbial diversity
- Agrodiversity
- Biodiversity and ecosystem services
- Biodiversity and climate change
- Biodiversity and renewable resource management
- Biodiversity conservation

Topics of specialised workshops include:

- Middle Eastern freshwater fishes, their taxonomy, biogeography, status and conservation
- Natural history museum education
- Natural history museum management in the Middle East

Conference Language

The official symposium language is English. All abstracts, presentations and posters will be in English.

Call for Pre-registration and Abstracts

If you are interested in participating, kindly fill in the pre-registration form attached to this circular to ensure that you will receive the second circular.

Abstracts must be submitted as Word files by e-mail attachment. The abstract should be concise, intelligible in itself, and draw attention to the significant contents of the paper and the author's principle results and conclusions. It must not exceed 250 words, nor contain any uncommon abbreviations or literature citations.

Please send your abstract to: Ms Nadia Manasfi (nmanasfi@senckenberg.de).

EXAMPLE OF ABSTRACT FORMAT:

Freshwater and Estuarine Fishes of Socotra Island

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Socotra lies in the Afro-Asian arid belt and irregular rainfall during the monsoon results in a marked seasonality in river flow, salinity and temperature regimes. Most inland waters are separated from the sea during the dry season. In the 19th century, primary freshwater fishes had been reported, but their presence was not confirmed during recent surveys between 1998 and 2002. Rivers and estuaries are inhabited by obligate catadromous species, secondary freshwater fishes and species of marine origin. Forty-four fish species belonging to 22 families were recorded. Trophic levels were similar to other tropical Indo-Pacific areas with 55% benthic invertebrate feeders, while surface invertebrate feeders, herbivorous, iliophagous, planktivorous and piscivorous species were represented with 7-11% each. Socotra's estuaries are important nurseries, dominated by juveniles and sub-adults of marine species, which later return to the sea where they colonize a wide range of benthic and pelagic habitats. The study underlines the ecological and economic importance of Socotra's inland waters.

The Abstract submission deadline is 31 May 2008

Fees

Symposium fees will be Jordanian Dinars¹ (JD) 150.- for participants, JD 70.- for students and JD 50.- for accompanying persons. Fees for participants and students will cover admittance to all symposium sessions, conference materials, abstract booklet, coffee breaks and lunches. Fees of accompanying persons will include admission to sessions, coffee breaks and lunches.

Schedule and Deadlines

- 31 May 2008: Deadline for abstract submission
- 30 Jun 2008: Distribution of second circular

Please check the following homepage for updates: www.senckenberg.de/biodiversity_symposium

¹ At present 1 JD is approximately 1€

Social Activities

A symposium dinner and trips to the vicinity of Amman will be offered for symposium participants and accompanying persons. Possible destinations of post-symposium tours may include Petra, Dana, Aqaba and the Dead Sea. Details and costs will be announced in the second circular.

Venue and Travel Information

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is a beautiful and diverse country of about 90,000 square kilometres at the crossroads between east and west. About 90 percent of the country is steppe and desert. Jordan is bisected by the northern reaches of the great Rift Valley with the Jordan River and the Dead Sea, bordered by high mountains. East of the mountain range is a high, wide plateau, which places Amman as the second highest capital in the Arab World. Jordan has a population of about 4.5 million, almost half of whom live in Amman, which sprawls over 19 hills covered with light-coloured houses with flat roofs. Amman is one of the oldest, continuously inhabited cities in the world, looking back to a history of 5500 years. Today, it is a thriving commercial and administrative centre with modern facilities, historical attractions and a longstanding tradition of hospitality. Amman is also home to the University of Jordan, the largest and oldest university in the country.

The climate is dry and hot during summer, while winter and spring months are cooler and wetter. In October weather in Amman is expected to be dry and pleasant with temperatures ranging between 14 °C and 26 °C. Light clothing is generally suitable, but sweaters or jackets may be needed at night.

The weekend in Jordan is Friday and Saturday, on which days government offices are closed. The weekly holiday is Friday. Banks and most other commercial activities close on Fridays. Amman is conveniently connected with frequent direct flights from major cities in the Middle East, Europe and North America. For entry to Jordan you need a passport, which should be valid for at least six months after arrival. Nationals of many Middle Eastern and European countries, Australia, Canada and the U.S. can obtain visa upon arrival at Queen Alia International Airport. Please contact your nearest Jordanian Embassy or Consulate for visa information.

Information about hotels in the vicinity of the University of Jordan with special rates for symposium participants, ranging from budget accommodation for students to 5-star hotels, will be provided in the second circular.

For more information about Jordan please visit the homepage of the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities: <http://www.mota.gov.jo/TOPICS.HTM>



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PRE-REGISTRATION FORM

International Symposium

Documenting, Analysing and Managing Biodiversity in the Middle East

20-22 October 2008 Amman, Jordan

Please complete this form and return it by e-mail or fax to:

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Full name (family name in CAPITALS):

Affiliation:

Address:

Phone:

Fax:

E-mail:

I wish to give a presentation: () oral () poster () no presentation

Tentative title of presentation:

Date:

Signature: