

Introduction

Qatar is a peninsula at the midpoint of the western coast of the Arabian Gulf, which borders it to the north and east. To the west Qatar is bordered by the Gulf of Bahrain and to the south by Saudi Arabia. The southern portion of the Gulf of Bahrain is also known as the Gulf of Salwah.

Qatar's 700 km of coastline, which includes a number of coastal islands, is comprised of tidal flats, salt marshes, mangroves, and both sandy and rocky beaches. Mangroves on the northeastern coast and vast coral reef systems along the eastern and northern coast host the highest concentrations of wildlife.

At Risk Wildlife

Avian species – coastal areas of Qatar, particularly Al-Dhakira, Khor al-Udeid, Al-Thakhira and Al-Aaylia Island are utilised by migrating and wintering waterbirds. Species of concern include ferruginous duck, black-tailed godwit, Eurasian curlew, Socotra cormorant, and the critically endangered sociable lapwing. Two species of flamingo are also found here.

Marine mammals – there are three marine mammal species found in the waters of Qatar. The Indo-pacific finless porpoise and the Indo-Pacific humpback dolphin are the only cetaceans routinely reported in the area. Qatar hosts the second largest population of manatee in the world, which spends winters in the northwestern waters of the country and spreads out along the entire coast over the summer.

Marine Reptiles – four species of sea turtle (leatherback, loggerhead, hawksbill and green) have been reported as present in Qatar's waters, however only hawksbill and green turtles are regularly seen and only hawksbills nest here. They nest on northeast beaches-Umm Tays, Fuwairat, Al Ghariyah, Ras Laffan and some offshore islands between April and July.

Regional Seas

The Arabian (Persian) Gulf portion of the ROPME Regional Sea area

(Note: The ROPME Regional Sea area is based on the boundaries established by the Kuwait Convention's Regional Organisation for the Protection of the Marine Environment for their scope of work).

Past experience

Qatar experienced two major incidents in the 1980s from the HASBAH 6 well blow-out off of Saudi Arabia (1980) and from the Nowruz oil field (1983). The ITOPE country profile notes the use of an innovative system of dykes and sluice gates to retain the oil in man-made lagoons, as well as the use of booms to protect sensitive areas. No wildlife impacts were reported in these instances.

Response: the role of the authorities

A National Oil Spill Contingency Plan was revised and updated in 2005 but as of 2011, the Ministry of the Environment had not formally approved it. At present, the Ministry of the Environment is the national authority for oil spill response. All spills are reported to the Oil Spill and Emergency Response Department (OS&ERD) of Qatar Petroleum, which functions as the On-Scene Commander for all major spills in the country, overseeing onshore, offshore and shoreline response.

In Doha Port, the Doha Port Management Company is responsible for response with OS&ERD monitoring their work. In the rest of the country, OS&ERD would respond. For joint ventures, the venture would respond with OS&ERD available to assist as needed.

For larger incidents the Marine Emergency Mutual Aid Centre (MEMAC), a ROPME cooperative project, could be called in for assistance.

The Ministry of Environment, formerly the Supreme Council for the Environment and Natural Reserves (SCENR), is responsible for environmental protection and would therefore be the likely authority for oversight of any oiled wildlife

response.

Oiled wildlife response

Formal guidelines?

There are no formal guidelines for oiled wildlife response at present.

Response objectives and strategy

Not applicable.

Euthanasia or rehabilitation?

It is likely that rehabilitation would be allowed, however, at present no capacity exists within the country.

Impact assessment

There are environmental sensitivity maps, which include wildlife habitat information, available through the Ministry of the Environment. MEMAC Regional Marine Oil Pollution Manual includes a section on impact assessment, although methods for impact assessment are not detailed. The Friends of the Environment Centre, a BirdLife International affiliate, completed a Guide to the Birds of Qatar in 2015 and might be an additional resource for impact assessment as they also conduct avian monitoring programmes around the country.

Notification and early response

There is no system for notification and early response to oiled wildlife.

Wildlife responders

There are no experienced oiled wildlife response groups in Qatar. Al Wabra Wildlife Preservation, a conservation project, is willing to assist in any rehabilitation process undertaken by providing veterinarians and biologists. The facility itself would not be able to take in any animals due to strict quarantine measures in place to protect endangered species in their captive breeding projects. The Friends of the Environment Centre may be able to assist in surveying for oiled wildlife and sourcing additional help.

The University of Qatar, Texas A&M University at Galveston (TAMUG) and ExxonMobil Research Qatar (EMRQ) initiated a collaborative study of the manatee population in Qatar in 2014. It is likely that this project would play a role in response to any manatees affected.

Qatar University's Environmental Science Centre (ECS) works closely with the Ministry of the Environment and Qatar Petroleum on hawksbill turtle conservation and would likely be involved in any response involving sea turtles.

Cooperation between stakeholders

Qatar is a signatory to the Kuwait Convention's Regional Organisation for the Protection of the Marine Environment and is active in its Marine Emergency Mutual Aid Centre (MEMAC) processes.

Permanent facilities

There are no permanent facilities in Qatar for wildlife rehabilitation.

Current processes

A MEMAC regional workshop on oil spill response was held in September 2015 in Qatar to review the status of participating countries and share information. Details of the meeting were not available at time of publication.

Documentation and references

General references

Qatar National Biodiversity Action Plan 2004

ROPME Regional Plan

MEMAC website

ITOPF Country Profile

Birdlife International Country profile. Accessed online 7.2015

General references

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