

Location



Introduction

The Kingdom of Bahrain is an archipelago in the Middle East, consisting of two island groups spanning approximately 48km from north to south and 16km from east to west. Bahrain Island accounts for seven-eighths of Bahrain's total land area and is surrounded by smaller islands. The country is bordered by Saudi Arabia to the west across the Gulf of Bahrain and the Qatar peninsula is to the east. Bahrain does not share a land boundary with another country and is linked to Saudi Arabia by the 15-mile-long King Fahd Causeway. The coastline of Bahrain is 161km long. The country is mostly desert, the terrain is flat and the climate is arid and mild, with very hot and humid summers.

Regional Seas and Biogeography

Persian Gulf/Arabian Gulf
Gulf of Bahrain
Gulf of Salwah

Habitats

The seas around Bahrain are shallow, with a range of different habitat types:

- Mangroves are found in Tubli Bay and have been planted in a reserve at Arad Bay, both on the northeast coast of the main island.
- Seagrasses are found extensively off the east coast of the main island and the smaller islands.
- Coral reefs occur in many areas off Bahrain's coasts, in the Hawar islands and in the eastern Gulf of Bahrain between Bahrain and Qatar.
- Saltmarshes in the central and southern areas.
- Tidal and mud flats are found in many areas.

Biodiversity Hotspots

→ National Parks/Marine Protected Areas

Although not designated for marine wildlife, a marine protected area and UNESCO World Heritage Site to the northeast of the main island (the Northern 'Hayrat' and Reef Bul Thamah) is designated for its oyster beds (for pearl diving), so may be subject to particular conservation attention in the event of an oil spill.

Mashtan Island is located in the South-East around 2.5km off Bahrain's main island. The surrounding sea grass beds are known to be important for foraging dugongs (VU) and sea turtles

Dohat Arad (or Arad Bay) is a man-made sheltered bay dominated by mudflats which are an important resting and feeding area for many resident and migratory waders.

→ RAMSAR Sites

Tubli Bay (also an IBA) is a shallow sheltered bay in the northeast, south of Manama. The bay is characterized by intertidal mud and sand flats, also with some rocky shores the last remaining natural mangrove stand in the country at Ras Sand in the southwest corner (natural reserve). The wetland is an important staging and wintering area for up to 45 species of waterbirds both resident and migratory, mainly herons, shorebirds, gulls and terns, who regularly visit the bay during the migration periods and in winter. Common moorhen (*Gallinula chloropus*) and black-winged stilt (*Himantopus Himantopus*) breed in the mangroves.

The **Hawar Islands** (also an IBA and Marine Protected Area) are an archipelago of 16 small desert islands, some with cliffs, in the Gulf of Bahrain, close to the northwest coast of Qatar, in the upper part of the Gulf of Salwah. They are surrounded by shallow seas with extensive seagrass beds and are in relatively pristine condition because access is severely restricted. They support one of the largest breeding concentrations of the Socotra Cormorant (VU) in the world, as well as and large numbers of Greater Flamingo (*Phoenicopterus roseus*) and Black-headed Gull (*Larus ridibundus*). Some tern species breed here, as well as the Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*). Some of the world's largest dugong (VU) concentrations are seen here year-round. Sea turtles are also observed.

→ IBAs

The **Southwest Coast** IBA is a long, sandy beach on the south-west coast of the main island. Relatively undisturbed by humans, it provides breeding habitat for white-cheeked terns (*Sterna repressa*).

→ IMMAs

The **Gulf of Salwa IMMA**, which includes territorial waters of both Bahrain and Qatar is a shallow water area with extensive seagrass meadows. It is a globally important area for one of the world's largest populations of dugong (VU). Cetacean species seen in the area include Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops aduncus*), Indian Ocean humpback dolphins (EN) and, more rarely, finless porpoise (VU).

At risk Wildlife

In this section, some individual wildlife species are mentioned followed by a letter in parentheses. These are species included in the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species within the top three categories of risk - Vulnerable to extinction (VU), Endangered (EN) or Critically Endangered (CR). A more complete list of IUCN listed species is found in Appendix 1.

→ At risk birds

Bahrain is located on the Central Asian Flyway, an important migration routes for waterbirds. Many thousands of migratory birds can be seen on their migration during spring and autumn. Species of particular note are huge numbers (up to 100,000 breeding pairs) of Socotra cormorant and a large breeding colony of Western Reef Heron (*Egretta gularis*) on the Hawar Islands. Greater flamingoes (*Phoenicopterus roseus*) are present year round on tidal and mud flats. Several species of terns breed in Bahrain, as well as the Kentish plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus*), Kentish Plover and the black-winged stilt (*Himantopus himantopus*).

→ At risk reptiles

Two sea turtle species are known. Hawksbill turtles (CR) forage in Bahraini waters, and between Bahrain and Qatar, with the exception of during the very hot season (June to August) when they move further offshore to deeper waters. Green turtles (*Chelonia mydas*), on the Bahrain Red List as endangered, are known to forage around the Hawar islands, however there is no evidence that they are nesting on Bahrain's beaches.

Caspian turtle (*Mauremys capsica*), on the Bahrain red list as Vulnerable, are found in freshwater springs and agricultural channels in the north, east and western parts of the country.

→ At risk mammals

Bahrain's waters are globally important for dugong (VU), particularly around the Hawar Islands (aggregations of more than 1000, particularly in winter). They are also thought to be breeding. Dugong are also found in the waters between Bahrain and Qatar, south of Fasht Al-Adham, north of the Hawar Island and south of King Fahad causeway.

In addition to dugong and the cetaceans mentioned in the IMMA section above, surveys have indicated presence of bottlenose dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*) and Indo-Pacific humpback dolphins (VU) in Bahraini waters.

Past experience with oil spill and potential risks

Given its geographical location in the Persian Gulf, Bahrain can be at risk to oil spills from maritime traffic, particularly with a high number of oil tankers passing through nearby waters. However, there have not been many major oil spill incidents impacting the coastline or wildlife, instead chronic pollution is more commonly the issue.

October 2, 1980, the rig Ron Tappmeyer in the Hasbah oil field blew out during drilling. Crude oil began to discharge into the Persian Gulf, causing the release of hydrogen sulfide gas. The well discharged oil for 8 days until it was capped.

International and Regional Treaties and Agreements

→ Oil spill and HNS Response

d CLC Convention 69

CLC Protocol 76

CLC Protocol 92

- FUND Protocol 76
- FUND Protocol 92
- FUND Protocol 2003
- LLMC Convention 76
- LLMC Protocol 96
- OPRC Convention 90
- HNS Convention 96
- HNS PROT 2010
- OPRC_HNS 2000
- BUNKERS CONVENTION 01

➔ **Marine Biodiversity Protection**

- Indian Ocean South East Asia (IOSEA) Marine Turtle MoU
- MoU on the Conservation and Management of Marine Turtles and their Habitats of the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia (CMS IOSEA)
- MoU on conservation and management of Dugongs (*Dugong dugon*) and their habitats throughout their range
- Kuwait Regional Convention for Cooperation on the Protection of the Marine Environment from Pollution

Oil Spill Response and HNS Spill Response

➔ **National Contingency Plan?**

Bahrain has a National Oil Spill Contingency Plan first developed in 1993 and updated in 2013 to include HNS. The overall objectives are to provide safety, timely, effective and coordinated response to any oil or hazardous materials and to protect human health and the marine and terrestrial environment.

The oil industry is responsible for drawing up their own spill contingency plans.

➔ **Role of Competent National Authorities**

The Supreme Council for the Environment (SCE) has the overall responsibility for the National Oil Spill Contingency Plan and the President is the Supreme Incident Commander for pollution incidents, whereas the SCE's Chief Executive takes the role of National Incident Commander and chairs the National Unified Command during an incident. The Chief Executive is responsible for pre-identifying contractors for a response, coordinating with, and possibly activating Tier-2 resources, with the regional intergovernmental body Marine Emergency Mutual Aid Centre (MEMAC) (more in Cooperation between stakeholders section below).

The SCE set up a Pollution Technical Advisory Committee that meets regularly which provides advice to the SCE and keeps an overview of agencies and facilities that would likely be involved in an oil or HNS spill incident. The Technical Advisory Committee has representatives from different ministries, such as SCE, Transportation, Defense, Interior and Finance, and the Oil and Gas Authority.

The Ministry of Defense is responsible for organising shoreline cleanup, including people power, oil and pollution cleanup. The Coast Guard is responsible for at sea operations and also sits in the Unified Command.

Oiled Wildlife Preparedness and Response

➔ **Formal guidelines?**

There are no formal guidelines for oiled wildlife response in Bahrain. However, within the SCE there is a Director General of Wildlife Protection who is responsible for the oversight, management and protection of wildlife. It is likely that they would become involved in an oiled wildlife incident.

➔ **Response objectives and strategy**

There are no formal response objectives on wildlife response

➔ **Euthanasia or rehabilitation?**

There is no information regarding euthanasia or rehabilitation.

➔ **Impact assessment**

There is no mention of wildlife in the plans, however, it is likely that the SCE would take a decision on an assessment and likely coordinate or lead it. In the SCE, there is a Director General of Wildlife Protection and therefore a wildlife impact assessment could fall under this jurisdiction.

→ Notification and early response

Notification for an incident would go to the SCE to the National Incident Coordinator who would inform and coordinate the Command Team. However, there are no formal notification processes for wildlife specifically.

→ Wildlife responders

Mohamed Bin Zayed Nature Reserve, formerly Al Areen Wildlife Park and Reserve, works on the conservation and breeding of Bahrain's unique species and mentions birds and reptiles in their description. However, they have never been involved in an oiled wildlife incident and do not have facilities designed for such an incident.

→ Cooperation between stakeholders

Bahrain is a signatory to the Kuwait Regional Convention for Co-operation on the Protection of the Marine Environment from Pollution. Within that, Marine Emergency Mutual Aid Centre (MEMAC) for mutual assistance between the signatories was set up and is run from Bahrain.

→ Permanent facilities

For oiled wildlife, there are no specific facilities. However, Mohamed Bin Zayed Nature Reserve does some rehabilitation of local species, but not with a big marine focus. Bahrain Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (BSPCA), part of the SPCA international organisation, works on animal welfare but does not seem to work on wildlife. However, they might have facilities if there was an incident.

→ Current processes

There are no known ongoing processes.

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Appendix 1

→ At risk birds

Common name / Latin name / IUCN Red List Category (CR,EN,VU) / Resident-Migratory (season) / Breeding-Nesting-Pupping (season)

Great Knot / *Calidris tenuirostris* / EN / Resident /
Common Pochard / *Aythya ferina* / VU / Resident /
Socotra Cormorant / *Phalacrocorax nigrogularis* / VU / Resident/breeding /
Grey Plover / *Pluvialis squatarola* / VU / Resident /
Broad-billed Sandpiper / *Calidris falcinellus* / VU / Resident /
Curlew Sandpiper / *Calidris ferruginea* / VU / Resident /

→ At risk reptiles

Common name / Latin name / IUCN Red List Category (CR,EN,VU) / Resident-Migratory (season) / Breeding-Nesting-Pupping (season)

Hawksbill turtle / *Eretmochelys imbricata* / CR (also on Bahrain Red List) / Resident/migratory / Not nesting
Green turtle / *Chelonia mydas* / LC (Endangered on Bahrain Red List) / Resident/migratory / Not nesting

→ At risk mammals

Common name / Latin name / IUCN Red List Category (CR,EN,VU) / Resident-Migratory (season) / Breeding-Nesting-Pupping (season)

Dugong / *Dugong dugon* / VU (also on Bahrain Red List) / Resident (year round on Hawar islands) / Breeding
Finless Porpoise / *Neophocaena phocaenoides* / VU (CR on Bahrain RedList) / Resident/migratory / Breeding in Arabian gulf (april-early may)
Indian Ocean humpback dolphin / *Sousa plumbea* / EN / Resident/migratory /
Indo-Pacific humpback dolphin / *Sousa chinensis* / VU / Resident/migratory /