

## Location



## Introduction

Egypt is a large country in the northeast of Africa which has coastlines on two seas, the Mediterranean to the north and the Red Sea to the east which total 2,450 km. It borders Sudan to the south, Libya to the west. There is a desert peninsula known as Sinai Peninsula which borders Israel on the northeast. To the west of the peninsula is the Gulf of Suez, and to the east the Gulf of Aqaba. Egypt has a desert climate characterised by hot, dry summers and mild winters. Precipitation is low, with most of the country's rainfall happening in the north of the country.

The Suez Canal, which links the Mediterranean Sea to the Red Sea, is in Egypt and is one of the busiest shipping routes in the world as a crucial link between Europe and Asia for trade. Around 50 ships a day pass through the Suez Canal making risk to incidents high. Approximately 1 million barrels of oil pass through the Suez Canal daily. The Red Sea is also subject to geopolitical tensions and ships have been known to be targeted in the Red Sea.

## Regional Seas and Biogeography

Red Sea LME

Mediterranean Sea LME

## Habitats

Given that Egypt has coastlines on the Mediterranean Sea and the Red Sea, the habitat types can be different on each coastline.

Mediterranean Sea:

- Sand banks and dunes can be found throughout the coastline, with the most extensive stretch in the northwestern area along a coastal road between El Sallum and Marsa Matrouh.
- Rocky shorelines are mostly found near the port city of Alexandria.
- Coastal lagoons are along the Mediterranean coast of Egypt, with two major ones on either side of Alexandria and two other major ones at the Nile Delta Coast.

Red Sea:

- Coral reefs can be found along large stretches of the eastern coast and Sinai Peninsula, with a particularly high concentration around Hurghada and Sharm El Sheikh, which are popular diving areas.
- Red and grey mangroves can be found in patches on the Red Sea coast. There are mangrove as the southern tip of the Sinai Peninsula at Sharm el Sheikh, at Safada in the east of the country, and in the south east in the Wadi El Gemal Hamala National Park.
- Seagrasses are found on the northeast coast of both São Tomé and Príncipe islands, being more common in the former.
- Rocky shorelines can be found along the coastline of the Sinai Peninsula in the Red Sea.
- There are salt lagoons in the coast of Egypt in the Red Sea, but not as large or prominent as those in the Mediterranean. There are lagoons at Sharm el Sheikh and elsewhere on the tip of the Sinai Peninsula.

## **Biodiversity Hotspots**

### → **National Parks**

*Wadi El-Gemal Elba national park* is on the southeast coast of Egypt along the Red Sea. It is a large protected area of over 7000km<sup>2</sup> with 120km of coastline and the park designation extends into the marine area. The coast and marine area have large coral reefs and mangrove forests as well as seagrass beds, making them an important and vulnerable marine habitat. There are thousands of species in the park, but notably there are dugongs, critically endangered Hawksbill sea turtles, and Green sea turtle (*Chelonia mydas*).

### → **RAMSAR Sites**

*Lake Burullus*, also an IBA, is on the Mediterranean Coast, east of the port city of Alexandria. It is a shallow saline lagoon with around 75 small islands inside it, and it is separated from the sea by a large dune. It is an important area for wintering waterfowl such as the Ferruginous duck (*Aythya nyroca*), Corncrake (*Crex crex*), and lesser kestrel (*Falco naumanni*).

*Lake Bardawil*, also an IBA, is a major saline lagoon on the Mediterranean coastline of the Sinai Peninsula. It is an important area for migrating, wintering and breeding waterfowl. Gargeny (*Spatula querquedula*) can be found in numbers over 200,000, as well as important populations of Corncrake (*Crex crex*), marbled duck (*Marmaronetta angustirostris*), and Ferruginous duck (*Aythya nyroca*). Green sea turtles (*Chelonia mydas*) and loggerhead turtles (*Caretta caretta*) are also present.

### → **IBAs**

*Hurghada archipelago* is in the southern coast of Egypt in the Red Sea which covers a number of islands that are protected areas. It hosts large numbers of breeding colonies of seabirds and water birds, such as the white-eyed gull (*Larus leucophthalmus*), White-cheeked Tern (*Sterna anaethetus*), and Western reef egret (*Egretta gularis*). The IBA covers marine areas that have endangered species such as dugongs and hawksbill sea turtles.

### → **IMMAs**

*Northern Red Sea Islands* are located off the coast of Egypt in the northern Red Sea. It covers a network of islands, coral reefs, bays, lagoons and open water. The area is designated for Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops aduncus*), and Indian Ocean Humpback Dolphins.

*Southern Egyptian Red Sea Bays, Offshore Reefs and Islands* are south of Marsa Alam on the Red Sea coast covers coastal bays, offshore reefs, and islands. It is designated for 9 marine mammals, such as Dugongs, Indian Ocean humpback dolphins, Risso's dolphin (*Grampus griseus*) amongst others.

## **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**

Egypt has many types of birds given its two different coasts, and is known for wintering of waterfowl especially in the Mediterranean coast in its wetlands. Gulls, terns, ducks can also be found in high numbers. The coastal birds that are endangered in Egypt are mostly found in the winter related to the migration, such as the Common pochard and the Yelkouan shearwater.

### → **At risk reptiles**

Egypt has 4 of the 7 species of sea turtles in its waters, the hawksbill sea turtle which is critically endangered and feeds on the Egyptian coral reefs, as well as the loggerhead and the green sea turtle (*Chelonia mydas*). The endangered olive-ridley sea turtle can occasionally be found in the offshore waters of the Red Sea.

### → **At risk mammals**

Given that Egypt has two seas, the Mediterranean Sea and the Red Sea, there are quite a few marine mammals that can be found in its waters. There are a number of dolphin species, with the most endangered being Indian Ocean Humpback Dolphin. Similarly, there are a number of whale species such as the fin whale and sperm whale.

The Dugong is also found in the waters of Egypt in the Red Sea, and Monk seals have returned to the Egyptian coastline on the Mediterranean coast.

**Past experience with oil spill and potential risks**

The VSG Glory (2024) lost propulsion in the Red Sea off Quseir and sustained a hull breach which leaked around 70 tonnes of fuel oil onto a reef. Efforts were made to pump the oil from its tanks, but bad weather made it difficult. The ship eventually sank on a coral reef

In 2021, there was a globally significant incident when the Ever Given, a 400 metre long container ship, ran aground and blocked passage through the Suez Canal for 6 days. Strong winds turned the ship which became wedged across the canal on both banks on either side. The ship was refloated and eventually tugged to Great Bitter Lake. The incident has significant impacts on global trade, potentially costing billions of dollars, although exact figures are difficult to obtain.

In 2010, a significant oil spill in the Northern Red Sea polluted around 160km of coastline on the Jebel al-Zayt coast from an unknown source, although it was thought to have come from an offshore platform. The spill impacted notable tourist beaches and sensitive coastal habitats such as coral reefs, and protected areas.

In 2005, the Oil Tankers Genmar Kestrel and Trigata collided during high winds, spilling 1000 and 500 tonnes of oil respectively off Port Said. Local authorities handled the oil spill response operations

Al-Samidoun Oil Tanker Spill (2004) occurred in the Suez Canal where the single hull tanker lost tens of thousands of cubic metres of cargo. A slick of several kilometres formed in the canal but relatively little is known about the spill. The Suez Canal Authority handled the response operations

In 2004, the Good Hope lost around 1000 tonnes of oil while loading near Alexandria. The local authority treated the spill with dispersants, and the rest was believed to evaporate naturally.

In 1996 there were two incidents that led to oiling of coastlines. The Kriti Sea spilled approximately 50 tonnes of oil in the Suez Canal. The shores of the Great Bitter lack became oiled and dispersants and manual cleanup operations were initiated. The Million Hope in the same year grounded on a reef at the entrance to the Tiran Strait. Oil was lost which impacted around 7.5km of sandy coastline.

Given its location with the Suez Canal and extremely high maritime traffic, offshore oil platforms and long stretches of coastline, Egypt is quite susceptible to oil spills.

**International and Regional Treaties and Agreements****→ Oil spill and HNS Response**

- 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
- Jeddah Convention and its Protocol Concerning Regional Cooperation in Combating Pollution by Oil and Other Harmful Substances in Cases of Emergency
- Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and contiguous Atlantic area (ACCOBAMS)
- Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (AEWA)
- Barcelona Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea against Pollution

- The Regional Marine Pollution Emergency Response Centre for the Mediterranean Sea (REMPEC)
- MoU on the Conservation and Management of Marine Turtles and their Habitats of the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia (CMS IOSEA)

## **Oil Spill Response and HNS Spill Response**

### **→ National Contingency Plan?**

Egypt has a National Oil Spill Contingency Plan which is developed and led by the Ministry of Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency (EEAA).

Apart from this, every oil company in the country is obliged to have their own local oil spill contingency plan, such as the Egypt Oil and Gas Group, which are activated in the event of small spills considered a Tier 1 oil spill in Egypt. For a Tier 2 oil spill, regions can activate their oil spill contingency plans and work together. If it is a large oil spill, considered a Tier 3, the EEAA has responsibility for activating the National Plan and contacting neighbours or international bodies for assistance.

### **→ Role of Competent National Authorities**

The EEAA has overall responsibility for the national oil spill contingency plan and for overall coastline cleanup. For Spills under 100m<sup>3</sup>, port authorities and oil companies are responsible for the at sea response. Local governments are responsible for cleanup on shorelines for smaller spills. For spills over 100m<sup>3</sup>, the EEAA takes over coordination of a response, including coordination between local governments and other stakeholders, but is not running the operations on site. The EEAA may also decide to delegate to the Egyptian General Petroleum Company (EGPC) who have their own oil spill response plan. This is generally done for oil spills related to exploration and production of oil.

The Suez Canal Authority has its own oil spill contingency plan given the high maritime traffic.

For shoreline response, the local governments provide equipment, personnel, and deal with oil disposal.

## **Oiled Wildlife Preparedness and Response**

### **→ Formal guidelines?**

While there is a National Oil Spill Contingency Plan, there is no oiled wildlife plan in place and therefore no formal guidelines.

### **→ Response objectives and strategy**

The overall objective is to minimise damage to the environment and economic resources, with no objective about wildlife specifically.

### **→ Euthanasia or rehabilitation?**

There are no formal guidelines for euthanasia or rehabilitation.

### **→ Impact assessment**

The EEAA would be responsible for initiating an impact assessment if the National Oil Spill Contingency Plan is activated. The Hurghada Environmental Protection and Conservation Association (HEPCA) regularly monitors oil impacts on the environment and wildlife in the Hurghada area, and might be involved in an assessment there during an incident. Nature Conservation Egypt has experience monitoring bird species and therefore could be considered a potential stakeholder for an assessment.

### **→ Notification and early response**

EEAA is the point of contact for the national oil spill contingency plan and would receive the general first notification of an oil spill that goes beyond local oil spill plans or oil company plans. It is not clear how this might work for oiled wildlife.

### **→ Wildlife responders**

While there is no formal process for oiled wildlife in the National Contingency Plan, there are local NGOs who might be able to become involved if there were an incident. Turtle Watch Egypt is a citizen science project for snorkelers and divers who identify species and report sightings.

The Hurghada Environmental Protection and Conservation Association (HEPCA) is an NGO that works with

local governments in the Hurghada area to protect marine life and the coral reef systems in the area. They regularly monitor the Red Sea coastline for evidence of oil spills or oiled wildlife. During the Jebel al-Zayt oil spill, they reported dead seabirds and turtles found along the coast and therefore could be a stakeholder in a response.

Nature Conservation Egypt is the national Birdlife partner that works on nature conservation, species monitoring, advocacy and education. Similar to the above NGOs, they might likely get involved in an oiled wildlife response although no formal agreement is in place.

Alexandria Turtle and Wildlife Rescue on the Mediterranean coast specialises in the rescue and rehabilitation of sea turtles, as well as other wild animals. It is possible that their rehabilitation centre could assist in an oiled turtle incident, although no formal agreement is in place.

#### → **Cooperation between stakeholders**

There is no history of cooperative action on wildlife response within the country.

Egypt is a contracting party to the Barcelona Convention for protecting the Mediterranean Sea. For the Red Sea, there is the Regional Organization for the Conservation of the Environment of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden (PERSGA) of which Egypt is one of 7 Member States which aim to collectively address environmental threats including pollution. PERSGA is the Secretariat of the Jeddah Convention (Red Sea and Gulf of Aden) which is a legal commitment for those countries to collaborate to protect the environment.

#### → **Permanent facilities**

Alexandria Turtle and Wildlife Rescue on the Mediterranean coast has a rehab facility but it is not clear how big it is and is not part of a formal process. There does not appear to be bird rehabilitation centres.

There are animal welfare organisations, such as Cairo Society for the Protection of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA), but they work with domestic animals rather than wildlife.

#### → **Current processes**

No current ongoing processes known.

## **Documentation and references**

BirdLife International (2025). *Important Bird Area factsheet: Egypt*. <https://datazone.birdlife.org/country/factsheet/egypt>

BBC News (2021). *Ever Given: Suez Canal ship blockage cost global trade billions*. Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-56559073>

CEDRE (n.d.). *Al-Samidoun oil spill*. Available at: <https://wwz.cedre.fr/en/Resources/Spills/Spills/Al-Samidoun>

Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) (n.d.). *Red Sea cetaceans report*. Available at: [https://www.cms.int/sites/default/files/publication/red\\_sea\\_cetaceans\\_report\\_web\\_final.pdf](https://www.cms.int/sites/default/files/publication/red_sea_cetaceans_report_web_final.pdf)

Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency (EEAA) (2022). *[Official report]*. Available at: <https://www.eeaa.gov.eg/Uploads/Topics/Files/2022121314330094.pdf>

Egypt Oil & Gas. *Egypt's oil spill preparedness*. Available at: <https://egyptoil-gas.com/features/egypts-oil-spill-preparedness/>

Mittal, H.V.R., Langodan, S., Zhan, P., Li, S., Knio, O. & Hoteit, I. Hazard assessment of oil spills along the main shipping lane in the Red Sea.

IMMA E-Atlas. *Marine Mammal Habitat*. Available at: <https://www.marinemammalhabitat.org/imma-eatlas/>

ITOPF (2018). *Country profile: Egypt*. Available at: <https://www.itopf.org/knowledge-resources/countries-territories-regions/egypt/>

National Parks Association of Egypt. *Wadi El Gemal National Park*. Available at: <https://nationalparksassociation.org/egypt-national-parks/wadi-el-gemal-national-park/>

Nature Scientific Reports (2024). *[Article s41598-024-67983-x]*. Available at: <https://www.nature>.

[com/articles/s41598-024-67983-x](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/269850191)

RAC/SPA. *Marine biodiversity in the Mediterranean and Red Sea*. Available at: <https://www.rac-spa.org/node/2176>

RAMSAR Sites Information Service (n.d.). *Ramsar Sites Information Service*. Available at: <https://rsis.ramsar.org>

Reuters (2024). *Cargo ship sinking off Egypt's Red Sea coast*. Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/cargo-ship-sinking-off-egypts-red-sea-coast-2024-12-02/>

International Oil Spill Conference Proceedings (2005). *Challenges of oil spill response in the Egyptian coastal zone overlooking the Mediterranean and the Red Sea*. Available at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/269850191>

*Marine mammals on the Egyptian Mediterranean coast: Records and vulnerability*. Available at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/331802519>

State of the World's Sea Turtles (SWOT) (2017). *SWOT Report, Vol. XII: Special feature – Africa*. Available at: <https://www.seaturtlestatus.org/swot-report-vol-12>

UN Biodiversity Lab. *UN Biodiversity Lab*. Available at: <https://map.unbiodiversitylab.org>

Al Jazeera (2005). *Oil tankers collide off Egypt*. Available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2005/2/6/oil-tankers-collide-off-egypt>

## **Terms and Conditions**

These Country Wildlife Profiles are provided in good faith as a guide only and are based on information obtained from a variety of sources over a period of time. This information is subject to change and should, in each case, be independently verified before reliance is placed on it. Country Wildlife Profiles may have been issued solely to incorporate additional or revised information under one heading only. Each Profile has therefore not necessarily been completely verified or updated as at the stated Date of Issue.

Sea Alarm hereby excludes, to the fullest extent permitted by applicable law, any and all liability to any person, corporation or other entity for any loss, damage or expense resulting from reliance or use of these Country Wildlife Profiles.

© Sea Alarm Foundation, 2026

These Country Wildlife Profiles may be reproduced by any means for noncommercial distribution without addition, deletion or amendment, provided an acknowledgment of the source is given and these Terms & Conditions are reproduced in full.

These Country Wildlife Profiles may not be reproduced without the prior written permission of Sea Alarm Foundation either for commercial distribution or with addition, deletion or amendment.

## **Appendix 1**

### **→ At risk birds**

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

Common pochard / *Aythya ferina* / VU / Migratory, Winter / non-breeding

Yelkouan Shearwater / *Puffinus yelkouan* / VU / Migratory / Non-breeding

Broad-billed sandpiper / *Calidris falcinellus* / VU / rare visitor in Winter / non-breeding

Curlew Sandpipers / *Calidris ferruginea* / VU / Winter visitor / non-breeding

Sooty falcon / *Falco concolor* / VU / Passage / non-breeding

Grey plover / *Pluvialis squatarola* / VU / Passage/migratory in winter / non-breeding

➔ **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 / Resident / Nesting

Loggerhead / (*Caretta caretta*) / VU / Resident / Nesting

Olive-Ridley turtle / (*Lepidochelys olivacea*) / VU / Resident / Rare visitor

➔ **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 / Resident / Breeding

Indo-Pacific Humpback Dolphin / (*Sousa chinensis*) / VU / Resident / Breeding

Indian Ocean Humpback Dolphin / (*Sousa plumbea*) / EN / Resident / Breeding

Fin whale / (*Balaenoptera physalus*) / VU / occasional visitor /

Sperm whale / (*Physeter macrocephalus*) / VU / /

Mediterranean Monk seal / (*Monachus monachus*) / VU / Resident /