



Ministry of Environment



## Coastal and Marine Biodiversity in Egypt

The Arab Republic of Egypt has a unique geographical position in Northeast Africa; it also overlooks on the two strategic seas; the Red Sea in the east; and the Mediterranean Sea in the north. Egypt is home to a wide range of ecosystems, wildlife with biodiversity and unique coastal heritage that contributes to supports the economy and human welfare. The Egyptian coastal and marine ecosystems are distinguished by some of threatened species such as Dugong which live only in three places in the world (Red Sea, Arabian Gulf, and Australia), and special habitats such as coral reefs, mangroves, coastal wetlands, volcanic and coralline islands. Each of these habitats accommodates high biodiversity of plants and animals.



The Egyptian Coastal and Marine ecosystems contains numerous habitats and endemic species (17% in the Red Sea). The recorded species in the Egyptian coastal and marine ecosystems includes 17 species of marine mammals (dolphins and whales), about 300 species of birds, 4 marine turtles species, more than 1500 fish species from both the Red Sea and Mediterranean Sea, more than 800 species of seaweeds and sea grasses, 209 species of coral reefs , more than 800 species of mollusks (bivalve, snails and octopus), 600 species of crustaceans (shrimp and crabs), 350 species of echinoderms (sea stars, sea cucumber), in addition to hundreds of species that have never been discovered until now especially in the Economic Exclusive Zone (EEZ) in the Red Sea and the Mediterranean Sea. In spite of the fact that the coastal and marine biodiversity is high in Egypt (about 5000 species) due to the huge areas that extend more than 3000 km of distinguished coasts with rich and divers habitats. For example: Gulf of Suez is different from Gulf of Aqaba, in its physical, chemical and biological characteristics and mineral resources (oil and natural gas).

Many marine species in Egypt are endangered especially marine mammals (17 species), marine turtles (4 species), sharks (more than 20 species), sea cucumbers, some of bivalves, Coral reefs, mangrove trees, and many birds (White eye gull, Sooty falcons, and Osprey).

**Egypt to host the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity Conference (CBD COP14), Sharm El Sheikh, 13-29 November 2018**

For more information, visit [www.cop14-egypt.com](http://www.cop14-egypt.com)

## **Economic importance of coastal and marine areas in Egypt**

In recent years touristic activities contributed significantly to the national income, where tourist visiting the Egyptian coast have increased to more than 11 million during 2010, in addition to several millions of Egyptians who are not resident along the coast. The revenues of marine activities related to biodiversity especially tourism are more than 30 billion L.E. annually (beaching, diving, swimming, snorkeling, and bird watching). The revenues from protecting threatened species are estimated with billions L.E.; such as: Dolphins in Samadi (50 million L.E.), sharks in far islands (more than one million L.E.) and dugong (more than 10 million L.E.) annually. The marine fish production as amounted to 100.000 tones that are estimated with 5 billion LE.

More than 20% of Egypt total population lives on the coasts where available food and raw material are required for economic development. More than 40% of industrial and developmental activities are concentrated along the coasts that include 52 ports (of them 15 commercial, 13 oil, 9 minerals, 15 fishing, in addition to more than 30 tourist ports), cities, agricultural reclamation, infrastructure, roads and tourism. Furthermore, 85% of oil and gas production in Egypt is extracted from coastal and marine areas. The coastal and marine ways are important as main-bridge for transport and trade (more than 19000 ships cross annually Suez Canal and more than 14000 ships arrive annually at the Egyptian ports especially Alexandria).



Therefore, Egypt has paid special attention during the last 3 decades for natural resources conservation issues, and has enacted legislation to conserve natural heritage with support of political leadership to assure integration of development sectors with environment protection, and conserving natural resources for the existing and future generations. The promulgation of law no 102 of 1983 on protected areas was in tandem with the declaration of Ras Mohamed, the first national park in Egypt, in south Sinai, followed by establishment of 30 protectorates all over Egypt covering about 15% of Egypt's total area. These protected areas are includes most of all ecosystems and natural resources in Egypt. The coastal and marine protected areas represent about 30% of all protected areas, and they include Ras Mohammed, Napq, Abu Galum, Red Sea Islands, Wadi El-Gemal, Elba, Zaranik, Ashtoum El-Gamil, Burullus, Omayed, and Gulf of Sallum.



Protected Areas of Egypt listed chronologically by declaration date

- |                                   |                                     |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Ras Mohamed National Park      | 16 .Nabq Protectorate               |
| 2. Zaranik Protectorate           | 17 .Abu Galum Protectorate          |
| 3. Ahrash Protectorate            | 18 .Taba Protectorate               |
| 4. El Omayed Biosphere Reserve    | 19 .Lake Burullus Protectorate      |
| 5. Elba National Park             | 20 .Nile Islands Protectorates      |
| 6. Saluga and Ghazal Protectorate | 21 .Wadi Degla Protectorate         |
| 7. St. Katherine National Park    | 22 .Siwa Protectorate               |
| 8. Ashtum El Gamil Protectorate   | 23 .White Desert National Park      |
| 9. Lake Qarun Protectorate        | 24 .Wadi El-Gemal/Hamata            |
| 10. Wadi El Rayan Protectorate    | 25 .Red Sea Northern Islands        |
| 11. Wadi Alaqi Protectorate       | 26 .El Gifl El Kebir                |
| 12. Wadi El Assuti Protectorate   | 27 .El-Dababya                      |
| 13. El Hassana Dome Protectorate  | 28 .El-Salum                        |
| 14. Petrified Forest Protectorate | 29 .El-Wahat El-Bahreya             |
| 15. Sannur Cave Protectorate      | 30 .Mount Kamel Meteor Protectorate |

In Egypt, protected areas are selected to include and protect important key habitats and biodiversity from man's unsustainable activities. Geological protectorates include El Hassana Dome and Wadi Sannur Cave, a magnificent 700-meter-long cave filled with stalactites and stalagmites. The White Desert is also protected for its magnificent scenery and unique geology. Wadi El Hilan is an open-air museum of fossils, which has been declared a World Heritage site in 2005, also thanks to the support provided by the Egyptian-Italian Environmental Cooperation Program (EIECP). Gebel Elba National Park is the most important area for biodiversity and harbors plants and animals found nowhere else in Egypt.

The Gifl Kebir National Park, the largest Egyptian protected area complex is particularly notable for the pre-historic rock art and artifacts that abound in the area and are testament to human adaptation to past changes in climate. It has to be underlined that it also represents an outstanding sample of the hyper-arid ecosystems and biodiversity of the Eastern Sahara.

Zaranik Protectorate and the protected wetlands of the Mediterranean coast are of major importance for migrating birds and endangered wildlife. The Protected Areas system aims at conserving the cultures and the traditions of the diverse peoples - such as at Siwa and St Katherine and Protected Areas, who have contributed to the cultural enrichment of Egypt.

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In order to the ecological sensitive and economic importance of these coastal and marine protected areas; specialist are selected to be staffs and encourage them to obtain PhD, MSc, and BSc., and offer intensive training inside and outside Egypt and are equipped with equipment and tools, means of transportation and accommodations to protect coastal and marine biodiversity through law enforcement, carryout research and studies, assessment of biodiversity, public awareness, engage local communities in management of protected areas and implement projects funded by Egypt and donor countries and organizations. Since 1980 until now, many skills and experiences have been gained to improve protected areas management and biodiversity conservation. The first phase, during eighties, was distinguished by comprehensive protection, while the second phase during nineties and beginning of this century was distinguished by conservation and sustainable development. Currently the main target is comprehensive ecosystem management which depends on applying integrated ecosystem for human being welfare. This is to achieve the biodiversity targets in the strategic plan of the Biodiversity Convention and match with sustainable development goals (2030 Agenda) that require mainstreaming of biodiversity in all national development sectors.□

