

Carnegie Mellon University in Qatar host the first photographic exhibition about the Desert of Qatar

"Carnegie Mellon University in Qatar to host the photographic exhibition, 'Treasures of the Desert of Qatar', in honour of the International Year of Biodiversity 2010"

What: 'Treasures of the Desert of Qatar' photographic exhibition
Where: Library Lobby, Carnegie Mellon University in Qatar
When: Opening Ceremony (open to the public)
25 November 2010 at 12:00 pm (noon)
Duration: Through June 2011

Summary:

On 25 November 2010, the first exhibition in Education City to feature the biological treasures of the desert of Qatar will open in the Carnegie Mellon University in Qatar (CMUQ) library at 12:00 pm. The exhibit features the spiny-tailed lizard, *Uromastyx aegyptia microlepis*, locally called dhub. The photographs focus on the habitat, food sources, human interactions, and local efforts to promote preservation of this species.

Exhibit: The exhibition includes photo panels, a standing poster, a photo slide show and informational fliers, stickers, and bookmarks featuring the spiny-tailed lizard and its surroundings in Qatar.

Purpose: To contribute to the International Year of Biodiversity and to raise local awareness of species preservation.

Audience: General public

Objectives

- To help improve the knowledge of the desert wildlife of Qatar
- To improve the interest of the general public for natural resources including animals and plants
- To start a social awareness campaign on the importance of preserving and maintaining biological diversity in Qatar and around the globe
- To encourage students to learn more about the importance of preserving natural resources. [In Spring 2010, CMUQ became the first university in Education City to offer courses in ecology and conservation biology taught by Adjunct Professor of Biology, Dr. April A. T. Conkey.]

Why focus on the spiny- tailed lizard?

The spiny-tailed lizard is a flagship species of Qatar, common throughout the peninsula, and it is an important part of Bedouin culture and diet. Hunting and consuming dhubs may have dual negative effects on the lizard population and the human population. Over-hunting will cause a decline in the lizard population, and consumption of lizard meat may lead to human health problems from increased levels of cyanobacteria toxins in the body.

Who supports preserving and maintaining biological diversity in Qatar?

Qatar has a young but developing scientific culture in natural resource research, recycling, and sustainable development and the initiatives of Qatar Foundation support these development efforts. Apart from the Qatar Supreme Council of the Environment and Qatar Foundation, there are several non-governmental groups that also support and promote the development of these activities. They include the UNESCO Doha Office, The Friends of the Environment Centre, the Qatar Natural History Group (QNHG), Carnegie Mellon University in Qatar (CMUQ), Weill Cornell Medical College in Qatar (WCMCQ), Texas A & M University at Qatar (TAMU-Q), and Qatar University. Moreover, scientific institutions in other countries, such as Spain (Spanish National Research Council, CSIC and the Forest Technology Centre of Catalonia, CTFC) are also supporting scientific progress inline with natural resources with their effort and dedication towards the study of wildlife in Qatar.

Biodiversity is also present across the curricula, as Dr. Selma Limam Mansar and Dr. Daniel Phelps chose developing an iPhone App design to increase awareness of biodiversity in Qatar as the theme for the Information Systems (IS) Fall 2010 Innovation Competition (67-102: Concepts of Information Systems) and the upcoming Ibtikar Qatar workshop to introduce secondary students to Information Systems.

Who started the initiative for this exhibition?

The photographic exhibition, "The Treasures of the Desert of Qatar", is an initiative of Mr. Bijan Esfahani, the Library Director at Carnegie Mellon University in Qatar (CMUQ). Mr. Esfahani has directed the exhibit with the collaboration of Dr. April Conkey at CMUQ and Dr. Aurora Martínez de Castilla, from the Spanish National Research Council & the Forest Technology Centre of Catalonia (CSIC-CTFC). Mr. Esfahani has been the Director of Libraries at a CMUQ since 2009. His previous experience includes two years at the library of Weill Cornell Medical College in Qatar. He teaches classes on information literacy at CMUQ, and his interests extend well beyond books to a tremendous concern for the preservation of natural resources and wildlife in Qatar.

Collaborators

The content of the exhibit panels has been developed through the active participation and collaboration of a multidisciplinary and multicultural team composed of international researchers: Dr. April A. T. Conkey (CMUQ), Dr. Aurora M. Castilla (CSIC-CTFC), Dr. Renee Richer (WCMC-Q), Mr. John Tribuna (QNHG), Ms. Rita Chan (Qatar Veterinary Center), Dr. Alexi Sergeev (TAMU-Q), Dr. Anthony Herrel (CNRS), and students from Education City (including Mr. Mohamed Al-Thani and many other volunteers from WCMC-Q).

Two posters on the diet of the dhub lizard in Qatar will be presented by collaborators at the Qatar Foundation Annual Research Forum on December 12 – 13, 2010.