

Ecology



The Qaru Island.

Photo by Hussain Al-Qallaf



A Corn Crake at the Qaru Island.

Photo by Aris Vidalis

Sighting extraordinary

'Corn Crake' seen on Qaru Island

By Nancy Papathanasopoulou

During its three years of research on sea turtles as well as their underwater and beach habitats, the Kuwait Turtle Conservation Project (KTCP) has not been indifferent to the bird population of islets Qaru and Umm Al-Maradim, which are its main research areas.

Sponsored by TOTAL Foundation and TOTAL Kuwait since July 2008, a number of scientists and volunteers from many countries gathered in Qaru and Umm Al-Maradim several times in the year to observe, assess and reflect upon wildlife conservation on these two ecological treasures of Kuwait.

Sea turtles, sharks and at least 125 fish species (not counting the long list of molluscs and crustaceans) live here, some of them breeding and some foraging on the extended reef areas.

In Umm Al-Maradim and in March 2009, within just three days in cold and rainy weather, KTCP members observed 45 species of birds, including 200 Chiff chaffs,

pipits, a Rufus-tailed Rock Thrush and a Stone Curlew.

The team was, however, not prepared for the unusual sighting of a Corn Crake (*Crex crex*), which took place on an early June morning in Qaru, just a few weeks ago. After a long night shift observing Green turtles and in the crack of dawn, the KTCP team caught glimpse of an unusual, "chicken-like" bird flying under the antenna of the island.

Close view and photography of team environmentalist Aris Vidalis revealed that the bird was indeed a Corn Crake. Its populations mostly live and breed in Russia and Belarus and during its migrations it travels in numbers and never solitary. It inhabits grasslands and farmlands and breeds in bushy areas. It is quite common in its home and not of any concern of extinction. It is very unusual to encounter it in offshore sandy islets anywhere worldwide.

Its passage in Qaru, and outside the regular migration season was random and rare, rendering the sighting extraordinary.

Later research in literature revealed that this bird is the first one ever recorded on the island and one of the very few in the country.

Over the years, a few sightings of this species have occurred mostly in the Sabah Al-Ahmad reserve during mid-spring or autumn, which are the most common migration seasons for birds.

Events such as this one demonstrate the extremely high ecological importance of islands Qaru and Umm Al-Maradim, which, due to their geographical position, provide sanctuary to all kinds of wildlife, often creating unique opportunities of sightings such as the one of this Corn Crake.

In cooperation with the Voluntary Work Center and The Scientific Center, KTCP is currently preparing a management plan based on sustainability and environmental respect for these two Kuwaiti islets. An exhibit on Kuwait's sea turtles is also being prepared for permanent display at The Scientific Center. The project wraps up its works in the end of this summer.

Cabinet gets briefing on challenges facing Kuwait

Food law violators to get harder penalties

KUWAIT, July 17, (KUNA): Kuwaiti Cabinet held its weekly meeting at Seif Palace here Sunday, under Acting Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

Following the meeting, State Minister for Cabinet Affairs Ali Fahad Al-Rashed made a statement on the meeting's deliberations and outcome.

Seeking to protect people's health and lives, Cabinet reviewed proposed amendments to the law No. 5 of 2005 on construction and food dealing regulations.

The amendments impose harsher penalties on violators of construction and food regulations and the current penalties proved to be un-deterrent for greedy dealers.

The Cabinet also reviewed and approved a bill proposed by Social Affairs Committee for establishing a center for rehabilitating former drug addicts.

During the meeting, Governor of Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) Sheikh Salem Abdul-Aziz Al-Sabah made a presentation on the challenges facing the Kuwaiti economy in the current stage and proposed measures to address these challenges.

Following this presentation, the Cabinet assigned the Ministerial Economic Committee to cooperate with the Supreme Council for Planning and Development to update studies conducted on the economy.

The Cabinet also reviewed main points in the Government Annual Performance Report of FY 2009-2010, conducted by the Audit Commission.

The Cabinet members expressed appreciation to the great efforts exerted by the State Audit Commission to enhance financial control over the government spending.

The Cabinet was briefed on two messages sent to HH the Amir from Slovenian President Danilo Turk and Comoro Islands President Ikililou Dhoinine.

The messages focused on bilateral relations and how to



KUNA photo

CBK Governor Sheikh Salem briefing Cabinet about Kuwaiti economy.



KUNA photo

The Cabinet session in progress.

enhance them.

The Cabinet also decided to approve several bills, and to submit them to HH the Amir in order to be referred to the National Assembly.

The Cabinet was briefed on recommendations of the legal committee on approving a trade-bolstering agreement between the government of Kuwait and Argentina; a pact on avoiding tax duplication with Nigeria; a trade agreement between Kuwait and Benin on cultural and art cooperation and agreement on cooperation in the field of occupational learning and training between Kuwait and Yemen.

The approved bills were referred to the Amir Sheikh

Sabah for studying and referring to the National Assembly for deliberations.

Finally, the Cabinet discussed the political affairs in light of the reports related to the overall political developments at the Arab and international levels.

Meanwhile, Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs and Minister of State for Housing Affairs Mohammed Al-Nomas announced on Sunday that the cabinet chose Salah Al-Mudhaf from among several candidates as General Manager of the Credit and Savings Bank (CSB) in the rank of Undersecretary. A decree in this regard is underway.

The minister told KUNA

following the weekly cabinet meeting that discussed the candidacy note submitted by Minister of State for Housing Affairs with respect to candidates for the post of Director-General of the Bank in accordance with the law No. 30/1965 as well as Article 15 of the Civil Service Commission law on the need for the competent minister to nominate the names of candidates to fill leadership positions on the cabinet.

The Cabinet has agreed to appoint Faisal Al-Jazzaf, as Chairman and Director-General of the Public Authority for Youth and Sports and Nabil Al-Mijel as Civil Service Commission Undersecretary.

News in Brief

KPC to start communication program: Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) announced on Sunday the start of a project to prepare the national communication of the State of Kuwait to study the effects of climate change on the economic, social and environmental conditions in the country. It will be completed by the first quarter of 2013.

Managing Director of research, development health, safety and the environment Bader Al-Khashti asserted to KUNA, on the sidelines of the first technical workshop for a group of national experts responsible for studying greenhouse gases that cause climate change hosted by KPC over two days, the importance of preparing the national communication to determine the economic influence caused by the process of climate change on Kuwait.

He added that the draft national communication in which the Environment Public Authority (EPA) contributes along with the relevant national institutions with technical support from the United Nations Environment Program is one of the most important requirements of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

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| 1. (Sunday - 10/6/2011)
Salboukh Rakan
Awadh Al-Enzi | 2. (Monday - 11/6/2011)
Ahmed Fahad
Ahmed Khadadah | 3. (Tuesday - 12/6/2011)
Aysha Abbas
Mohammed Al-Abad | 4. (Wednesday - 13/6/2011)
Kowmod Ranjon Das
Kotei Shand Das | 5. (Thursday - 14/6/2011)
Karama Saeed
Khalifa Mohammed |
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