



CONSERVATION BI-ANNUAL

REPORT

January to June 2024



We are pleased to present the Conservation Bi-Annual update on the work that Emirates Nature-WWF has undertaken during the first half of 2024 (January - June).

Our list of achievements continues to grow, and it would not be possible without the generous and gracious support of our partners!

**THANK YOU FOR CONTRIBUTING TO A HEALTHIER AND
OPTIMISTIC FUTURE FOR PEOPLE AND THE PLANET.**



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INTRODUCTION

The Year of Sustainability Continues in 2024

The momentum for nature and climate action continues to grow in the months following the United Nations climate change conference COP28. There has been significant interest, progressive dialogue and ground-breaking commitments to scale up ecosystem restoration, decarbonization, nature financing and innovation in the UAE – with the support of incredible partners like you.

But temperatures are moving faster than humanity.

The window to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement – and limit temperatures from permanently breaching 1.5° C – is shrinking. With strong leadership, science-driven solutions and decisive actions, we can still secure our vision for a sustainable future.



OUR STRATEGY

Our 5-year Conservation strategy (2021-2025) reflects the ever-evolving state of the environment, focusing on the climate-nature nexus. Emirates Nature-WWF developed a set of five pillars and goals that underpin our work.

Enabling our vision and mission requires support from donors like you, in addition to commitment, passion, and expertise to achieve conservation impact.

PILLAR 1 NATURE & WILDLIFE



Enhance and restore natural ecosystems with measurable biodiversity, social and economic benefits.

PILLAR 2 CLIMATE ACTION



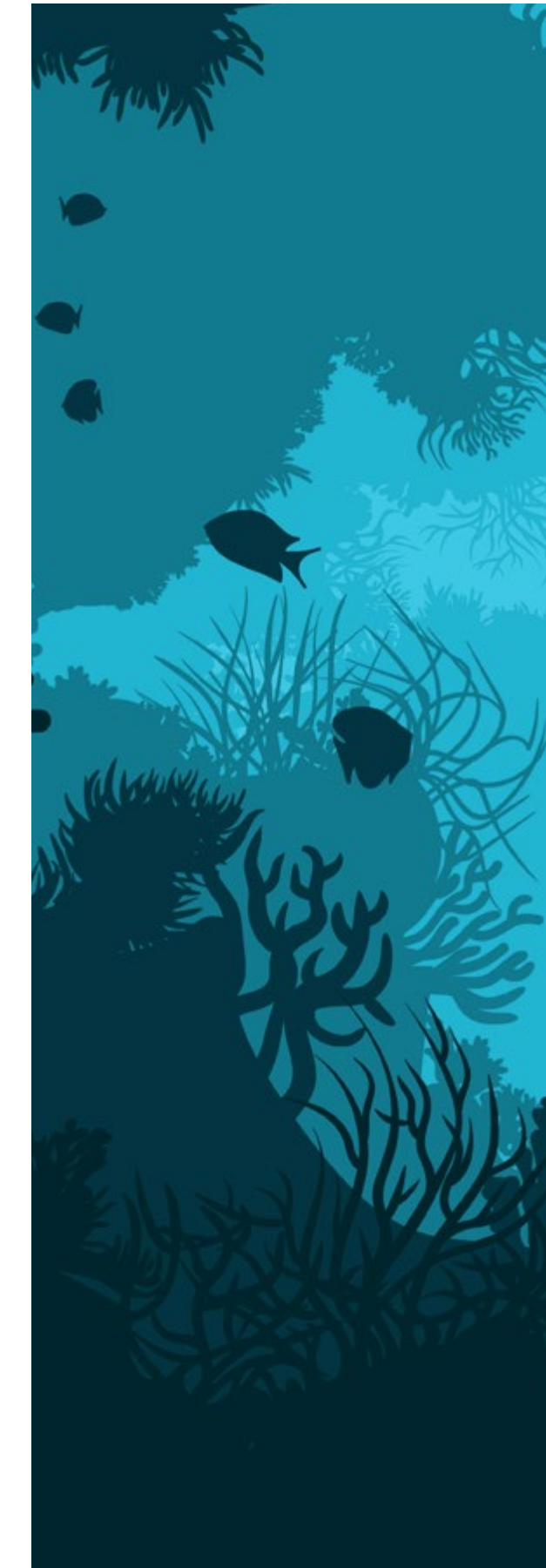
Support the UAE's goal to achieve Net-Zero carbon emissions and enhance climate resilience.

PILLAR 3 GREEN ECONOMY & MARKET TRANSFORMATION



Enable a sustainable and circular economic model across key economic sectors in the UAE.

PILLAR 4 FOOD & WATER SECURITY



Build sustainable and resilient communities aligned with innovative solutions for food & water production.

PILLAR 5 CITIZEN SCIENCE & COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION



Build an active civil society in which individuals and youth are empowered to create and implement green solutions.

PILLAR 1:

NATURE & WILDLIFE

The diverse range of natural ecosystems in the UAE - including mangrove forests, corals, seagrass, lagoons, dunes, wadis, and mountains - offer vital habitats for wildlife and play a key role in sustaining our local communities and economy. However, our natural heritage faces increasing challenges due to rapid population growth, continuous development and climate change.

Our pillar on Nature & Wildlife preservation pinpoints priority areas for biodiversity in the UAE to advance understanding of the linkages between natural and human systems. This serves as the basis for creating effective ecosystem management blueprints and promoting economic diversification.



Nature-based Solutions for Climate, Biodiversity, & People Initiative

The flagship **Nature-based Solutions (NbS)** initiative illustrates how convening all sectors of society to prioritize NbS unlocks benefits beyond simply protecting nature. NbS are broadly recognized by international conventions and organizations, including the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), as critical tools for climate change mitigation and adaptation that also deliver biodiversity and socio-economic benefits.

Furthermore, research shows that NbS could offer up to 1/3 of the climate change mitigation needed to achieve the Paris Agreement.

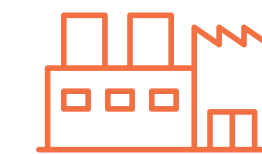


The 4-year NbS project formed a partnership between policymakers, scientists, Emirate-level authorities, and the private sector focusing on two sites in the Emirates of Umm Al Quwain and Abu Dhabi to:



1

Manage and restore key coastal ecosystems, including mangroves, seagrasses, and saltmarshes to mitigate and adapt to climate change.



2

Demonstrate Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions avoidance and carbon sequestration achieved through ecosystem protection and restoration.



3

Provide co-benefits for the society including food security and economic opportunities.



4

Beyond biodiversity benefits, the project also aims to deliver investments in natural capital as a new business model in the UAE.

The combination of these project components strengthens ecosystem resilience and drives economic diversification opportunities across ecotourism, agroecology and fisheries, and creates new blended finance potential.

During the first half of 2024, the NbS project was prominently highlighted across key events:



1

Art Umm Al Quwain. Nature and NbS were featured at the immersive mixed event, which showcased local artwork and organized environmental activities for the general public, including nature walks and mangrove restoration. The promotion of NbS aligns with Umm Al Quwain's Sustainable Blue Economy Strategy 2031.



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The NbS project continues to make significant strides:

- A high-profile **NbS Finance Roundtable** was organized by Emirates Nature-WWF and hosted by HSBC, convening vital stakeholders from government and private financial institutions to advance dialogue on unlocking capital for NbS in the UAE.
- The **E-DNA Field activity** led to the collection of more than 400 eDNA samples from four coastal lagoons, expanding our knowledge of species in this area and informing ecosystem management plans.
- A **comprehensive study of UAE's Coastal Lagoons** was published, revealing key findings of scientific surveys undertaken in the project's 2 pilot sites. The study was covered widely by media.



2

Halophyte Exclusive Tour. In collaboration with sustainability champion Omar Shihab (of Michelin green-star restaurant BOCA, Dubai), a unique tasting event was organized to introduce locally cultivated halophytes to culinary professionals across the UAE. More than 20 culinary professionals attended the event, and significant media coverage featured halophyte as a promising nutritious, salt-tolerant and climate-resilient local ingredient.



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3

MENA Oceans. Emirates Nature-WWF contributed to regional dialogue on 'Building knowledge and capacity around nature finance,' highlighting the crucial need to increase investments in order to scale up NbS.



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Notably, a **10-minute documentary on the NbS project** was launched on World Ocean Day, showcasing the milestones achieved on this collaborative journey and featuring partners including: H.E. Abdulla Bin Touq Al Marri, UAE Minister of Economy; H.E. Dr Shaikha Salem Al Dhaheri, General Director of EAD, and representatives from EAD, ICBA, HSBC, Emirates Nature-WWF and the local community.

- **Results of the biodiversity survey** at UAQ Coastal Lagoon were published in Science Direct, underscoring the success and importance of preserving this critical ecosystem.



Restoring Mangroves in the UAE

The **Restoring Mangroves** in the UAE project directly supports the Nature & Wildlife pillar by identifying and selecting key sites for restoration of vulnerable coastal areas. It aims to plant 50,000 saplings across 10 hectares in key sites around the country to restore mangrove ecosystems and regenerate degraded coastal habitats.

Mangroves provide a range of ecosystem benefits, including the ability to store up to 2 times more carbon than tropical forests, protect coastlines from deadly storm surges, improve water quality, and act as nurseries for juvenile and endangered marine species.

Currently, the team works at sites in the Emirates of Umm Al Quwain, Sharjah, and Ajman. The project also contributes to the UAE's national goal of planting 100 million mangrove saplings by 2030.



49,200 / 50,000
saplings planted



10
hectares

During the first half of 2024, we achieved significant milestones:



1

24,000 saplings planted (equivalent to approximately 1.5 hectares) in Umm Al Quwain Beach, **with the help of community volunteers** including youth, students, families and attendees of the Art UAQ event. An **additional 1,000 saplings** were planted in Khor Kalba, Sharjah.



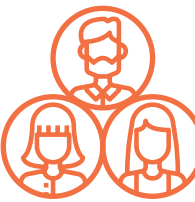
2

98.4% of our target reached, with a total of 49,200 mangroves restored to date. The remaining mangroves will be restored through direct seeding in Khor Kalba in the second half of 2024.



3

Regular monitoring of saplings at all sites, with some adjustments made to increase the survival rate of restored mangroves. For example, channels were built to improve water flows in the upper tidal areas of the restoration site in Umm Al Quwain. Results are regularly updated on the monitoring dashboard.



4

Collaboration with EAD and MOCCAIE to showcase critical Do's and Don'ts on mangrove restoration. Insights and best practices have been included in the technical guide for mangrove restoration, which is being finalized for publication.



PILLAR 2: CLIMATE ACTION

2024 has not offered a respite from rising temperatures. On the contrary, we continue to break the wrong records.

June 2024 marked the 13th consecutive month of record-breaking global temperatures, according to data from the Copernicus Climate Change Service. June also marked the 12th consecutive month in which temperatures crossed 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.

The hotter it gets the more harm climate change causes to people and nature everywhere. The UAE and Gulf are no exception, with the UAE receiving its highest rainfall in 75 years and exceptional heatwaves affecting pilgrims in Mecca. If left unmanaged, climate risks will continue having widespread and far-reaching implications for growth and wellbeing.

It is evident that current actions are not enough to buck the trend. We need to scale up decarbonization efforts and accelerate the adoption of renewable energy to prevent a permanent breach of the 1.5°C threshold.¹

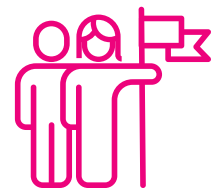


¹ Passing the Paris Agreement threshold would require the global average temperature to remain above 1.5°C for a 20-year average period. Unless there is an immediate and deep reduction in emission across all sectors and regions, Earth is set to overshoot 1.5°C in the early 2030s.

The UAE Alliance for Climate Action (UACA)

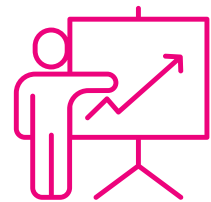
It is critical to ensure that economic sectors consider climate impacts of their actions and work towards reducing their emissions. Our flagship climate project – the **UAE Alliance for Climate Action (UACA)** – supports the integration of climate considerations across industries and sub-national entities, with a specific focus on decarbonization efforts.

UACA convenes sub-national and non-state actors (SNSAs) to develop and implement credible decarbonization strategies to drive ambitious action that also contribute to federal net-zero goals. **Its four primary objectives include:**



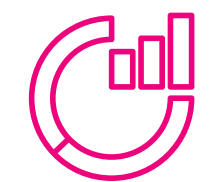
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A surge of ambition and action at the sub-national level to give national stakeholders the opportunity to ratchet up ambition.



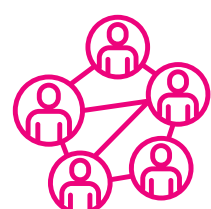
2

Address policy barriers which will further increase ambition and implementation.



3

Increase amount of sub-national and non-state actors (SNSAs) setting credible, transparent and verifiable net-zero near and long term targets and to drive implementation and action.



4

Build a whole-of-society approach to collaborate in activating policy and solutions to achieve net-zero for the UAE by 2050.



UACA is the 10th 'Alliance for Climate Action' and the 1st in the MENA region. UACA meets members wherever they exist on the decarbonization journey. The team provides a range of activities to advance emissions reductions, including training webinars and workshops, digital tools, and engaging decisionmakers to advance related government policies.

UACA has developed two bespoke digital tools:

- **eMission** – a baselining tool that demystifies GHG emissions management and identifies critical gaps in decarbonization activities. It is used to track Scope 1-3 emissions.
- **On Track2.0** – a climate dashboard that monitors progress against science-based targets and commitments, to drive greater transparency and accountability in climate action

UACA continues to strengthen its impact. In the first half of 2024:

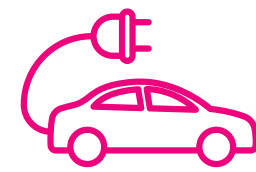


1

UACA grew to 53 members, welcoming on board EAD and Agthia.

The post-COP28 momentum is strong amongst UACA, as members remain committed to rapid decarbonization in all sectors.

- 11 out of 26 organizations (42%) with validated Science-Based Targets (SBTi) are UACA members — a significant increase of 5 member organizations since 2023.
- 22 members actively use **eMission by UACA** to measure emissions
- 40% of UACA members, i.e. 21 members, report their progress on the newly launched climate dashboard **On Track 2.0**



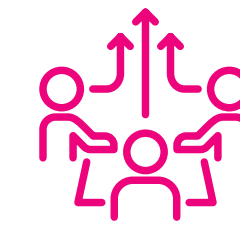
2

Road2.0 powered by UACA is more than halfway on track to launch its EV pilot.

Launched at COP28, Road2.0 is officially endorsed by the Ministry of Energy & Infrastructure (MOEI) and regarded as the flagship UAE initiative that focuses on reducing emissions linked to Commercial Road Transport.

Road 2.0 is supported by **17 signatories** who have clear commitments to scale electric fleets by 2030. Over 40% of signatories are either in the process of procuring EVs or are testing them.

- Signatories are developing a **Road2.0 Toolkit** to help reduce emissions linked to road transport.
- They have formed **two working groups** that meet bi-weekly to (1) activate the EV Ecosystem and (2) explore other decarbonization technologies and enablers.
- A **demand signal letter** addressed to EV Ecosystem stakeholders is currently being developed and will be published in the second half of 2024.



3

The **UACA Advisory Committee held its second meeting**, where advisory members evaluated the barriers and success of each project in depth, identified strategies to support each endeavour and provided guidance on next steps. The Advisory Committee offered excellent feedback throughout the engagement, testament to their commitment to the UACA mission.



4

A comprehensive survey is being prepared to quantify barriers and possible solutions across all non-state actors in the UAE, including UACA members.



5

6 webinars and 4 workshops were conducted on capacity building, identification of challenges, energy efficiency, baselining and measuring emissions, advancing EV pilots, and more.

PILLAR 3: GREEN ECONOMY & MARKET TRANSFORMATION

The public often perceives that conservation organizations and private companies are inherently at odds with one another, believing they are natural antagonists. The private sector, however, is a crucial ally for our planet.

There has been a growing movement among companies and businesses to support nature resiliency while seeking ways to foster economic benefits and growth.



Global Islamic Finance Program for Climate, Nature, & Development

We are working beyond the UAE to support greater financing of sustainable projects at the climate-nature nexus, which are critical to meet climate and biodiversity challenges. Globally, there exists a **massive nature-finance** gap to achieve the SDGs and support climate action – more than USD 2 trillion is required annually. **Islamic Finance is a largely untapped resource in this fight**, with potential contributions estimated at between USD 30 billion and USD 100 billion annually.

Along with the WWF Freshwater Practice, we have catalyzed a new, Sharia-compliant investment model – the Global Islamic Finance Program for Climate, Nature & Development (GIFP) – to help plug the nature financing gap by increasing the engagement of Islamic Finance stakeholders in climate and nature-positive projects.

Islamic precepts align intrinsically with nature stewardship. Islamic Finance can help divert capital flows towards human activities with a positive environmental and social impact.



The aims of the GIFP include:



1

creating a program and blueprint enabling Islamic investors to support projects to address the climate and nature crisis directly,



2

mobilizing an initial USD 150 million of public and private capital to scale up and further integrate Islamic Finance,



3

developing a blueprint and roadmap through the GIFP and its Advisory Committee to support bankable and nature-based solutions.

The initiative aims to **mobilize Islamic finance capitals across the MENA and Asia regions** and create a consortium of partners - MDBs, commercial global banks, sovereign wealth funds, and governments. **By utilizing a blended finance mechanism, GIFP will support high-quality, investable, and bankable projects** aligning with the aims of Islamic investors and focused on the Global South.

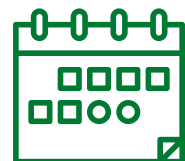
During the first half of 2024, we achieved several operational milestones:



1

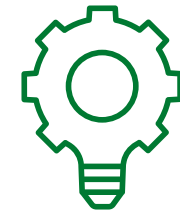
The right people with the right expertise have come on board, including:

- A well-known and well-respected **Islamic Finance scholar** to drive Advisory Committee discussions
- A full-time **technical advisor** to focus on the successful launch of the programme
- A temporary **project administrator** to help develop the pipeline framework, assist with knowledge management, and manage the Advisory Committee and expert working groups



2

Advisory Committee meetings meet monthly to move ahead with key decisions and integrate the expertise of our esteemed members, especially around attracting anchor partners and finetuning the blueprint of the initiative.



3

5 Expert Working Groups are up and running. Key outcomes of this endeavour include:

- Determining the correct jurisdiction for **creating a legal and independent entity for GIFP** to manage investments and establish various hubs across MENA and Asia.
- Creating a project **pipeline assessment framework** by Q4 2024, along with governance mechanisms and design structures. Discussions around NbS have been gaining traction, and warrant the creation of guidance for identifying and creating projects with either a 'returns first' or 'impact first' focus for inclusion in the pilot program.



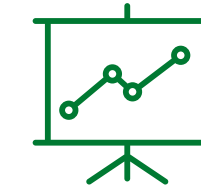
4

The GIFP team have **integrated more than 10 stakeholders including government entities, international experts, legal firms, and global commercial banks into the Advisory Committee.** This wider committee has been engaging with a range of organizations to identify other potential partners and capital providers across the MENA and Asia-Pacific regions.



5

Additionally, we are engaging and consulting with external colleagues from WWF International and network offices in Pakistan, Malaysia, Indonesia, Tunisia and the Netherlands – including well-known leaders in Islamic Finance as well impact investments.



6

Capitalizing on momentum from COP28, the GIFP team is working together - with guidance from the Advisory Committee - **to bring in anchor partners and upstream investors.** A few entities have indicated interest to come on board with investments. We are actively pursuing these opportunities with a goal to secure soft commitment in Q4 2024.

PILLAR 4: FOOD & WATER SECURITY

More than 80% of food in the UAE is imported from other regions, leading to significant reliance on global supply chains and a high environmental footprint. Scarcity of freshwater is another area of serious concern, especially given the arid environment experienced in this part of the world.

As our population continues to grow, a sustainable approach to food and water is critical to achieving food security and sovereignty.



The relationship between food production, consumption, emissions, water risks, and biodiversity decline is being brought into sharp focus as food systems command a larger part of dialogue around climate and nature pressures.

A number of our projects focus on food and water – from improving management of precious freshwater resources and soil to promoting more sustainable farming practices, and innovating local food production solutions that also build resilience and sustainability of rural communities.

When most people think of **rural agrofarming**, they immediately think of terrestrial-based landscapes. These certainly hold promise for local food security, and can be complemented by **unconventional agriculture in marine and coastal areas**.



1

The **marine Nature-based Solutions project**, discussed in Pillar 1, has included food production as a key component of its work. In 2024, the project engaged well-known culinary figures to promote awareness of **native salt-tolerant plants or halophytes**, which are highly nutritious and versatile as an ingredient. Gourmet dishes featuring UAE-grown halophytes *Salicornia* and *Arthrocaulon* were featured at an exclusive tasting event earlier this year, to demonstrate the potential of halophytes to renowned chefs, restaurateurs and industry professionals.

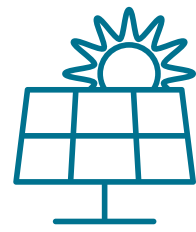
A business case is currently being developed to promote the commercial cultivation of halophytes, and will become part of a larger pipeline of bankable Nature-based Solutions.

2

As part of the **Resilient Communities programme**, the Terrestrial team has increased its focus on food and water security using agroecology within rural mountain communities in the Emirates of Fujairah, Sharjah, and Ajman.

Agroecology is a Nature-based Solution that applies ecological principles and concepts to farming. The aim is to diversify and increase local production to enhance food security, while also creating alternative income for rural communities and preserving (or increasing) biodiversity. Agroecology can be used to build resilient communities across mountain communities as well as coastal and inland desert oases.

During the first half of 2024, the Terrestrial team achieved significant milestones:



1 Installed **small scale solar power systems** on two private farms to pump water for irrigation.



2 Planted **1,676 moringa saplings** (equivalent to approximately 1.2 hectares) on five private farms in **Masfout, Ajman**. Arabian Moringa (or Shu'a) trees are a novel and native crop that hold exceptional environmental and economic potential for local livelihoods. An additional **250 saplings** were planted on a private farm in **Bithnah, Fujairah**.



3 Conducted monthly **biodiversity surveys** and recorded more than **200 biodiversity observations** in **Masfout**, with a focus on the farms where we planted moringa saplings and surrounding areas.



4 Restored **350 meters of aboveground falaj channels**, and constructed a new traditional sharia (water storage area) covering an area of 70 square meters at the **Masfout falaj**, to preserve the precious water that previously faced run off and leaks due to deterioration.



5 Constructed and completed **820 meters of the Masfout Nature Trail** and **400 meters of the Masfout Hiking trail**, to encourage nature visitation and ecotourism in the area.



6 Engaged **local communities** in these efforts through the organization of four majlises in Masfout and one majlis in Bithnah. **Civil society volunteers** from across the country were also involved in restoration efforts.





Flood recovery efforts

In response to the extreme weather conditions and flooding that affected the nation in April 2024, we channelled our Leaders of Change community volunteering efforts to aid **flood recovery and restoration efforts** at sites where we implement our conservation work.

Together, we **implemented biological and engineering measures to mitigate community losses**, such as introducing drought-resistant crops and constructing reinforced retaining walls to protect falaj systems and farms from the impacts of future flash floods.

205 civil society volunteers from across the UAE came together with conservation experts for flood restoration activities in Masfout, Bithnah and Wadi Shees (Sharjah). Together, we:



Cleared **165 kgs of debris** during flood restoration events



Constructed **20 meters of retaining walls** in Wadi Shees



Replanted **120 moringa saplings**



Restored **550 meters of falaj channels** that were damaged by flooding in Masfout and Bithnah



Restored **300 meters of damaged trails** in Masfout

PILLAR 5: CITIZEN SCIENCE & COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION

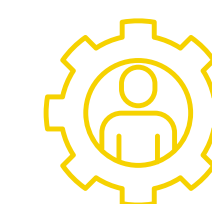
Emirates Nature-WWF views civil society as a key actor for a sustainable future, believing every individual can make a measurable impact on nature and climate.

People are pivotal to achieving transformative conservation goals and are at the heart of our aspirations for Pillar 5: Citizen Science & Community Mobilization. Our work aims to inspire the public to become active members of the community and, ultimately, put nature at the heart of their future decision-making. We catalyze these goals by mobilizing thousands of boots on the ground for environmental conservation and transformative impact.





We engage civil society by creating activities via our **Leaders of Change programme**, the **Connect with Nature** youth programme, and supporting **EAD's PPSR** initiative. Examples of events include:



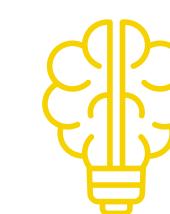
1

Taking direct **ACT[ion]** in conservation efforts in the field, including planting native Shu'a trees, cleaning up waste from nature that provides vital data to the government, restoring falaj, monitoring mangroves, and much more



2

Conducting **TRAIN** sessions on subjects ranging from climate to marine topics and food systems transformation



3

Holding interactive **IDEATE** sessions where participants discuss and try to solve critical challenges, with activities that include climate simulations, measuring of individual ecological footprints, and a boardgame on energy and water efficiency

During the first half of 2024, 5,000 people participated in our events with nearly 8,000 hours given to nature.

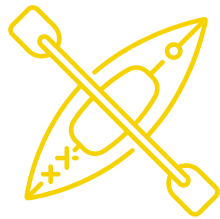
Over the last six months, our community of volunteers, youth and citizen scientists collected **16,170 data points**, paving the way for significant scientific contributions and discoveries.

Across Leaders of Change and Connect with Nature, we organized 88 events, including:



1

Mangrove restoration and monitoring: An incredible **25,000 saplings** were planted with the support of the community at events including the Art UAQ Festival.



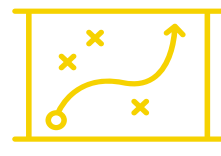
2

Clean ups across different habitats: Volunteers and youth learned about our unique habitat and collected litter while **kayaking** through the lush mangroves of Abu Dhabi, and **walking/hiking** through the nature trails at Al Wathba, Abu Dhabi and Wadi Abadilah Fujairah. Together, we safely disposed of almost **3,000 kgs of litter!**



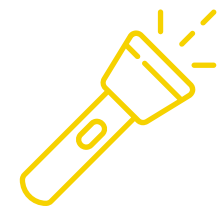
3

Turtle patrols: The critically endangered Hawksbill turtles lay their eggs on the pristine beach of Saadiyat Island, Abu Dhabi every spring and summer. Our youth community patrolled the beach looking for turtle tracks, recording all activity and taking actions to protect and occasionally relocate nests as needed.



4

Biodiversity mapping on World Environment Day: In partnership with the Fujairah Environment Authority, 46 Leaders of Change ventured into Wadi Wurayah National Park, where our conservation experts guided the group in gathering valuable data on local species.



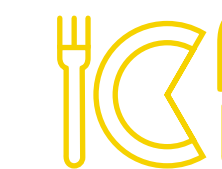
5

Biodiversity mapping on Earth Hour: Citizen scientists headed to the desert to search for wildlife under the cover of darkness. Together, with our conservation experts, we spotted diverse species and recorded observations during the Nature at Night event.



6

Flood recovery and restoration: In a brilliant display of community, 205 volunteers showed up to aid in flood recovery and restore resilience in Masfout, Bithnah, and Wadi Shees. Together, we cleared debris and rehabilitated damaged trees, farmlands, nature trails and falaj irrigation channels.



7

Save 1/3 during Ramadan: The Save 1/3 campaign reminds our community to avoid food waste during the festive period, by committing to “Shop Smarter, Cook Smarter, and Eat Smarter.” To inspire sustainable choices, we asked Omar Shihab, Chief Sustainability Officer of the MICHELIN Green Star restaurant BOCA, for his tips on minimizing food waste. The importance of sustainability was also discussed during the ‘Food for Thought’ Leaders of Change masterclass.

SPECIAL RECOGNITION

- Earlier this year, our Head of Conservation and Outreach, **Arabella Willing** was awarded a **gold medal** in the Environmental Initiator Category **at the inaugural Sheikh Hamdan bin Zayed Environmental Award**. She was recognized at a prestigious ceremony held at the Al Nakheel Palace in Abu Dhabi, where **H.H. Sheikh Hamdan bin Zayed Al Nahyan**, the Honorary Founder and President of Emirates Nature-WWF and Ruler's Representative in Al Dhafra Region recognized the environmental achievements and excellence of award winners.
- We are also deeply honoured to share that the **Leaders of Change programme was showcased to H.H. Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan**, President of the United Arab Emirates and Ruler of Abu Dhabi, at a special **World Environment Day event**. Our Honorary Founder and President, H.H. Sheikh Hamdan bin Zayed Al Nahyan, and Managing Director H.E. Razan Al Mubarak were also present at this distinguished event.





THANK YOU!

Your support enables the organization to achieve sustainable progress for people and nature. We deeply appreciate the continued contributions that make this work possible.

Together, we're stronger.