The Royal Society
for the Conservation
of Nature

biosphere reserves

E-Newsletter Special Edition

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Local Communities and Biosphere Reserves

"I didn't know anything about these products or how to make them, but RSCN trained me. Now I am a supervisor and I can teach these skills to other women to help them improve their financial situation as well. Already, I've noticed more visitors to our workshops than ever before. I am excited about this new publicity. Hopefully, it will mean continued work for us, inshallah."

Samira Roleh

Handicrafts Workshop Supervisor at Mujib Biosphere Reserve

"I never used to care about the environment and never used to know the importance of nature conservation. After joining RSCN and understanding its philosophy on nature conservation, I could direct myself and the local community to serve RSCN cause. We didn't just learn to love nature but also we learned how to take better care of it. And now, Mujib reserve is declared as a biosphere reserve which is very exciting because it does not only mean international recognition, but it means the possibility of creating more jobs for our local community."

Misha'el Amareen

Mujib Biosphere Reserve Manager 1990-2004

"I buy clothes and food supplies for my children and household, from my own money that I worked hard to earn, by the end of each month I feel content and I know I'm a mother that works hard to provide a better future for her family. All the women that work here feel lucky, we are at home, and we work and give from our hearts and spirits. RSCN made us love our environment and everything around us, the things we never appreciated are now of utmost importance to us"

Noura Al Shtawi Al Azazmeh

Noura has been working with dedication and passion in the Feynan Leather Project for four and a half years

› Did you Know

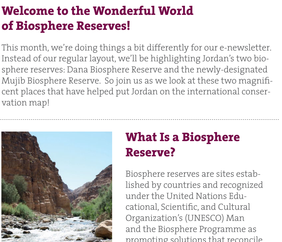
Did you know that there are 26 biosphere reserves in 11 Arab countries? Check out the list here:
www.unesco.org

Visit Dana & Mujib Now

Don't want to leave the country? Dana and Mujib Biosphere Reserves are open year-round and offer exciting activities for all ages.

So what are you waiting for? Contact Wild Jordan Tourism Unit to find out how you can visit these beautiful Jordanian treasures today!

06 4616 523 ext. 21
tourism@rscn.org.jo



Welcome to the Wonderful World of Biosphere Reserves!

This month, we're doing things a bit differently for our e-newsletter. Instead of our regular layout, we'll be highlighting Jordan's two biosphere reserves: Dana Biosphere Reserve and the newly-designated Mujib Biosphere Reserve. So join us as we look at these two magnificent places that have helped put Jordan on the international conservation map!

What Is a Biosphere Reserve?

Biosphere reserves are sites established by countries and recognized under the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) Man and the Biosphere Programme as promoting solutions that reconcile sustainable use and conservation of biodiversity and natural resources. There are currently 580 biosphere reserves in 114 countries throughout the world.

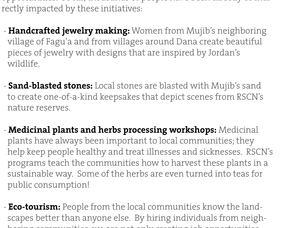
What's So Important about Biosphere Reserves?

Biosphere Reserves serve three main functions:

- **Conservation:** Biosphere Reserves contribute to the conservation of landscapes, habitats, ecosystems, and biodiversity.
- **Development:** Biosphere Reserves foster economic and human development by generating income that is socio-culturally and ecologically sustainable.
- **Logistic Support:** Biosphere Reserves advance our understanding of sustainable development by support research, monitoring, and education, both locally and at the international level.

In other words, biosphere reserves are all about helping nature while helping people. They're a perfect fit with our work here at RSCN – it's no wonder we now have two biosphere reserves here in Jordan!

Want to know more about UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme? *Check out this link* ›



Jordan's Biosphere Reserves

Conservation

Jordan's first biosphere reserve, Dana Biosphere Reserve, was added to UNESCO's list in 1998. Dana Biosphere Reserve covers almost 300km2 in the Tafilah governorate, with about 33,000 people living nearby. The Reserve houses a large representation of biodiversity, including 833 species of plants (that's one-third of Jordan's entire plant species!), 215 species of birds, and 38 species of mammals.

It also spans four main biogeographical zones, which means that while visiting Dana, you can see the landscapes and animals of the Mediterranean, Irano-Turanian, Sudanian, and Suharo Arabian zones. Dana has it all! In 2011, UNESCO declared Mujib Nature Reserve as Jordan's second biosphere reserve. Many people know Mujib for its Siq Trail, a cooling water hike through the Mujib River, but Mujib is more than that! It's one of the most significant Important Bird Areas in the Jordan Rift Valley, giving a home and refuge to thousands of resident and migratory birds.

The Nubian Ibex, which was once locally-extinct, can also be found roaming within Mujib's borders. From wetlands to steppe, Mujib is a great representation of some of Jordan's most important landscapes.

To learn more about Mujib's declaration as a biosphere reserve, check out this article ›

Socioeconomic Development

RSCN believes that since all of Jordan's natural landscapes have been shaped partly by human-nature interactions, developing the local communities is just as important as conserving the environment. Therefore, in both Dana and Mujib Biosphere Reserves, we work hard to create sustainable and environmentally-friendly socio-economic opportunities. So far, thousands of people have been directly or indirectly impacted by these initiatives:

- **Handcrafted jewelry making:** Women from Mujib's neighboring village of Fagu'a and from villages around Dana create beautiful pieces of jewelry with designs that are inspired by Jordan's wildlife.
- **Sand-blasted stones:** Local stones are blasted with Mujib's sand to create one-of-a-kind keepsakes that depict scenes from RSCN's nature reserves.
- **Medicinal plants and herbs processing workshops:** Medicinal plants have always been important to local communities; they help keep people healthy and treat illnesses and sicknesses. RSCN's programs teach the communities how to harvest these plants in a sustainable way. Some of the herbs are even turned into teas for public consumption!
- **Eco-tourism:** People from the local communities know the landscapes better than anyone else. By hiring individuals from neighboring communities, we are not only creating job opportunities, we are making sure that all of our visitors get the best experience possible.

All of the products from these workshops and initiatives are available to the general public to purchase at any of our reserves and at the Wild Jordan Center in the heart of Jabal Amman.

Logistic Support

Both Dana and Mujib Biosphere Reserves are extremely important because they serve as sites for research, education, and monitoring.

Studies on Blanford's Fox, educational laboratories that teach local communities how to conserve water while growing highly profitable crops, and observing the feeding patterns of the Caracal are all initiatives found within these two biosphere reserves.

The knowledge gained here is important not only for the future of Jordanian conservation efforts, but for conservation efforts throughout the entire world!

Look for an upcoming article on Mujib Biosphere Reserve in UNESCO's newsletter in January!

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