

Conservation and Sustainable Management of Turkey's Steppe Ecosystems Project

Conservation and Sustainable Management of Turkey's Steppe Ecosystems Project implemented by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry General Directorate of Nature Conservation and National Parks (GDNCNP), General Directorate of Plant Production (GDPP), and General Directorate of Forestry (GDF) with the financial support of Global Environment Facility (GEF). The works within the scope of enabling environment established for the effective conservation of steppe biodiversity across large landscapes are carried out by the Nature Conservation Centre (DKM).



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HOMELAND OF THE GAZELLES



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For the details

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General Directorate of Plant Production
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Hyaena hyaena
(Striped hyaena)

Şanlıurfa steppes have a unique animal diversity largely because these steppes host xerophytic and semi-xerophytic species and some cold-adapted species. The northernmost distribution of some animal species is seen in Şanlıurfa steppes.



Rhodospiza obsoleta
(Desert finch)

Cursorious cursor
(Cream-colored cursor)



Varanus griseus
(Desert monitor)

Gazella marica
(Arabian sand gazelle)



Şanlıurfa province is one of the first places that comes to mind when steppes of Turkey are considered. With its vast plains, semi-arid climate, and plain topography, steppes make up most of the natural vegetation in Şanlıurfa.

Ammoperdix griseogularis
(See-see partridge)



Mammals

Mammal species that live in the steppes are Arabian sand gazelle (*Gazella marica*), grey wolf (*Canis lupus*), striped hyaena (*Hyaena hyaena*), Indian crested porcupine (*Hystrix indica*), golden jackal (*Canis aureus*), red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*), Eurasian badger (*Meles meles*), European hare (*Lepus europaeus*), Palestine mole rat (*Nannospalax ehrenbergi*), marbled polecat (*Vormela peregusna*), Euphrates jerboa (*Allactaga euphratica*), Libyan jird (*Meriones libycus*), Tristram's jird (*Meriones tristrami*), Sundevall's jird (*Meriones crassus*), Vinogradov's jird (*Meriones vinogradovi*), Wagner's gerbil (*Gerbillus dasyurus*), Asian garden dormouse (*Eliomys melanurus*) and golden hamster (*Mesocricetus auratus*). Among these species, Arabian sand gazelles are under protection in Kizilkuyu Wildlife Reserve and Ceylanpınar Agricultural Enterprise (TİGEM).

Allactaga euphratica
(Euphrates jerboa)



Vormela peregusna
(Marbled polecat)



Reptiles

Harran lizard (*Acanthodactylus harranensis*) and long-nosed worm snake (*Lethobolia episcopus*) are reptile species that exist only in Şanlıurfa. Leaf-toed gecko (*Asaccus elisae*), western leopard gecko (*Eublepharis angramainyu*), rough-bent-toed gecko (*Cyrtopodion scabrum*), Bosc's fringe-fingered lizard (*Acanthodactylus boskianus*), small-scaled desert lizard (*Mesalina microlepis*), glossy-bellied racer (*Platyceps ventromaculatus*), hook-snouted worm snake (*Myriopholis macrorhyncha*) and desert monitor (*Varanus griseus*) are reptiles specific to the region with records from Şanlıurfa and its surroundings.



Acanthodactylus harranensis
(Harran lizard)



Varanus griseus
(Desert monitor)

The desert monitor, with a length reaching 130 cm, is the largest lizard species in Turkey and it is a priority species for the steppes of Şanlıurfa.

Birds

The principal areas that are important for bird species are the South Euphrates Valley, Birecik steppes, Karkamış, Bozova, Akçakale steppes, Harran Ruins, Ceylanpınar, Kizilkuyu Wildlife Reserve and Karacadağ. These areas are the most important breeding, staging, wintering, and feeding areas for the bird species observed in the region.

Great bustard (*Otis tarda*), cream-colored courser (*Cursorious cursor*), pin-tailed sandgrouse (*Pterocles alchata*), desert lark (*Ammomanes deserti*), spectacled warbler (*Sylvia conspicillata*), see-see partridge (*Ammoperdix griseogularis*), red-wattled lapwing (*Vanellus indicus*) and desert finch (*Rhodospiza obsoleta*) are important bird species that are distributed in the steppes of the region.

Vanellus indicus
(Red-wattled lapwing)



Otis tarda
(Great bustard)



Insects

Şanlıurfa is extraordinarily rich in terms of insect diversity, similar to other species groups. It is possible to observe in the region some species of plump bush crickets (*Isophya* spp.) and bright bush crickets (*Poecilimon* spp.), which are generally distributed in the Black Sea region, Aegean region, Greece, the Caucasus, and the Balkans. Butterfly species such as Osthelder's skipper (*Spialia osthelderi*), Levantine silver-line (*Cigaritis cilissa*), large salmon Arab (*Colotis fausta*), false Apollo (*Archon apollinus*), and eastern dappled white (*Euchloe ausonia*) are also noteworthy species.



Isophya sp.

Archon apollinus
(False Apollo)





Martes foina
(Beech marten)

Tek Tek Mountains National Park

Tek Tek Mountains National Park contains diverse habitats with its deep valleys, wooded areas, caves, rocky-stony areas, and lowland steppes. Species such as grey wolf (*Canis lupus*), red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*), least weasel (*Mustela nivalis*), European hare (*Lepus europaeus*), beech marten (*Martes foina*), Indian crested porcupine (*Hystrix indica*), long-eared hedgehog (*Hemiechinus auritus*), and the Euphrates jerboa (*Allactaga euphratica*) are the mammal species of this area. The grey wolf (*Canis lupus*), a predatory at the top of the food chain, has a regulatory role in the steppe ecosystem and keeps the population density of its prey at a certain level.



Vulpes vulpes
(Red fox)

Red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) and beech marten (*Martes foina*), two important predatory species, play an important ecological role, especially by regulating the population levels of small rodent species. The European hare in this area is an important food source for predatory mammal species.

Lepus europaeus
(European hare)



Meles meles
(Eurasian badger)

Sus scrofa
(Wild boar)

Karacadağ Steppes

Mammalian species of Karacadağ steppes are grey wolf (*Canis lupus*), red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*), Eurasian badger (*Meles meles*), European hare (*Lepus europaeus*), wild boar (*Sus scrofa*), beech marten (*Martes foina*), Palestine mole rat (*Nannospalax ehrenbergi*), Indian crested porcupine (*Hystrix indica*) and long-eared hedgehog (*Hemiechinus auritus*).

The grey wolf (*Canis lupus*), the red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) and the beech marten (*Martes foina*) play an important ecological role, especially by regulating populations of small rodent species.



Vormela peregusna
(Marbled polecat)



Nannospalax ehrenbergi
(Palestine mole rat)

Among those species, Arabian sand gazelle (*Gazella marica*) and marbled polecat (*Vormela peregusna*) are assessed "Vulnerable" (VU) at the global scale.

Gazella marica
(Arabian sand gazelle)



Cursorius cursor
(Cream-colored courser)



Ammomanes deserti
(Desert lark)

The red-wattled lapwing (*Vanellus indicus*), pale rockfinch (*Carpospiza brachydactyla*), see-see partridge (*Ammoperdix griseogularis*) and desert lark (*Ammomanes deserti*) are the bird species recorded in the area.

Vanellus indicus
(Red-wattled lapwing)



Spectacled warbler (*Sylvia conspicillata*), pale rockfinch (*Carpospiza brachydactyla*) and see-see partridge (*Ammoperdix griseogularis*) are among the important bird species known to be distributed in the area. Being the only known breeding site of spectacled warbler (*Sylvia conspicillata*) in Turkey, Karacadağ steppes has a special importance.

Sylvia conspicillata
(Spectacled warbler)



Pterocles alchata
(Pintailed sandgrouse)

In addition to bird species such as great bustard (*Otis tarda*), cream-colored cursor (*Cursorius cursor*), see-see partridge (*Ammoperdix griseogularis*), red-wattled lapwing (*Vanellus indicus*), sociable lapwing (*Vanellus gregarius*), blue-cheeked bee-eater (*Merops persicus*), pale rockfinch (*Carpospiza brachydactyla*), yellow-throated sparrow (*Gymnoris xanthocollis*) and pintailed sandgrouse (*Pterocles alchata*), there are also important reptile species in this area such as Levantine viper (*Macrovipera lebetina*), desert black cobra (*Walterinnesia morgani*), hook-snouted worm snake (*Myriopholis macrorhyncha*) and long-nosed worm snake (*Letheobia episcopus*).



Macrovipera lebetina
(Levantine viper)

Levantine viper (*Macrovipera lebetina*), hook-snouted worm snake (*Myriopholis macrorhyncha*), desert monitor (*Varanus griseus*) and western leopard gecko (*Eublepharis angramainyu*) are among the important reptile species that are present in Tek Tek Mountains.



Eublepharis angramainyu
(Western leopard gecko)

Among the butterfly species observed in the area, large salmon Arab (*Colotis fausta*) and African migrant (*Catopsilia florella*) live in arid areas in more southern latitudes, such as North Africa and the Middle East, and the northernmost point of their distribution in the world is Şanlıurfa.

Catopsilia florella
(African migrant)



Ammoperdix griseogularis
(See-see partridge)

Endemic cricket species (*Isophya sikorai* and *Bradyporus karabagi*) are also observed in this area.



Paranothotes opacus rectus



Letheobia episcopus
(Long-nosed worm snake)



Otis tarda
(Great bustard)