IUCN

Antelopes of North Africa and the Arabian Peninsula

FACT SHEET Nº 1

VULNERABLE
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Gazella cuvieri.
Photo © Tim Wacher/ZSL

SSC
Species Survival Commission

Antelope Specialist Group

Arabian Sand Gazelle – the *reem* of the Arabian Peninsula.
Photo © Tim Wacher/ZSL

Slender-horned Gazelle – the *reem* of North Africa.
Photo © Tim Wacher/ZSL

Arabian Gazelle – the *idmi* of the Arabian Peninsula.
Photo © Tim Wacher/ZSL

Antelopes are among the best-known animals of the deserts of North Africa and the Arabian Peninsula. These species have adapted to some of the most extreme desert environments in the world and they have always been celebrated for their grace and beauty in the art and poetry of the region. Although well-known in a general sense, close similarity between some of the smaller species of North Africa and Arabia has led to confusion. This fact sheet provides a summary of the species that occur naturally in each region.

In total, 11 species of antelopes occur: five in the Arabian Peninsula and six in North Africa (see Table below). The largest antelopes of both regions, the Arabian Oryx (*Oryx leucoryx*) in Arabia and the Scimitar-horned Oryx (*Oryx dammah*) of North Africa, are distinctive and well known.

The smaller gazelle species are similar in appearance and they occupy similar habitats in each region. Due to the shared history and language, some gazelles have the same common names. Despite this, it is important to note that these are in fact all different species and that no species occurs in both these regions.

Reem is the name given to the gazelles inhabiting dunes and sandy deserts, but the two types of gazelle called 'Reem' are different: Arabian Sand Gazelle (*Gazella marica*) across the Arabian Peninsula and Slender-horned Gazelle (*Gazella leptoceros*) in North Africa, from Egypt to Algeria.

Idmi or *edmi* is applied to species occurring mainly in mountains and hilly areas: Cuvier's or Atlas Gazelle (*Gazella cuvieri*) in the Maghreb and two species in the Arabian Peninsula. Arabian Gazelle (*Gazella arabica*) occurs across most of the peninsula and Mountain Gazelle (*Gazella gazella*) in the far north. Until recently the latter two were regarded as the same species, but are now split. In the United Arab

Arabian Peninsula

English name	Scientific name	Arabic name
Arabian Sand Gazelle	***Gazella marica***	Reem
Arabian / Mountain Gazelle	***Gazella arabica, Gazella gazella***	Idmi, Dumani
Saudi Gazelle	***Gazella saudiya***	Afri
Arabian Oryx	***Oryx leucoryx***	Al Maha

North Africa

English name	Scientific name	Arabic name
Slender-horned Gazelle	***Gazella leptoceros***	Reem, Ghazal abiad
Cuvier's Gazelle	***Gazella cuvieri***	Edmi
Dorcas Gazelle	***Gazella dorcas***	Ghazal, Afri
Scimitar-horned Oryx	***Oryx dammah***	Wach, Begar al Ouach
Addax	***Addax nasomaculatus***	Akash, Beggar al Ouach
Dama Gazelle	***Nanger dama***	Addra, Mhorr

Cuvier's Gazelle – the *idmi* of North Africa.
Photo © Tim Wacher/ZSL

Arabian Oryx.
Photo © David Mallon/ASG

Scimitar-horned Oryx.
Photo © David Mallon/ASG

Emirates, *dumani* is often used instead of *idmi*. But both these Arabian gazelles have always been entirely different to the 'Edmi' of North Africa.

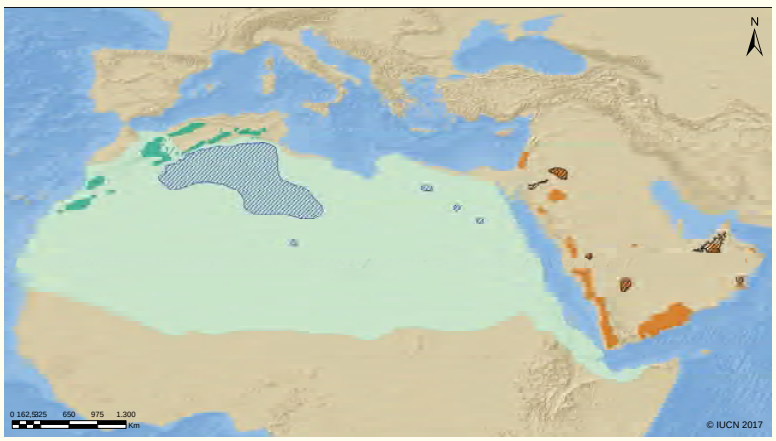
Afri refers to the Saudi Gazelle (*Gazella saudiya*) of the Arabian Peninsula, which is sadly now extinct, and is also used in some places for the Dorcas Gazelle (*Gazella dorcas*), which still occurs widely across North Africa.

The Arabian Oryx and Scimitar-horned Oryx both became extinct in the wild. The Arabian Oryx has since been reintroduced into several sites in the Arabian Peninsula and a project to reintroduce the Scimitar-horned Oryx to its historic wild range in Chad began in 2015. The Dama Gazelle (*Nanger dama*) and Addax (*Addax nasomaculatus*) are now extinct in North Africa, but survive in the Sahel in very small numbers; there are large collections of both species in captivity.

These species form an important part of the natural and cultural heritage of North Africa and the Arabian Peninsula, therefore it is vitally important to conserve all of them for future generations. Many projects have been initiated to improve the conservation status of gazelles in the region. Concentrating conservation efforts on wild populations in their natural habitat provides the best guarantee of long-term success. In situations where species have become extinct in the wild, or their ranges have been severely reduced, reintroductions may be the only option. Several operations to reintroduce species to sites where they have disappeared have already taken place. IUCN has published Guidelines on Reintroductions (2013) that should be followed in all cases.

In planning and implementing all these and future projects, it is essential to keep in mind that the antelopes of North Africa and those of the Arabian Peninsula are completely distinct and have evolved separately. Therefore, animals from the two regions should not be mixed. There is a high risk that species moved outside their original region may interbreed with the indigenous species, diluting gene pools and reducing fitness. In other cases, reintroduced animals from outside the region may occupy the habitat of native species and displace them to areas of less suitable habitat.

It is strongly recommended that all these gazelles are conserved and managed separately in order to maintain the regional biodiversity and individual character of both North Africa and the Arabian Peninsula.



Gazelles in North Africa
Gazella cuvieri
Gazella dorcas
Gazella leptoceros

Gazelles in Arabian Peninsula
Gazella arabica / Gazella gazella
Gazella marica

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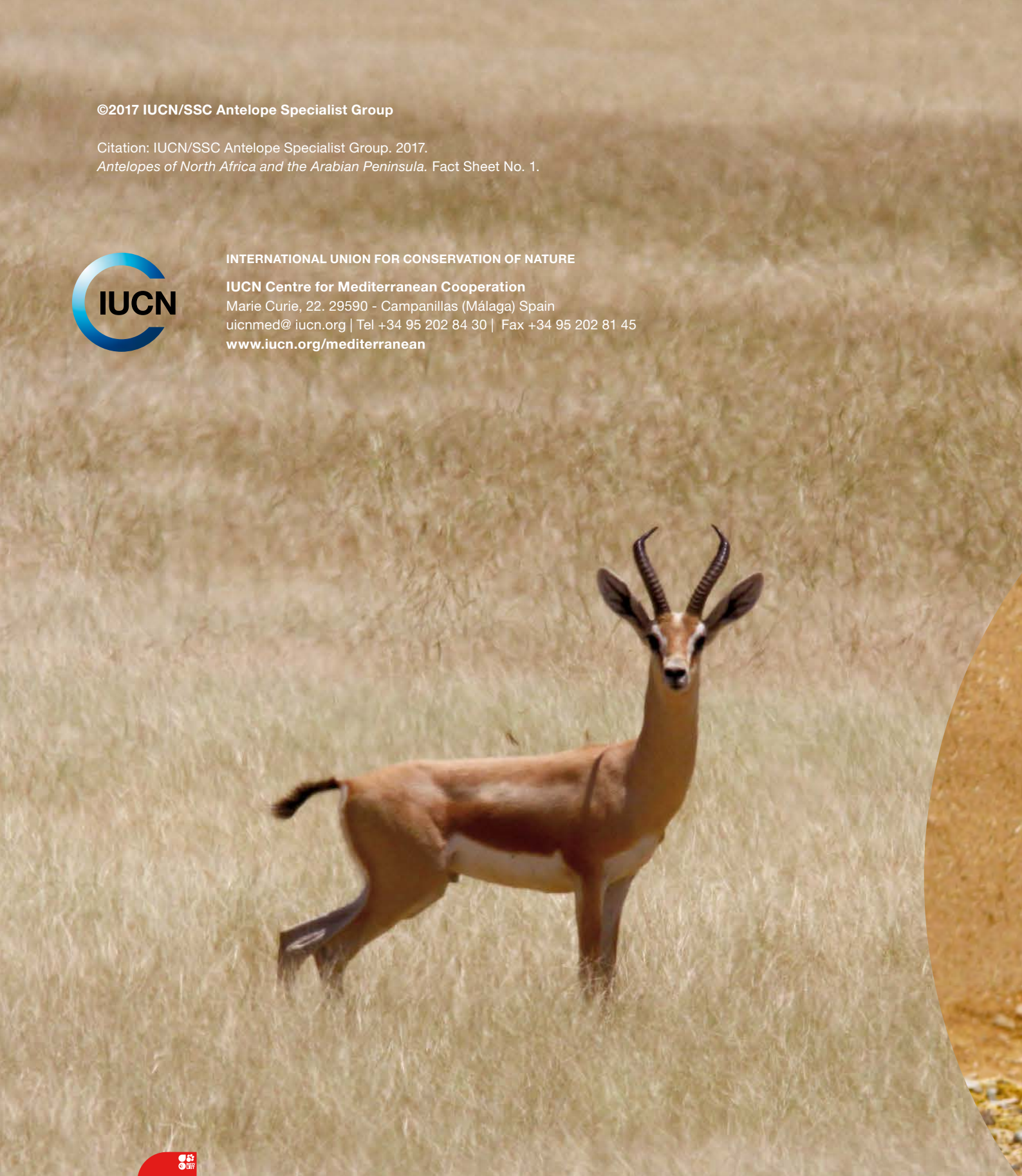

***Gazella dorcas*.**
Photo © Tim Wacher/ZSL

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