

ST KATHERINE PROTECTORATE PROPOSED MANAGEMENT SCHEME

The Operation Wallacea Trust with their Egyptian partners BioMap and the South Sinai Community Foundation have developed a plan for protecting the biodiversity of the Southern Sinai. This plan is in its early stages and is currently going through consultation before being submitted for funding approval. The objective is to establish a best practice management scheme for the St Katherine Protectorate that could then be replicated elsewhere in other National parks in Egypt.

The St Katherine Protectorate has a number of advantages as the location for a best practice management programme for Egypt. The Protectorate had an excellent management plan and infrastructure developed with European Union funding, although since funding from this scheme finished 3 years ago the management actions have declined considerably. The funding though was sufficiently recent that much of the expertise and good will is still available to move straight into the proposed sustainable project. In addition Operation Wallacea with its team of academics and funding from paying volunteers is committed to working in the Protectorate for a further 8 years. In addition the annual Operation Wallacea presentations to all UK and many east coast US and Canadian universities and schools help raise the profile of the St Katherine Protectorate amongst conservationists and academics. There are no similar programmes in any other Egyptian National Parks. The St Katherine Protectorate is also relatively accessible with metalled roads around the perimeter and there is an existing tourism infrastructure. There is much expertise available to help implement the management programme. BioMap, a unit within the EEAA has been developing a national biological records centre with online GIS access, and this organisation could be used to co-ordinate the monitoring elements of the programme. The South Sinai Community Foundation has been formed to develop community programmes amongst the Bedouin and this organisation could be used to co-ordinate the development of the contract system and development of businesses.

The proposed programme would contain the following elements:

Component A. Development of Bedouin contract scheme

Each of the Bedouin communities in the southern Sinai would be offered a contract which will develop long-term income streams for the communities and in return they would commit to ensuring agreed grazing levels are not exceeded, hunting is banned and there are no other non sustainable activities carried out by the communities. If they do break this part of the contract then the investment will be suspended until the rogue elements are brought under control. The contract will also entail a commitment by the communities to have regular, minuted meetings about their stewardship of their environment and how their activities might be impacting environmentally on the immediate area. In order for the contract system to work the investment part of it must have the following elements:

- a. It must be used to develop businesses that could be suspended if the community does not fulfil its part of the contract. In other words it can't be major capital investment because short of demolishing what has been built or bought there are no realistic sanctions in the event of a breach of the contract.
- b. The benefits must be spread widely amongst the communities. If only a few people benefit there will be little incentive for the others to comply with the contract conditions.
- c. The funding should be a pump priming exercise to establish businesses that will run long after the initial funding has stopped.

There are a limited number of investment options that would fulfil these criteria but they essentially fall into three categories:

1. **Getting greater value from products they are already producing;** This is essentially Fair Trade but the problem with traditional Fair Trade schemes is that although they pay fair wages to the producers there is no link between purchase of a product from the community and the impact that community has on the conservation value of the environment. The proposal is to offer a Fair Trade Plus scheme to the communities in the St Katherine Protectorate where they will receive enhanced prices for their commodities (eg almonds, dried fruits, medicinal plants etc) in return for ensuring the whole community comply with the environmental restrictions and the stewardship principles. There is a growing market in western countries for Fair Trade products, where the producer is guaranteed a fair price. In order to obtain the Fair Trade logo the exporter needs to obtain certification for the intended products (eg almonds, dried fruit, medicinal herbs). Funding would be needed for this certification process. Once the certification has been obtained though the intention would be to market the products as Fair Trade Plus - ie they are sourced from communities where the community is ensuring biodiversity conservation of their surrounding environment. Products such as 'Ibex Almonds' or 'Ibex Dried Fruit' would then be marketed as providing a direct benefit to conservation. Funding would be needed to develop the marketing strategy and ensure that a regular supply of the products could be sold at enhanced prices. Medicinal plant production is already the subject of a \$6 million GEF/Egyptian government project, and part of this project is aimed at providing enhanced incomes for Bedouin communities for growing the plants and provision to Egyptian based pharmaceutical companies. A complementary strategy that could be used is to market the dried herbs or extracts via western health food shops again using the Ibex logo as an indication that the funding was being used to protect the biodiversity value of the Protectorate. The objective is to ensure that each community has a co-operative formed and that by the end of a 5-year period of grant aid that a proportion of the profits on the dried fruit, almonds and medicinal plant production for each community are used to fund the Guardian element of the patrol teams.
2. **Research tourism;** Research tourism is where paying volunteers join biological, social or archaeological research programmes. The archaeological research tourism market is well developed already in Egypt, but the biological and social research tourism markets are only just beginning to be tackled. Operation Wallacea has started to bring biological survey teams comprising university students and sixth formers to help with biological surveys to the St Katherine Protectorate each year in July and August. Operation Wallacea is developing this market, which involves utilising Bedouin teams to lead trek teams mainly from the UK comprising biologists and volunteer surveyors. There is however, a similar market available in Egypt with university students and sixth formers, which could also be developed and an NGO called Conservation Egypt has been formed to develop this market. This would enable the current survey season to be extended to provide more biological data and regular income to the Bedouin communities, as well as raising the level of awareness of conservation issues amongst Egyptian universities and schools. A third market that could be developed is to offer short (3 - 4 day) trek surveys to the existing tourist market in Sharm and other Red Sea resorts. St Katherine Protectorate has the advantage that it is adjacent to the major tourism destination in Egypt, has existing access roads around the perimeter, there is some experience amongst the Bedouin community of running trek and camping expeditions to the interior, the mountains are spectacularly beautiful and there are iconic desert species that can be seen on the survey treks (Ibex, Blue-headed Agama lizards, Chukar, Tristram's Grackle and the world's smallest butterfly - the Sinai baton Blue).

A Project Manager would be appointed to ensure the community contracts were agreed and implemented prior to receipt of the additional income streams. Experience of running such schemes elsewhere is that the target communities for such contract schemes are normally very keen on educational benefits for their children and in many cases where income has been invested in a community much of the resultant benefit has been used to fund scholarships and support local schools. It is proposed that in order to demonstrate an immediate benefit to the Bedouin communities, that support is offered to each of the communities for education

projects. This would then allow time for the contract details to be agreed and the businesses outlined above to have time to start yielding income for the communities.

The South Sinai Community Foundation would carry out this aspect of the project. After initial consultation with each of the Bedouin communities and the contract approach agreed in principle, educational grant aid would be offered to the community and funding would be needed for this initial activity. The objective is to both reward communities moving towards sustainable management and also to provide a stop gap tangible benefit until the income generated from the various businesses can be brought on stream.

Component B. Enhancement of enforcement activities

There is currently widespread overgrazing, over collection of wood and medicinal plants and some illegal hunting within the Protectorate. However, such activities are curtailed by the degraded state of the environment and are likely to be more significant issues as the level of vegetation cover and target hunted species increase as a result of the management actions proposed. There is an existing Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency (EEAA) ranger team, but the level of patrolling in the internal parts of the Protectorate is very low. The proposal is to fund the creation of a Wildlife Crime Unit building on the elected Guardian system that has been proposed by the Protectorate. Guardians from each of the Bedouin community would be funded to join the rangers on a regular patrolling programme throughout the Protectorate. These patrol teams would also gather monitoring data (see Component D). One of the conditions of the proposed community grants is that they would eventually fund the Guardians once the income reached a pre-determined threshold. The EEAA would be responsible for the administration and office costs for the office in St Katherine.

Component C Improvement of awareness of biological importance of the Protectorate and existing regulations

Component D Implementation of monitoring scheme and training of Egyptian field scientists to complete similar programmes elsewhere

If the St Katherine Protectorate is to be used as a best practice example for Egyptian National Parks, then it is important to demonstrate with published results in international peer reviewed journals, the effects of the management programme. The advantage that the St Katherine Protectorate has over other Parks in Egypt is that Operation Wallacea has signed an 8-year agreement to provide volunteers, academics and funding to complete annual biodiversity assessments of the Protectorate. Moreover with the development of the Conservation Egypt volunteer programme, the short stay research treks and the regular proposed patrolling there is therefore much expertise on site each year to assist with the monitoring programme. However, a core team of Egyptian scientists should be trained to be able to carry out biodiversity and socio-economic assessments and it is proposed that Egyptian students should undertake the main components of the monitoring programme as part of a PhD programme. A benefit of this approach is that at least 3 Egyptian PhD students would be trained, so that these qualified researchers could run similar monitoring programmes elsewhere in Egypt. The main monitoring components should be the household incomes in each of the Bedouin communities across the Protectorate and how this changes during the course of the project, the levels of vegetation cover and botanical diversity and the population and distribution of key vertebrate species.

Component E Development of plans for other sites in Egypt where similar schemes could be introduced with much reduced initial funding requirements

Once the community contract system, enforcement and educational programmes are in position and the monitoring teams are producing data to show the effectiveness of this type of approach, then the Project Management team would concentrate on developing plans for similar schemes to be run in other Egyptian National Park sites. Additional schemes will not require the investment programme needed to establish the St Katherine Protectorate as a best practice example, since the demonstrable economic benefits to communities should drive the development of community contracts in other Parks.