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THE FAUNA OF ŞANLIURFA

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REPUBLIC OF TURKEY
SANLIURFA GOVERNOR
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NATURE CULTURE
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Şanlıurfa is not only an important province of our country because of its history and touristic values but also because of its natural environment. Şanlıurfa is with its rocky, desert and semi-desert areas, home to many endemic species, which offers pristine opportunities for nature tourism. Species of Şanlıurfa that are endangered have been chosen for this study.

MAMMALS AND REPTILES

Goitered Gazelle (*Gazella subgotturosa*): Between the years of 1940-1960 herds of 500 and 1000 animals have been often seen in together in the lands of Ceylanpınar and between Suruç and Cizre. Males tend to protect their females. The gestation period is 5-6 months. It births 1 cub. Mother and cub live together for 1 year. They eat hay, alfalfa and fattening meals. Years of unconscious hunting and cub collection led to the near extinction of the goitered gazelle. In the 1970s conservation works have begun and within the scope of the Ceylanpınar Agricultural Enterprise, a 26 hectare big area has been turned into a protected area with a fence. The goitered gazelle today freely lives in the mountainous and steppe regions of Şanlıurfa.



Goitered Gazelle (*Gazella subgotturosa*)

Striped Hyena (*Hyaena hyaena*): It is known, that the striped hyena once lived in the South of the Aegean Region, the Mediterranean Region and Southeaster Anatolia. The striped hyena lives in steppes and semi-desert and rocky areas. The color of the striped hyena is dirty light yellow. It also has 6-10 cm big stripes in blackish dark. From the neck to the waist the hyena has a mane out of hard and harsh hair. The front legs are longer than the back legs. Their essential food are dead animals (carrions). The striped hyena still lives in the rocky areas at the Şanlıurfa borders. Since it feeds at night, it is passive during the day.



Striped Hyena (*Hyaena hyaena*)

Euphrates Softshell Turtle (*Rafetus euphraticus*): An endemic species found in the Tigris and Euphrates River. It doesn't get bigger than 1 meter. The color of its back varies from dark green to light brown. Young turtles have a light colored body with consecutive black and white spots. A small and soft snout can be found on tip of their head. Through this snout they are able to breathe. They are able to stay a long time under water. This is why it is very difficult to see the Euphrates softshell turtle. They move quite faster than other types. By quickly stretching out their neck they are able to catch their prey. They generally choose muddy lakes and rivers as living space and spend most of their time in the mud at the bottom. They generally eat aquatic animals. But sometimes they also prefer plants. Regions around the Euphrates and inshore islands have become important living spaces for the Euphrates softshell turtle.



Euphrates Softshell Turtle (*Rafetus euphraticus*)

Desert Monitor (*Varanus griseus*): Their most prominent feature are their long, thin and forked tongues. Because it is much bigger than a normal lizard it is also called "giant lizard". The color of their backs are generally tawny or grayish. They have transverse black or dark brown stripes on their backs. The species lives in desert or semi-desert areas. They are active during the day and passive at night. They generally eat other small lizards, rodents, birds they are able to hunt and reptile eggs. Cannibalism occurs. They also are able to dig the soil and climb trees. Females can lay up to 10-12 eggs at once. They grow up to 100 cm (at most 130 cm). The desert monitor still lives in the steppes of Şanlıurfa.



Desert Monitor (*Varanus griseus*)



Olivier's (Horny-scaled) Agama (*Trapelus ruderatus*): Their length vary from 15-18 cm. Their backs are round and have an earthy color. They live in areas with only few plants or deserts. They eat insects or different spider species. The species can be found in the Southeastern part of our country. In our region however it continues to live in natural areas that haven't been disrupted.

Olivier's (Horny-scaled) Agama (*Trapelus ruderatus*)

BIRD SPECIES

Northern Bald Ibis (*Geronticus eremita*) : A very important endangered bird species. In colonies they are only found in Turkey and Morocco. The grown Northern bald ibis has a bald head, a red beak and legs and its feathers are long, sharp and black. The Northern bald ibis used to build nests between rocks and hollows of the Euphrates River Bank in Birecik but because of the use of agrochemicals their number started to decrease drastically in the 1950s. In 2002 the number of the Northern bald ibis has been increased by establishing breeding stations through National Parks and the Nature Association, which still continue their work. The Northern bald ibis fly over cities as semi-pets. Also the Northern bald ibis is a symbol of abundance and fertility for the people of Birecik.



Northern Bald Ibis (*Geronticus eremita*)

Sociable Lapwing (*Chettusia gregarius*) : They use the southeast and eastern regions of our country two times a year to migrate between African countries, where they spend the winter, and Kazakhstan, where they breed. Unfortunately the sociable lapwing is with only 11.200 specimen worldwide about to be extinct. In Şanlıurfa they can be seen in steppes of Ceylanpınar and Akçakale.



Sociable Lapwing (*Chettusia gregarius*)

Pallid Scops Owl (*Otus brucei*): Off all countries in Europe, the species can most likely be seen in Şanlıurfa. The Pallid scops owl is an owl species that is passive during the day and actively hunting during the night. Their most prominent living space in Birecik is the Söğütlük Park with the Euphrates poplars, which is a 1st degree protected area. The reason why they choose the Soğütlük Park are probably the old trees and insect and lizard density caused by the cities lighting system.



Pallid Scops Owl (*Otus brucei*)

Cream-Coloured Courser (*Cursorius cursor*): Şanlıurfa is one of the rare places in Europe in which the Cream-Coloured Courser breeds and can be seen. In spring the Cream-Coloured Courser arrives in the steppes of Şanlıurfa, where it feeds and breeds until the end of summer and then migrates together with its new specimen. The Cream-Coloured Courser lives in semi-desert areas and in dangerous situations it prefers to run away rather than fly. Since this species can in our country only be seen in Şanlıurfa, it carries great importance in terms of birdwatching tourism.



Cream-Coloured Courser (*Cursorius cursor*)

Photographer: Turan Çetin

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