

CONNECT WITH NATURE

2024 Review



FOUNDING PARTNERS



CELEBRATING FIVE YEARS OF IMPACT

In the Year of Sustainability, Connect with Nature proudly marked its 5th anniversary, celebrating half a decade of empowering youth and communities to explore the UAE's natural heritage and take actions to protect nature.

In 2024, Connect with Nature inspired 2,300 youth to engage with nature through 52 exciting events – from Sahim clean-ups and turtle patrols to kayaking adventures and mangrove seed collection missions. Through virtual sessions, youth discovered how species adapt to thrive in hot, arid environments, and discovered the powerful link between nature and climate change.

Each activity is designed to be educational, inspiring and fun – while delivering real impact for conservation. We do this by embedding citizen science into our field activities, offering participants the chance to support scientific research and environmental decision-making. This year alone, youth contributed 4,000 hours for nature and recorded an impressive 26,850 data points - vital insights into the health of wildlife, biodiversity, and natural ecosystems across the UAE.

Connect with Nature continues to welcome individuals of all ages, including school children, fostering a nationwide culture of environmental stewardship. Promising changemakers – including our Ambassadors for Nature, Murshed Rangers, Green Youth Majlis (GYM) members, ecotourism vendors and educators – are gaining the skills to lead their own community events and grow this movement for nature.

Our local impact echoes globally as we joined initiatives like International Coastal Cleanup Day and the International Mangrove Conservation and Restoration Conference, helping strengthen the UAE's leadership in conservation.

Looking ahead, we are excited to embark on a bold new chapter with a fresh five-year strategy designed to scale our impact and shape an optimistic future for people and planet.





“From the very beginning, we knew the youth of the UAE held something extraordinary – a spark of purpose and a deep-rooted care for nature.

In the Year of Sustainability, and as we celebrate our five-year milestone, we’ve seen that vision come to life. Young people have stepped into the nation’s wetlands, wadis and coastal lagoons – immersing themselves in diverse habitats, discovering native species, and exploring real-world environmental solutions.

Youth are connecting with nature and going beyond.

They’re reshaping the future through citizen science and environmental stewardship. It fills me with pride to see Abu Dhabi at the heart of this movement, inspired by the values of the UAE’s Founding Father, the late Sheikh Zayed.

The next five years are not only about youth, but about building a lasting legacy for all.”

RASHA ALI AL MADFAI

- Division Director, Awareness and Outreach – Environmental Information, Science, and Outreach Management
Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi



هيئة البيئة - أبوظبي
Environment Agency - ABU DHABI





**connect
with
nature**

Join the movement at
www.connectwithnature.ae



تواصل مع ال

“What an amazing journey we have been on over the past 5 years. I’m incredibly proud of what our community of passionate young people have accomplished. Connecting with nature is so much more than just spending time outdoors – it’s about shifting attitudes and proactively creating a more optimistic future for our planet.

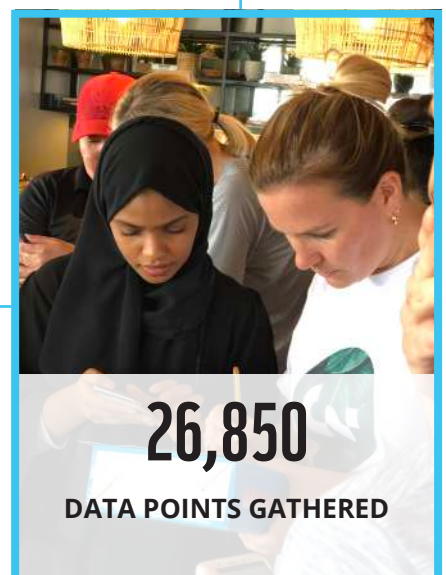
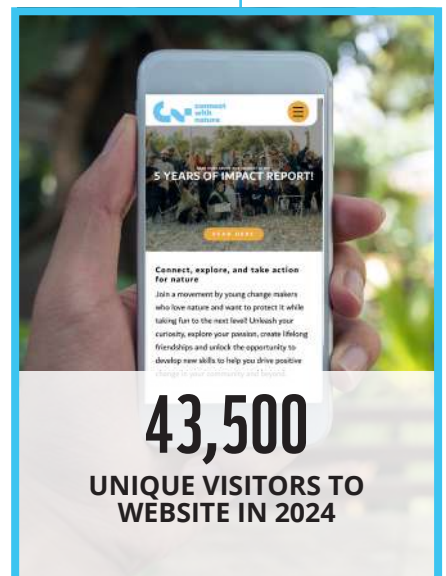
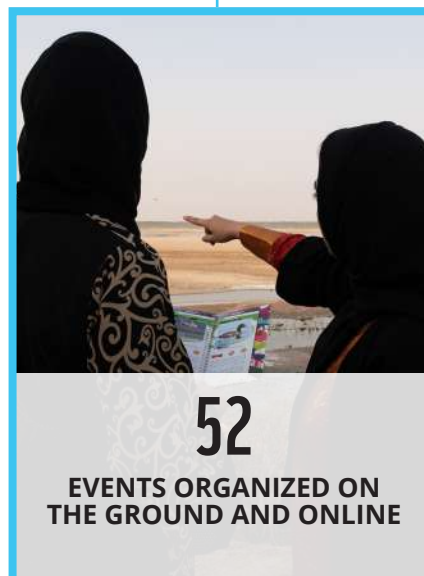
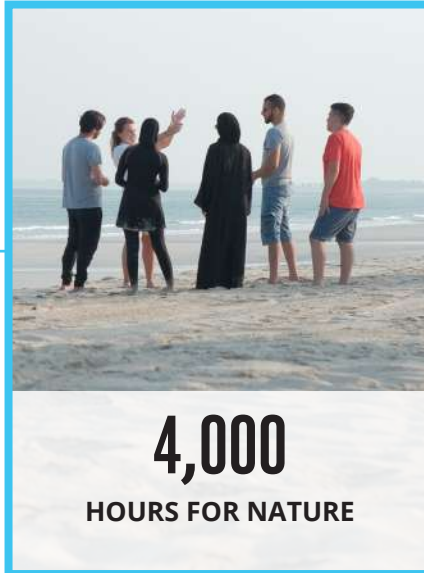
Through this programme, we have demonstrated the transformative power of intentionally designed experiences; trying, testing and refining our approach. As we look forward to the next five years, we’re gathering all that we have learned and targeting our conservation outreach towards a new audience of school children.

Of course, none of this is possible without supportive partnerships, and I’m thrilled that the Environment Agency - Abu Dhabi and Emirates Nature-WWF are extending their collaboration into a new era of community mobilisation and citizen science.”

ARABELLA WILLING

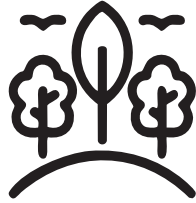
- Head of Conservation Science & Citizen Outreach, Emirates Nature-WWF

HIGHLIGHTS OF 2024



HIGHLIGHTS OF 2024

ABU DHABI



3,400

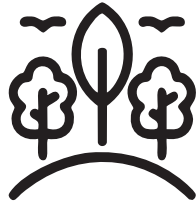
HOURS FOR NATURE



44 EVENTS

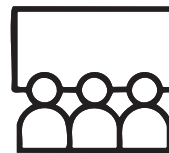
ORGANIZED IN ABU DHABI

VIRTUAL EVENTS



1,331

HOURS FOR NATURE



2

MASTERCLASSES



10 NATURE RESILIENCE SUMMER SESSIONS

+50% INCREASE IN SIGN UPS THIS YEAR

NOTABLE PROJECTS IN 2024

We are connecting youth with nature, transforming minds and hearts through an exciting series of nature-based activities.

5-YEAR CELEBRATION

Connect with Nature marked its landmark anniversary at Gracia Farm, Abu Dhabi, bringing together partners and changemakers. Together, we reflected on our impactful journey and heard from inspiring youth Ambassadors for Nature, Youth Insiders, and the Green Youth Majlis who have been key to the programme's success.

With more than 14,000 participants across 250+ events, Connect with Nature has evolved from a way of inspiring people to spend time in nature into a powerful movement of taking action for nature.

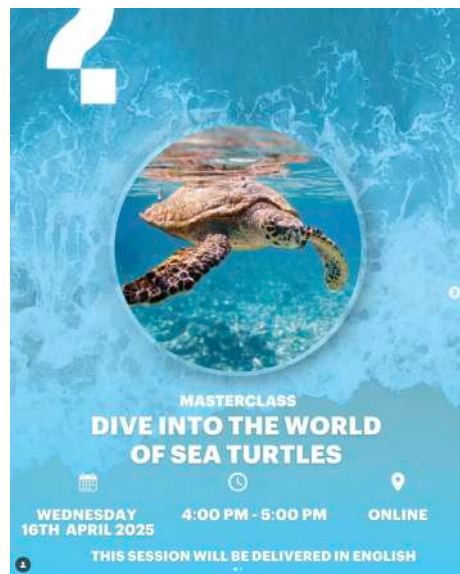


NATURE'S RESILIENCE SERIES

To raise awareness around UAE's unique biodiversity and to highlight the complex links between nature and climate, we launched Nature's Resilience – a series of 10 online sessions led by environmental experts at Emirates Nature-WWF, co-founding partner of Connect with Nature.

The virtual programme kept the community engaged with nature during the warmer summer months with incredible stories and facts about the UAE's diverse habitats and species.

1,000 individuals participated in this year's summer training series - a 50% increase from last year!



CITIZEN SCIENCE

(Field Trips for Schools and Educators)

Students in Abu Dhabi dove into hands-on conservation and discovered the vital role of mangroves in protecting our planet through our exciting school trip initiative. 58 students from three government schools joined these trips, with two mangrove monitoring trips held in Mirfa and one mangrove restoration trip held in Dhannah. Together, students collected 78 data points and planted 60 mangroves.

Recognizing the importance of engaging educators in hands-on conservation, Connect with Nature joined forces with the World Environment Education Congress (WEEC), organizing special field trips for conference attendees.

Fun fact: the Dhannah school trip marked the launch of the Environment Agency - Abu Dhabi's inspiring commitment to plant a mangrove for every visitor to the WEEC, kickstarting a bold initiative to plant 3,000 mangrove trees!



MARINE CONSERVATION AT SAADIYAT

Saadiyat Marine National Park is home to diverse marine life, including the critically endangered Hawksbill Turtle, dolphins and dugongs. To raise awareness about its rich biodiversity and to involve the community in conservation efforts, Connect with Nature collaborated with Aldar to offer training sessions, awareness evenings and conservation field trips.

Residents, visitors and school children learned how to patrol the beach for turtles, to help identify and protect turtle nesting sites. Participants also took part in nurdle hunts, removing microplastics and debris to protect local wildlife.



“Experiencing the mangroves firsthand transformed my students’ understanding of nature, making learning real and impactful. Their excitement, deeper awareness, and the valuable data we contribute drive us to return again.”

ABDULLAH

- Teacher at Al Mirfa Boys Schools

AMBASSADORS FOR NATURE

The Ambassadors for Nature initiative equips youth with the skills and mentorship needed to become environmental leaders. In late 2023, we selected a new cohort of Ambassadors to represent youth voices at COP28 and beyond, inspiring meaningful action for the environment.

From a pool of hundreds of passionate young people across the UAE, 10 new Ambassadors were selected for their dedication to sustainability. Following a comprehensive training program, they led sustainability projects, organized community initiatives and championed positive change.

Ambassador spotlight:

- **Dana Al Dhaen** was appointed president of the Green Youth Majlis (GYM).
- **Majid Bin Saad** was appointed Youth Advisor to the Youth Committee of GYM. He also earned 3rd place in the Environmental Influencer category at the first Sheikh Hamdan bin Zayed Environmental Award — a well-deserved recognition for his dedication to nature.
- **Faris Saadaat** launched a mangrove planting initiative in the UAE and advocated for nature as a Global Volunteer at the Conference of Youth (COY19). Faris shares his insights on the Emirates Nature-WWF blog to inspire more youth to lead the change.



“One of the most impactful aspects of Connect with Nature was my introduction to citizen science, a concept I was previously unfamiliar with. I saw firsthand how small actions can contribute to a much larger environmental movement. Additionally, I had the privilege of engaging with a like-minded community of ambassadors and gaining access to incredible events such as WEEC, COP28, and the Emirates Foundation Ideathon.”

This program was my first real step into the world beyond school, and I am deeply grateful that it was such a positive and enriching experience. It has not only broadened my understanding of conservation but has also left me excited for the future and the opportunities ahead.”

NUHA MOHIDEEN

- Ambassador for Nature

THE ROAD AHEAD

Looking ahead to 2025 and beyond, Connect with Nature is poised to scale its impact through an ambitious 5-year strategy. Our focus will be on engaging and upskilling the public, with a particular emphasis on schools, educators, and students.

Students represent the future of our nation and our planet. Through the expansion of the Citizen Science School Field Trips program, youth will have more opportunities to participate in hands-on conservation. They will learn about the environmental challenges we face today, and how they can be part of the solution.

Connect with Nature aims to provide easy access to learning experiences and interactive content through its digital platforms. A key priority will be integrating

sustainability into education and creating more pathways for youth to pursue careers in this field.

National and international environmental forums offer valuable opportunities for youth to apply their skills and gain real-world experience. We look forward to encouraging greater youth participation in these events, helping to pave the way for the next generation of citizen scientists and environmental leaders.



About Connect with Nature

Connect with Nature was developed through a founding partnership between Emirates Nature-WWF and the Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi (EAD). The programme aims to reconnect youth with nature through experiences and activities, equip them with knowledge and skills to make informed decisions, and to become leaders of the community in creating a sustainable future. For more information, visit www.connectwithnature.ae

About Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi (EAD)

The Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi (EAD) was established in 1996 to preserve Abu Dhabi's natural heritage, protect our future, and raise awareness about environmental issues. EAD is Abu Dhabi's environmental regulator and advises the government on environmental policy. It works to create sustainable communities and protect and conserve wildlife and natural resources. EAD also works to ensure integrated and sustainable water resources management, to ensure clean air and minimise climate change and its impacts.

About Emirates Nature-WWF

Emirates Nature-WWF is an environmental NGO charity established to conserve the United Arab Emirates' natural heritage and build a future where people and nature thrive. The organization was founded in 2001 by our Honorary Founder and President, H.H. Sheikh Hamdan bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the Ruler's Representative in the Al Dhafra Region and Chairman of the Governing Board of the Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi, as a legacy of the late Sheikh Zayed's vision for the United Arab Emirates.

For over two decades, Emirates Nature-WWF has been a prominent and active partner in environmental conservation in the MENA region. We work in association with WWF, one of the world's largest and most respected independent conservation organizations.

