



الصندوق الدولي للحفاظ على الحبارى
International Fund For Houbara Conservation

The IFHC Signs a Research Agreement with the Smithsonian Institution

Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates – March 2025: As part of its international cooperation strategy in research, scientific knowledge exchange, and the use of advanced technologies for the conservation of vulnerable and endangered species, as well as the protection of their natural habitats, the International Fund for Houbara Conservation (IFHC) has signed an agreement with the Smithsonian Institution to implement a 24-month joint research program.

The program comprises three environmental and geospatial studies focused on analysing the natural habitat, migration patterns, and breeding behaviours of Asian and Arabian houbara bustards. It will utilise remote sensing and spatial databases to model habitat suitability, assess food availability, and determine the impact of human activities on houbara populations.

Under the agreement, a team of post-doctorate researchers, supported by trained interns, will collect and analyse data under the joint supervision of IFHC and the Smithsonian Institution. The agreement was formalised in a virtual meeting, with HE Abdulla Ghurair Al Qubaisi, Director General of IFHC, representing the Fund, while Dr. Brandie Smith, Director of the John and Adrienne Mars National Zoo and Conservation Biology Institute at the Smithsonian Institution, signed on behalf of the Smithsonian.

In welcoming the signing of this agreement, the Director General of the International Fund for Houbara Conservation (IFHC) emphasised the importance of both national and international partnerships with universities, institutes, and research centres. He also highlighted the significant successes achieved by Abu Dhabi's strategy for the conservation of the houbara over the past decades, inspired by the legacy of the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan and under the guidance of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the UAE.

Commenting on the signing of this agreement, Dr. Brandie Smith – John and Adrienne Mars Director of the Smithsonian's National Zoo and Conservation Biology Institute, said: "Our partners at IFHC have laid impressive groundwork for restoring wild populations of bustards, including establishing captive breeding programs and reintroducing hundreds of thousands of birds to range countries in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. As a global research institution, the Smithsonian will lend its scientific capabilities to the effort, led by a team of ecologists that are part of the Smithsonian's Movement of Life Initiative, a pan-institutional initiative to understand how the movement of animals contributes to a more resilient and biodiverse planet."

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About the International Fund for Houbara Conservation (IFHC):

Continuing an initiative by the late Sheikh Zayed, Abu Dhabi has undertaken the task of rescuing the threatened houbara bustard. A global conservation strategy was developed and implemented over the past forty years with the objective of ensuring the species has a sustainable future in the wild through effective and appropriate conservation programmes and management plans. Since 1995, the conservation strategy adopted consists of an integrated approach combining sound ecology, protection measures in the wild, conservation breeding, and effective reinforcement programmes. The IFHC was created in 2006 to further the original programme by managing international assets and securing partnerships across the range of the houbara, which encourage sustainable practices to ensure the species' conservation.

For more information, kindly visit our website: <https://houbarafund.gov.ae/> and follow up on IFHC social media accounts @houbarafund

About the Smithsonian Institution:

The Smithsonian Institution is an educational and research organization that includes a group of museums and research centers in the United States. It was founded in 1846 and is headquartered in Washington, D.C. It encompasses the Smithsonian National Zoo and the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute. The institution oversees 19 museums, a national zoo, and several research centers, covering fields such as science, history, and the arts.