

ENVIRONMENT AGENCY – ABU DHABI, ALDAR, AND EMIRATES NATURE-WWF PARTNER TO STUDY BIODIVERSITY AND RAISE AWARENESS OF MARINE ECOSYSTEMS IN ABU DHABI



- **The partnership will support studies of marine habitats and species in Abu Dhabi as part of a shared commitment to preserve and raise awareness of the region’s unique marine biodiversity**
- **A marine conservation study of the nearshore areas of Saadiyat Marine National Park will be conducted as well as a series of community and citizen science activities on Saadiyat Island**
- **The study’s findings and community engagements will aim to support the management and understanding of the nearshore habitats of Saadiyat National Park**

Abu Dhabi, UAE – 20 January 2025: Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi (EAD), Aldar, and environmental charity Emirates Nature-WWF have partnered to support the implementation of marine habitat studies at Saadiyat Marine National Park aimed at preserving the region’s unique marine ecosystems.

This partnership underscores a shared commitment to environmental sustainability and biodiversity conservation and was initiated when Aldar joined the Abu Dhabi Mangrove Initiative (ADMI) partnership program in May 2024. By signing EAD’s partnership pledge, Aldar has committed to conserve and restore coastal ecosystems including mangroves, seagrass, salt marsh and microbial mats.



As part of the collaboration, innovative research and technologies, such as environmental DNA surveys and remote underwater surveys (BRUVs), are being utilized to study the nearshore areas of Saadiyat Marine National Park. The Park, which was formally declared part of Sheikh Zayed Protected Areas Network in 2017, is a protected marine area established and managed by the Agency. The shores of Saadiyat Island are home to an abundance of marine life, including the critically endangered Hawksbill Turtle, dolphins, dugongs, coral, seagrass and mangrove habitats, as well as marine invertebrates. This partnership will explore the development of a blueprint for biodiversity stewardship that can be applied by Aldar across its portfolio and coastal development projects in Abu Dhabi to avoid negative impact to marine species and habitats.

In addition, the initiative aims to promote environmental awareness within communities on Saadiyat Island, with the partners hosting a series of community events and citizen science activities as a part of the Connect with Nature initiative. Citizen science involves engaging the community in hands-on environmental monitoring and data collection efforts, empowering them to contribute directly to scientific research while fostering a deeper understanding of marine biodiversity and its importance.

Ahmed Al Hashmi, Executive Director of the Terrestrial and Marine Biodiversity Sector at EAD, said: "Following decades of conservation efforts by the Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi at Saadiyat Marine National Park, we are delighted to witness this impactful collaboration with Aldar and Emirates Nature-WWF. Partnerships like this play a pivotal role in advancing our collective mission to study, preserve and restore Abu Dhabi's rich marine biodiversity. We are certain the study findings will be applied to preserve the unique habitats and species that our emirate is blessed with."

He added: "Saadiyat Island and its adjacent marine seascape is a vital sanctuary for diverse species and, through this partnership, we aim to enhance community awareness and support conservation efforts, foster environmental resilience, and inspire sustainable stewardship of our natural resources. Together, we are not only protecting our oceans but also ensuring a thriving environment for future generations."

Salwa Al Maflahi, Executive Director of Sustainability and Community Outreach at Aldar, said: "Aldar's partnership with Emirates Nature-WWF and the Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi through the Abu Dhabi Mangrove Initiative Partnership program will help protect the natural beauty and biodiversity of Saadiyat's marine and coastal habitats and this reflects our dedication to both sustainable development and community engagement on critical



environmental issues. By fostering a deeper connection between our communities and the environment, we aim to inspire collective action towards a greener, more sustainable future."

Laila Mostafa Abdullatif, Director General at Emirates Nature-WWF, said: "We look forward to raising awareness of the rich biodiversity of Saadiyat Marine National Park in collaboration with Aldar and the Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi. Through biodiversity surveys, we will gather vital information to guide management decisions for understanding species and habitats in the shallow coastal waters of Abu Dhabi. Community engagement is another key pillar of this initiative, with exciting hands-on events planned to raise awareness about the importance of safeguarding nature and wildlife while also empowering individuals to make an on-the-ground impact as citizen scientists."

This partnership builds upon years of dedicated marine conservation efforts championed by EAD and is an example of both Aldar and Emirates Nature WWF's commitment to raising awareness and protecting natural habitats and biodiversity. Aldar's Environmental Policy aims to conserve biodiversity and uphold the coexistence of people and nature. Additionally, Aldar incorporates environmental assessments and regular monitoring into its project management activities and new development launches and, through Aldar Education, teaches students about the importance of ecosystem relationships.

Abu Dhabi is home to diverse ecosystems, including mangroves, seagrass meadows, coral reefs, saltmarsh and microbial mats – all of which support a wide array of marine and coastal species like dugongs, turtles, and migratory birds. These ecosystems play a crucial role in maintaining ecological balance, supporting fisheries, and protecting coastlines from erosion. Saadiyat Marine National Park was selected for this project due to its vital role in conserving marine biodiversity. The park is an essential site for research, education, and recreational activities, boasting high ecological diversity with coral reefs, seagrass meadows, and sandy beaches.

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About Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi (EAD)

Established in 1996, the Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi (EAD) is committed to protecting and enhancing air quality, groundwater as well as the biodiversity of our desert and marine ecosystem. By partnering with other government entities, the private sector, NGOs and global environmental agencies, we embrace international best practice, innovation and hard work to institute effective policy measures. We seek to raise environmental awareness, facilitate sustainable development and ensure environmental issues remain one of the top priorities of our national agenda.



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About Aldar

Aldar is the leading real estate developer, manager, and investor in Abu Dhabi, with a growing presence across the United Arab Emirates, the Middle East North Africa, and Europe.

The company has two core business segments, Aldar Development and Aldar Investment.

Aldar Development is a master developer of a 62 million sqm strategic landbank, creating integrated and thriving communities across Abu Dhabi, Dubai, and Ras Al Khaimah's most desirable destinations. The delivery of Aldar's developments is managed by Aldar Projects, which is also a key partner of the Abu Dhabi government in delivering housing and infrastructure projects across the UAE's capital. Internationally, Aldar Development wholly owns UK real estate developer London Square, as well as a majority stake in leading Egyptian real estate development company, SODIC.

Aldar Investment houses a core asset management business comprising a portfolio of more than AED 37 billion worth of investment grade and income-generating real estate assets diversified across retail, residential, commercial, logistics, and hospitality segments. It manages four core platforms: Aldar Investment Properties, Aldar Hospitality, Aldar Education, and Aldar Estates.



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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 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.

As a local conservation think-tank and pioneers of the "Leaders of Change" programme, the world's first- ever digital membership platform for the environment – we empower, convene and mobilize civil society, government entities and businesses to support the UAE's sustainability agenda and deliver transformative impact at scale for the benefit of people and planet alike.