



Unesco brings out Checklist of Flora

By Bonnie James
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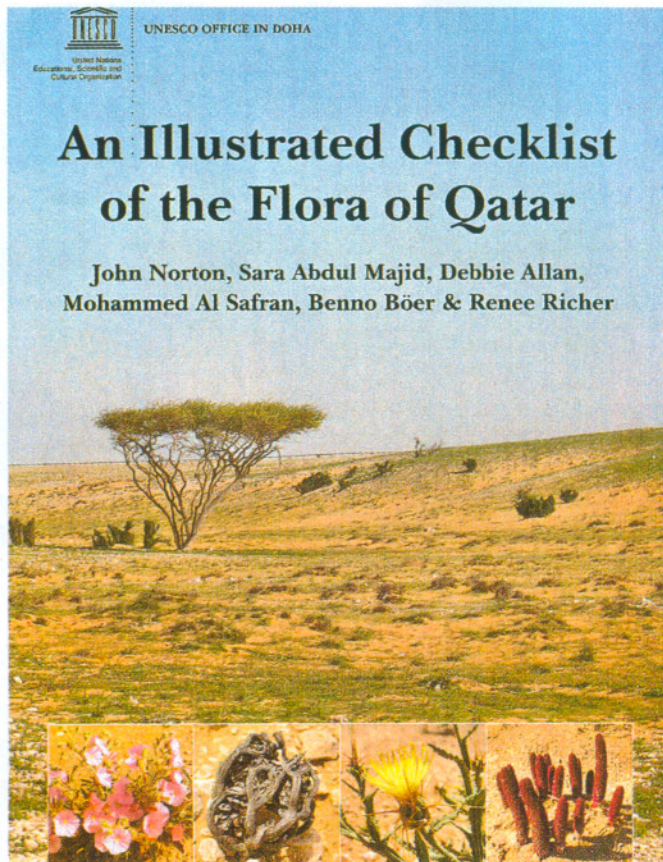
The Unesco office in Doha has brought out 'An Illustrated Checklist of the Flora of Qatar,' featuring a comprehensive listing of species that occur in the country as well as providing important eco-geographical information about them.

"The publication has been prepared in the overall framework of a major project linking biodiversity conservation with cultural heritage, namely the Qur'anic Botanic Garden (QBG) in Qatar," author and contributor Dr Benno Boer told *Gulf Times*.

The other authors and contributors are professional ecologist John Norton, and ecologists/botanists Sara Abdulmajid, Debbie Allan, Mohamed Alsafran al-Marri and Renee Richer.

The guidelines for the QBG have been developed under the guidance of Qatar Foundation, and with the international and inter-disciplinary support and advice from a team of experts.

They are Abdulaziz al-Midfa (UAE), Prof Dr Abdulrahman al-Muftah (Qatar), Prof Dr Kamal Batanouny (Qatar Foundation), Dr Gary Brown (Kuwait), Dr Uwe Herpin (Brazil), Prof Dr Fareed Krupp (Germany), Dr Guido Licciardi (Unesco), Narjes Yedder



(Tunisia) and Dr Boer who is also Unesco Arab region's ecological sciences adviser.

The team developed the overarching vision to "provide the

people of Qatar and the Gulf region with a centre of excellence for research and education, promoting the conservation of natural and cultural heritage, empha-

sising the teachings of the Holy Qur'an and the Hadith." The QBG will also function as a prime recreational destination.

"It was Norton who suggested to Unesco Doha to develop a comprehensive plant species checklist, and this found positive feedback from Unesco, Qatar Foundation, and Maersk Oil Qatar," Dr Boer recalled.

This volume was necessary in order to allow for the collection and cultivation of the plants that occur naturally in Qatar.

"We suggested to Norton to invite additional specialists, which he did, including Qatari nationals Mohammed Al Safran al-Marri and Sara Abdul Majid," Dr Boer said while asserting that this was real capacity building on the expert level.

It was in October 2007 that Unesco and Qatar Foundation embarked on this joint initiative, which was supported by Maersk Oil Qatar, and assisted by Ralf Oliver (Sharjah), and Botanic Gardens Conservation International (London). The international advisory committee met, guidelines were developed based on expert recommendations, the master plan was developed, reviewed, revised and produced, and an external evaluation report was compiled.

"These were all essential steps towards the establishment of the Qur'anic Botanic Garden," Dr Boer said.