“Biodiversity: The Challenges Facing Kuwait and Arabia”

The Center for Gulf Studies at the American University of Kuwait (AUK) hosted a talk by Eng. Abdulrahman Al-Sirhan about Biodiversity in Kuwait and Arabia. The event took place at the AUK Auditorium and attracted many AUK students, staff and faculty.

Al-Sirhan focused on the importance of preserving the earth’s biodiversity and biological wealth to human life and economic well-being. According to Al-Sirhan, many human activities are negatively affecting biodiversity and disturbing the ecosystem. In Kuwait, this phenomenon can be observed in overgrazing, housing expansion, and coastal development. These human practices have direct and indirect effects on the degradation and destruction of Kuwait’s ecosystem. Al-Sirhan listed some examples of those possible ecological hazards including, changes in numbers and distribution of species, alteration of natural chemical cycles and energy flows, as well as pollution of air, water and soil.

Al-Sirhan also shed light on the regulatory perspective associated with Kuwait’s ecological issues. He warned that inadequate implementation of policies that promote preservation of Kuwait’s ecosystem will lead to severe damage, and eventually, the extinction of many species including those that are endemic to Kuwait’s habitat. Furthermore, policies aimed at "making the desert green" could have disastrous effects.

Concluding his lecture, Al-Sirhan put forth some recommendations to support Kuwait’s biodiversity. He stressed that instead of efforts to turn the desert green, policymakers should focus on preserving Kuwait’s indigenous species, preventing overgrazing, and educating the public on the value of Kuwait’s biodiversity.

Al-Sirhan holds a B.Sc. in Electrical Engineering from Manchester Polytechnic University, UK. His contributions to improving understanding of Kuwait’s biodiversity include the publication of three scientific papers on Kuwait’s reptiles, and the discovery of various species of plants, birds and reptiles within Kuwait. Al-Sirhan is also a co-opted council member of the Ornithological Society of the Middle East, and Secretary of the Kuwait Ornithological Rarities Committee. His website, www.alsirhan.com, includes a comprehensive list of all bird species that inhabit Kuwait.

The Center for Gulf Studies (CGS) at the American University of Kuwait is a research center that aims to promote greater cultural understanding of and increased intellectual interest in the Gulf by facilitating free and open academic discourse on a range of issues that both shape and challenge this critical region of the world. The goal of CGS is to enable scholars as well as political and civil society actors both within and outside the region to contribute and add value to the burgeoning field of Gulf Studies, while at the same time informing and engaging the general public. To this end, the CGS encourages, supports, and cultivates interesting and original research on the Gulf, while regularly organizing a variety of public academic events such as lectures, roundtable discussions, and conferences.
Al Akhdar Environmental Club, led by Rasha Abdelhamid, is a student organization that aims to implement schemes that enrich appreciation for the environment, demonstrating the link between environmental and social relations and enhancing environmental sustainability within Kuwait and the Arab Vicinity. Under the supervision of its Academic Advisors, Dr. Ali Al Jamal and Dr. Aly Mansour, Al Akhdar Environmental Club aspires to precede its reputation as a non-profit environmental organization and to become a leading figure in accordance to ecosystem conservation and ecology.