

DHABI THE LIZARD IN SEARCH OF A HOME



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Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research
Children's Publication Series on the Environment

Published by Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research
P.O.Box. 24885, Safat 13109, Kuwait.

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Dhabi the Lizard in Search of a Home by Samira A.S. Omar
- Kuwait: KISR 2004

National Library of Kuwait Cataloguing in Publication
ISBN 99906-41-33-1
Depository Number: 2004/00017

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***Dhabi the Lizard in
Search of a Home***
Samira A. S. Omar



Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research
Kuwait 2004

This book is dedicated to all those
who care about the environment
and protect it.

Prologue

The desert environment of the State of Kuwait has been degraded due to many factors. They are related to human activities in the desert, such as overgrazing by animals, uprooting of plants, off road use by vehicles, the hunting of wildlife, recreation activities, and mining and quarrying. The intensive use of the terrestrial environment caused loss of important plant communities that grow naturally under harsh desert climatic conditions. When the natural plant cover is removed, the soil becomes vulnerable to wind and water erosions. This process of land degradation has caused losses, both to habitats and important wildlife species that use them as their niches.

"Dhabi" is a nick name for the large lizard (*Uromastyx microlepis*), which is a reptile locally known as Dhabb. The animal is frequently seen in the desert of Kuwait and the Arabian Peninsula. When adult, it is almost entirely vegetarian, feeding on desert plants. It is valued as a food and hunted in the wild.

The Sabah Al-Ahmad Nature Reserve was established to protect desert habitats and wildlife species like Dhabi. The Reserve was re-named after His Highness, the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, who officially opened the Reserve in 2004. The Reserve area is about 330 km², located in the north of Kuwait Bay along Al-Subbiyah road.

The aim of this book is to enhance children's awareness on conservation of wildlife species in their natural habitats and to protect the environment. All photographs presented in this book were taken by the author from the desert of Kuwait.

While he was in his burrow, Dhabi expected that the spring season this year would be rich in plants. This was because a lot of rain had fallen and he was sure that he was going to find enough food.



He was excited to go out to play with his lizard friends among the sand dunes and lime stones.



Dhabi was also eager to see the wild plants that grow during springtime like Arfaj, Khozama, Lusseig, Nuwair and Hummaidh.

1
Hummaidh



2
Lusseig



But what did Dhabbi see when he went out of his burrow? He did not see any plants around him. The earth was dry and arid without any plants, the soil was bare and hard, and there was only one single tree.

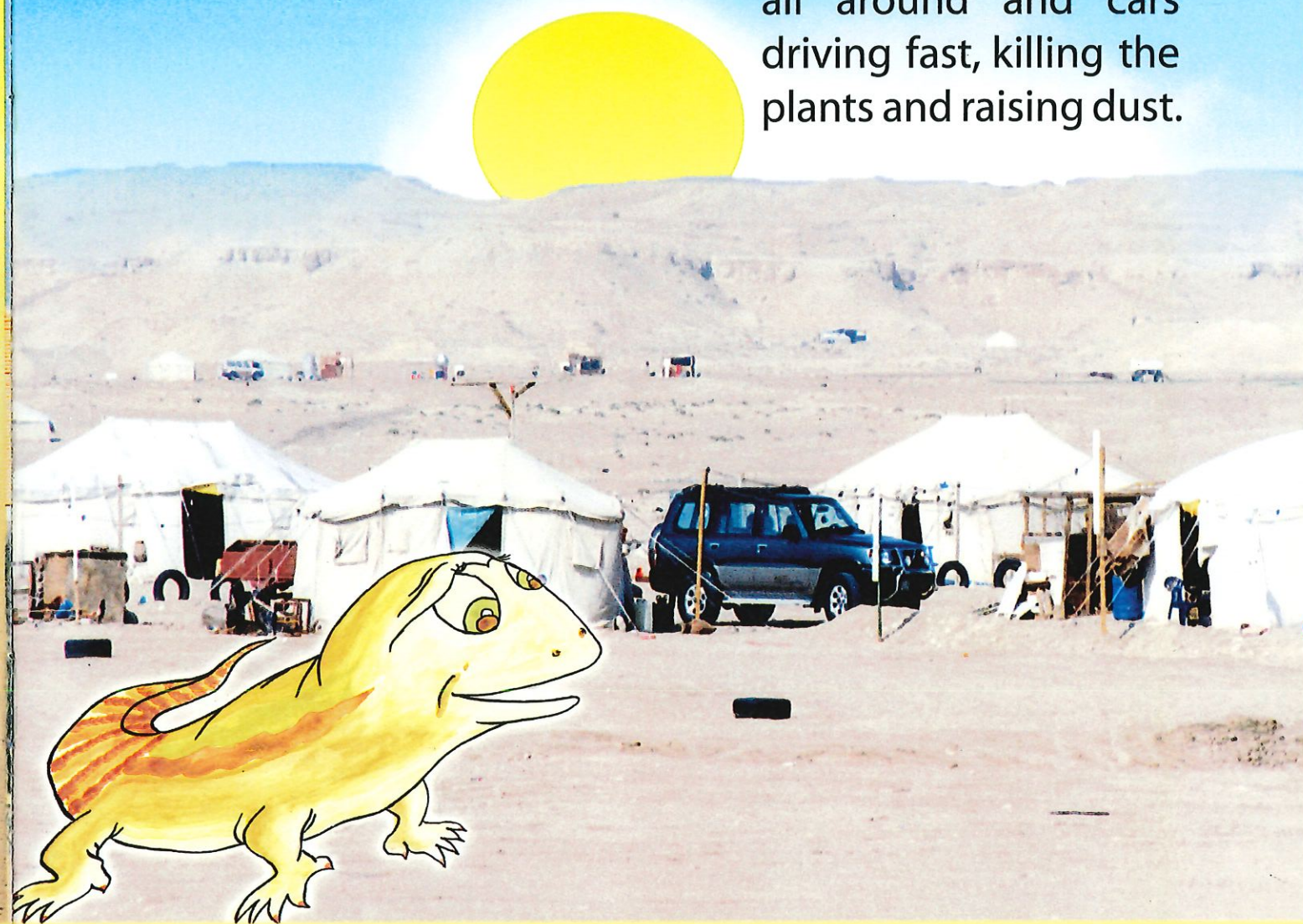


He wondered out loud "What happened to the land and why aren't there any plants?"

Dhabi looked around and saw a large number of sheep grazing everywhere. There was nothing left for him.



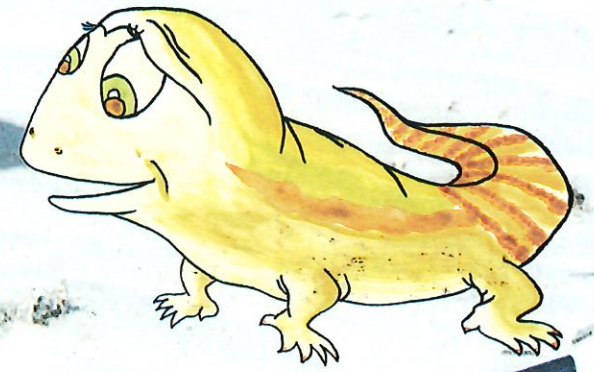
He saw tents pitched all around and cars driving fast, killing the plants and raising dust.



The plants were pulled up from their roots, causing soil erosion and sand movement.



Dhabi became terrified when he saw his bird friends had been killed by hunters.



He became so scared of the sound of machines and heavy vehicles, which remove the sand and destroy animal burrows.



"I am going to die.
There is no escape!"
He was very worried.



Dhabi became very sad for the deterioration of the natural and beautiful Kuwaiti desert environment.

Suddenly, Dhabi saw a group of camels coming towards him.



And he wondered out loud:
"What am I going to do
now?"



The biggest camel approached him. His name was Baeer, and he was known for his intelligence, wisdom and patience.

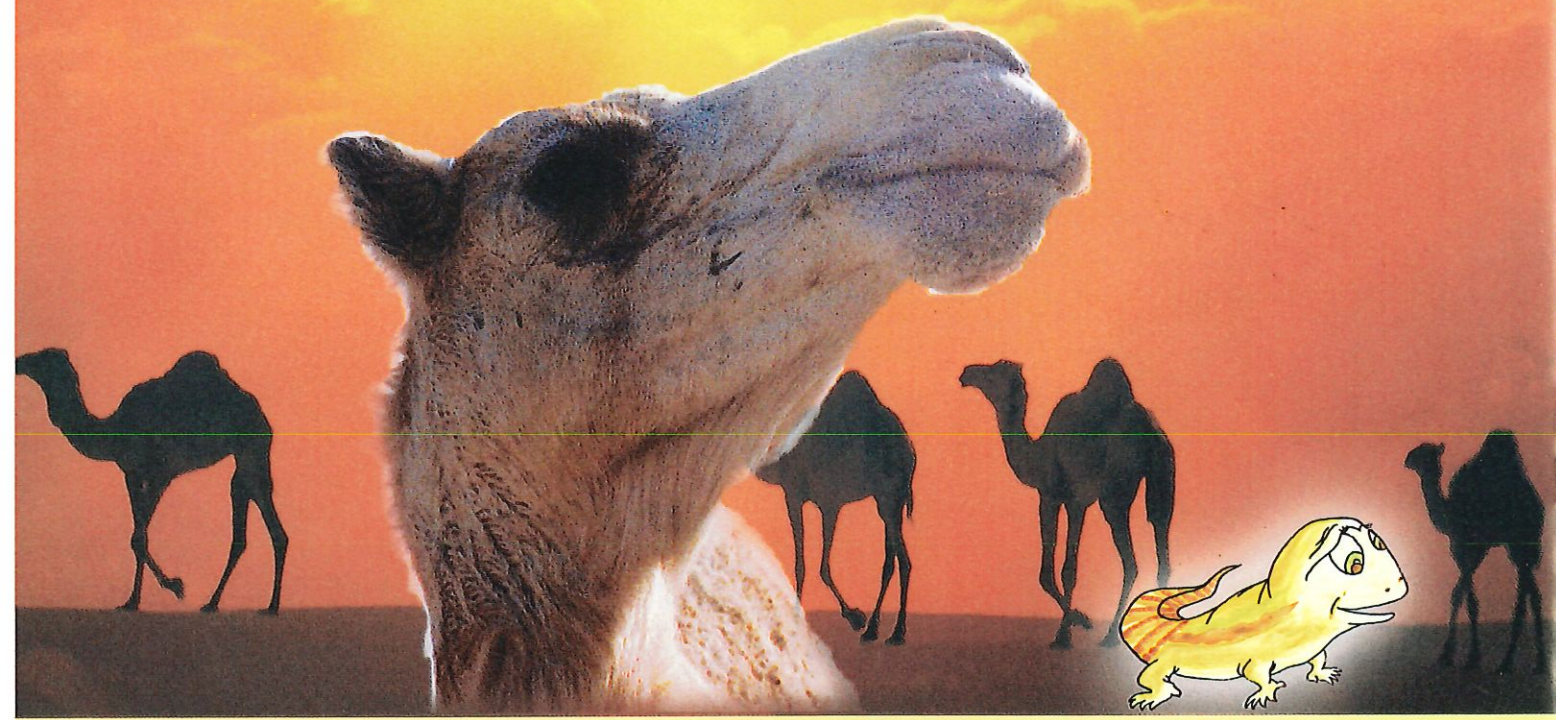
"Why are you crying Dhabhi?" Baeer asked.



Dhabhi sadly answered: "I came out of my burrow hoping to find a beautiful spring season and green plants covering the ground, but I found the ground was totally barren and degraded. I don't know what to do now. There is no shelter and food for me. Everything has been destroyed by human actions and misuse of the desert."



"I know a good place that protects you and your species. It is called "Sabah Al Ahmad Natural Reserve," said Baeer. "Its area is HUGE! It has different environments suitable for many different animals."



"But how do you live in such an environment?"

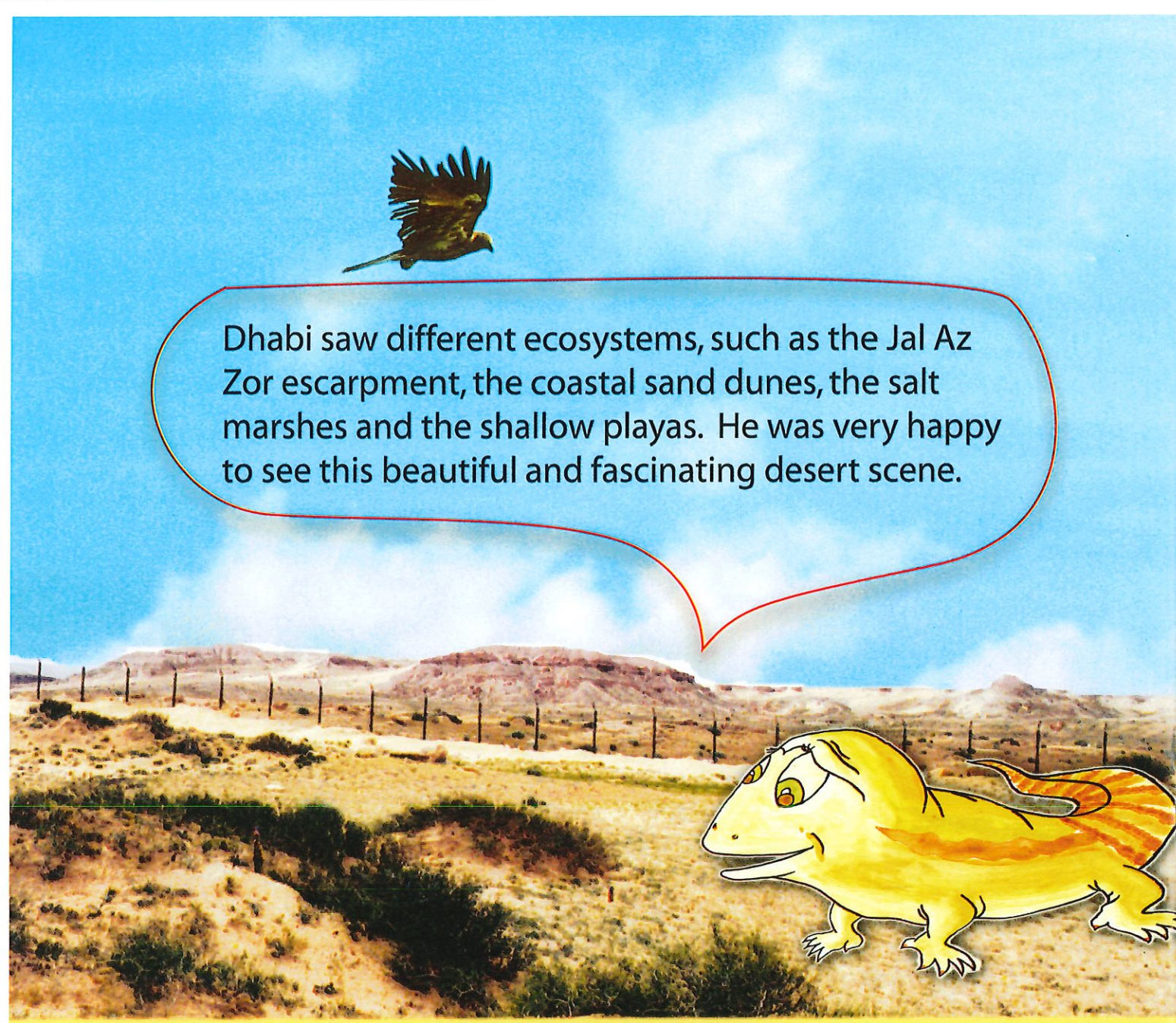


"Do not worry about us. We can get food and shelter. Humans can provide us with everything. I advise you to go to the Reserve. Go Dhab, go!" Baeer said.




Dhabi thanked Baeer for his advice and went to the "Sabah Al Ahmad Natural Reserve" and saw the main gates. The guards welcomed Dhabi and opened the gates for him.





Dhabi saw different ecosystems, such as the Jal Az Zor escarpment, the coastal sand dunes, the salt marshes and the shallow playas. He was very happy to see this beautiful and fascinating desert scene.



Dhabi found all kinds of plants, birds, insects and wild animals. The Reserve aims to protect them and to re-introduce native endangered species. The Reserve also provides an opportunity for recreation, education and research.





Dhabi thought about his friend Baeer and he wished that all Kuwaiti landscapes could be green like the Nature Reserve.

"Some protection and care would help the vegetation to recover." Dhabi thought.



Dhabi found a new home where he could live in peace, and he wished that the desert would recover and that one day he could return to his old home, which he had deserted.

And ever after, Dhabi was a happy lizard!



Acknowledgement

The author would like to express her gratitude and appreciation to Dr. Abdulhadi Al Otaibi, Director General for Kuwait Institute of Scientific Research and to Dr. Nader Al-Awadhi, Deputy Director General for Research. Special thanks are due to the working team who helped in preparing the illustrations of "Dhabi", editing, translating and production of the book.

About the Author

Samira A.S. Omar is a Kuwaiti Senior Research Scientist who has been working for Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) since 1973. Dr. Samira graduated from the University of California, Berkeley in 1990 with a PhD in Wildland Resource Science. Through her career efforts she has been able to make a significant contribution to the conservation, management and rehabilitation of the desert environment of Kuwait. She has many hobbies amongst which include art and photography.

