



## Vervet Monkeys and Nile Crocodile Share Home at Al Ain Zoo

*- Dynamic new mixed species exhibit now on display for visitors -*

**Al Ain, United Arab Emirates, 15 February, 2012:** Al Ain Zoo's newest exhibit in 2012 showcases an exciting mix of species that is as close to nature as it gets, where Vervet monkeys and a Nile crocodile now share a home so visitors can see previously unseen natural behaviour. The fascinating enclosure of Vervet monkeys, terrapins and a Nile crocodile is undoubtedly a unique attraction for visitors, and in fact houses species which occur in the same habitat in the wild – a tactic that Al Ain Zoo strives to implement as enrichment for their animals.

Dr. Arshad Toosy, Acting Chief Life Sciences & Conservation of Al Ain Zoo commented:

"It is not acceptable to house animals in sterile, isolated environments. Keeping animals in a mixed species enclosure provides them with behavioral enrichment and also enhances the visitor's experience. The exhibit has been structured in such a way that the Vervet monkeys can easily distance themselves from the crocodile as needed. We are closely monitoring the behavior of the monkeys, terrapins and crocodile and are confident the crocodile poses no threat to the other animals in the enclosure."

Having acknowledged the docile behaviour of one of its Nile crocodiles, Al Ain Zoo have moved the animal from the indoor pool it shared with terrapins in the Reptile House to an outdoor pool within the Vervet monkey exhibit. Recently, this Nile crocodile was observed basking in the sun while laying at the edge of the pool which cools in winter months. As for the monkeys, they have adapted themselves well to the presence of the crocodile and are often seen by the zookeepers teasing the crocodile for enjoyment.

Vervet monkeys use different sounds to warn of different types of predators. It has distinct calls to warn of the sighting of a leopard, a snake or an eagle. They are also known to be excellent swimmers, in addition to their speedy skills of running and climbing trees. The Vervet monkey is an arboreal monkey which means that it spends most of its time in the safety of the trees.

Nile crocodiles have brains and hearts that are more advanced than those of any other living reptiles. In contrast lizards, they have a "high walk." They swim with their tails, but their hind feet are webbed and can be used to submerge quickly. They are known for producing at least six different vocal signals.

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For more information on Al Ain Zoo please visit [www.alainzoo.ae](http://www.alainzoo.ae)

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**About Al Ain Zoo:**

Founded in 1968 by the late Sheikh Zayed, the Father of our Nation, *Al Ain Zoo* is a family destination, providing entertainment and learning experiences in a natural outdoor environment. Today, visitors of all ages discover the zoo's wildlife and enjoy a great day-out packed with fun and adventure, while learning about conservation and exploring a collection of over 4,300 animals.

*Al Ain Zoo* is home to an internationally important conservation programme focussing on the wildlife of the world's arid regions, the zoo is involved in conservation research, captive breeding and propagation and the reintroduction of threatened species to their wild habitats. Our collection of desert antelopes is recognized as among the best in the world. *Al Ain Zoo* is a proud member of the World Association of Zoos and Aquaria (WAZA). Strategic partnerships have been set up with leading zoos, conservation agencies and associations from across the world, including the World Conservation Union and Species Survival Commission, Environment Agency - Abu Dhabi, San Diego Zoo, Edinburgh Zoo, the Northern Rangelands Trust of Kenya and the Sahara Conservation Fund.

As part of the UAE's commitment to wildlife conservation both within the UAE and internationally, *Al Ain Zoo* is transforming the area around the existing zoo into a new institution dedicated to exhibiting, interpreting and conserving desert wildlife. This sustainable leisure and learning destination, called *Al Ain Wildlife Park & Resort*, will provide an extraordinary opportunity for visitors to explore and learn about the desert world and experience a world-class tourist destination. Embedded within the *UAE World Desert*, the *Sheikh Zayed Desert Learning Centre* will feature educational exhibits that celebrate the wildlife and traditions of the desert, celebrate the conservation heritage of the late Sheikh Zayed and help chart a sustainable future for desert living.