



Society for Conservation Biology

RELIGION AND CONSERVATION BIOLOGY

Working Group

<http://www.conbio.org/workinggroups/Religion/>

Islam and Conservation Fact Sheet

Religion and background

Islam originated with the teachings of the prophet Muhammad (570-632 B.C.E.). Muslims believe that he was the one chosen the final prophet and to receive the Qur'an from the one true God, Allah. The word "Islam" represents "submission and peace." A Muslim would then be known as "one who submits to God" and in so doing, finds peace. Muslims abide by the five pillars of Islam, which include the declaration of faith (Shahadah), prayer (Salah), fasting (Sawn), welfare tax (Zakat) and pilgrimage (Hajj). The worldwide population of Muslims is around 1,300 million, and there are more than 50 independent Muslim countries.

Religion in relation to environment

According to the Qur'an, Islam's primary authority in every aspect of life and source of knowledge about Allah, creation was a manifestation of Allah's supreme power, wisdom, generosity and sovereignty. Allah holds dominion over nature (Sura 2:107; 5:120), which praises Him by its very being (Sura 59:24; 64:1). The Unity of Allah or Tawhid, is a core value in Islam, and mankind, as trustees of creation, are responsible for upholding the unity of His creation, preserving ecological stability of the natural environment and all flora and fauna that lives within. At the end of one's life, a Muslim will have to be accountable before Allah of how he/she has preserved the balance and harmony in the whole of creation.

"The world is green and beautiful, and Allah has appointed you his guardian over it."—Muhammed

"O children of Adam! ... eat and drink: but waste not by excess for Allah loveth not the wasters." - Qur'an 007.031.

"For the Muslim, humankind's role on earth is that of a Khalifah - vicegerent or trustee of Allah. We are Allah's stewards and agents on Earth. We are not masters of this Earth; it does not belong to us to do what we wish. It belongs to Allah and He has entrusted us with its safekeeping." -Dr. Abdullah Omar Naseef, secretary general of the Muslim World League, Muslim declaration on Nature, 1986

"So unity, trusteeship and accountability, that is tawhid, khalifah and akhirah, the three central concepts of Islam, are also the pillars of the environmental ethics of Islam. They constitute the basic values taught by the Qur'an. It is these values which led Muhammad, (peace be upon him), the Prophet of Islam, to say: 'Whosoever plants a tree and diligently looks after it until it matures and bears fruit is rewarded', ... Environmental consciousness is born when such values are adopted and become an intrinsic part of our mental and physical make-up."-Dr. Abdullah Omar Naseef, secretary general of the Muslim World League, Muslim declaration on Nature, 1986

Examples of religious leaders in conservation

- Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences;
<<http://www.ifees.org.uk/>>
- The London Islamic Network for the Environment;
<<http://www.lineonweb.org.uk/>>

Examples of conservation projects aided by religion

- WWF-Malaysia successfully engaged Malaysia's Muslim preachers in Terengganu to raise awareness on turtle conservation issues. They are currently extending the programme to support efforts to tackle tiger poaching.
http://wwf.panda.org/wwf_news/news/?uN



- Islamic Society for North America;
<<http://www.isna.net/>>
- ewsID=162082
- Tanzanian fishermen replaced dynamite fishing with Islamic environmental principles, preserving the coral ecosystem in Misali Island.
<http://www.arcworld.org/projects.asp?projectID=170>
- Islamic rulings and teachings about sustainable management of natural resources used in the creation of a national biosphere reserve in Saudi Arabia.
<http://www.arcworld.org/projects.asp?projectID=173>

For more information, see Alliance of Religions and Conservation (www.arcworld.org), the Forum on Religion and Ecology (<http://fore.research.yale.edu/main.html>).

