

Saudi Arabia Accelerates Marine Conservation with Two New Red Sea Protected Areas

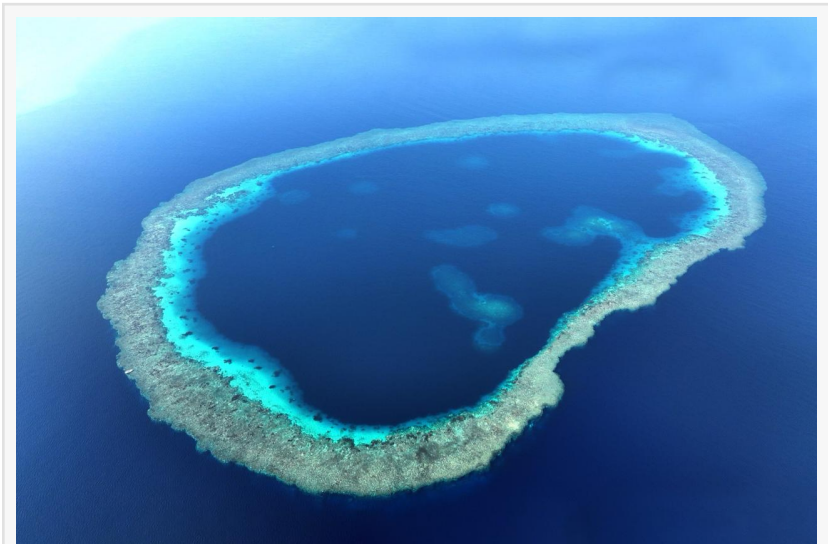
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EINPresswire.com/ -- Saudi Arabia announced the designation of two new marine protected areas, "Blue Holes" and "Ras Hatiba," marking a major step forward in the Kingdom's efforts to expand conservation of its coastal and marine environments.

The approval, endorsed by the Council of Ministers Board of Experts, follows scientific assessments confirming the biodiversity value of both areas and the importance of preserving them to support marine protection, scientific research, and sustainable tourism. With this announcement, Saudi Arabia's protected marine coverage increases from 6.5 percent to 16.3 percent, positioning the Kingdom among the fastest-advancing countries in marine conservation.

Dr. Mohammed Qurban, CEO of the Saudi National Center for Wildlife, said "This designation reflects Saudi Arabia's continued commitment to conserving unique marine habitats and natural treasures. Extensive studies led by the Saudi National Center for Wildlife demonstrated the ecological significance, scientific importance, and tourism potential of these sites."

The decision strengthens the Kingdom's objectives under the Saudi Green Initiative and its commitment to conserve 30 percent of land and marine areas by 2030. Development and



Saudi Blue Holes, Image provided the Saudi National Center for Wildlife



blue holes were discovered along the southern Saudi coasts of the Red Sea.

management plans for both sites will align with international biodiversity frameworks and national environmental goals.

The Blue Holes protected area is located along the southern Red Sea coast between Makkah and Jazan. It is notable for its rare underwater geological sinkholes and diverse marine life. Research identified high biodiversity across its formations, including coral reefs, sponges, fish, dolphins, and turtles. The site includes over 20 islands, some serving as nesting grounds for sea turtles, and is characterized by isolated ecological features that have remained undisturbed for centuries.

Ras Hatiba, located northwest of Jeddah and extending from Sharm Obhur to Al Qadimah across 5,715 square kilometers, includes coral reefs, mangrove forests, and seagrass meadows that support a wide range of marine species. The area provides vital feeding grounds for sea turtles and is a known habitat for dolphins, Bryde's whales, whale sharks, and manta rays. Ras Hatiba is also recognized for a number of islands and reefs that attract visitors for their natural beauty and rich marine life.

Saudi Arabia currently has 38 protected areas and aims to expand this network to more than 100 by 2030.

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