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Marine collection in Qatar - basis for biodiversity management

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Biological Collections, which deal directly with identifying and documenting biodiversity, have a major role in assisting biodiversity management. They form the basis for research, documenting flora and fauna and creating repositories of biological information. Without taxonomic research the biological collections would be merely a collection of curious objects, of limited value to our understanding of the natural world. The Environmental Scientific Centre of Qatar University has created a Marine Collection to house the species collected in the region. The species are being identified by taxonomists and deposited in the Marine Collection with a Collection Number and accompanied by descriptive characteristics. The Specify Software Project, a database platform for museum and herbarium research data, is being used concomitantly for registration of each species. The collection includes marine animals from coastal and offshore waters of Qatar, such as invertebrates (poriferas, cnidarians, crustaceans, gastropods, molluscs, echinoderms and others) and vertebrate specimens (urochordata, cephalochordate, Condrictyes, Osteicties and Reptiles). A total of 4830 specimens was collected and are being deposited in the Collection, as well as subsequent samples from new projects, including species for articles in preparation which are currently listed as a new occurrence in Qatar such as; *Coeloplana (Benthoplan) meteoris*, *Branchyostoma arabia*, *Paranchystus pictodontae* among several other species. Furthermore the collection houses a new systematic of *Portunus segnis*, and the biodiversity of benthic organisms from offshore oyster beds and crabs from the mangrove ecosystem. It is well recognized for any impending assessment of biodiversity indices a baseline of existing data is required and the marine collection at the ESC will be a crucial tool in any future research or environmental monitoring programs that might be undertaken in not only Qatar but the Arabian Gulf.

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