Har HaNegev Protected Area

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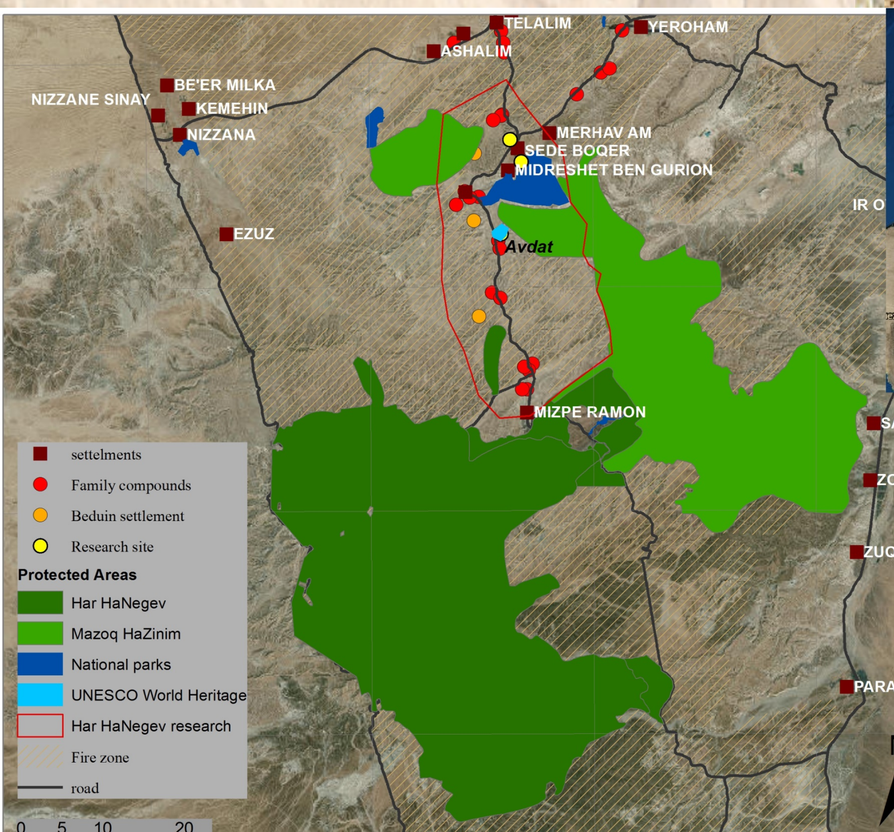
Main Ecosystem characteristics

- Arid dryland. Mean annual rainfall:80-100 mm
- Unpredictable and scarce water availability
- Mean annual temperature 18°C (-4°C – 40°C)
- Low air humidity and high evaporation rate
- Water redistribution defines productivity and ecosystem function
- Geodiversity: variability in geomorphology, rock formation, soil properties and transport
- Hydro-Geo-Eco-System (HGES) feedbacks
- Ecosystem engineers such as isopods, porcupines and shrubs, create new niches
- Grazing by ungulates

Makhtesh Ramon. Unique geological phenomena of erosion crater. Signpost of the hyper-arid desert, with less than 50mm rain annually. Encompasses unique natural phenomena and many endemic species.

Avdat National Park: UNESCO world heritage site. Ancient Nabatian settlement established in 4th century BCE. Was part of the ancient Incense Route which extended from the Arabian Peninsula to Rome.



Main habitats

Rocky slopes. Limestone, Chalk and dolomite rocks. Dominated by low shrubs. Home to the spiny mice, porcupines, hyenas and foxes.

Rocky cliffs. Little vegetation cover. Home for raptors, Griffon and Egyptian vultures, Nubian Ibex, an rock hyrax.

Valleys (Wadis). Dry riverbeds which contain water only after heavy rains. Hold most of the water and biomass of the ecosystem, with rich vegetation and scattered trees. Dorcas gazelle, Golden wolf, and caracals roam here.

Springs are scattered in the valleys. Some contain water yearlong and provide crucial drinking water for wildlife.

Loess. Clastic silt-size Aeolian sediment. Typical vegetation formation is shrubland and herbaceous cover. In spring time the area is covered by spectacular blooming fields, with rich diversity of arthropods, reptiles, birds, and mammals.

Threats to the PA are imposed by surrounding settlements, which include agricultural villages, Bedouin compounds, & family homesteads. It causes fragmentation and encroaching land uses to the PA, such as grazing and agriculture. Edge effects include invasive species, garbage and poisoning. Army training zone within the PA and intense tourism cause further damages.

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 641762