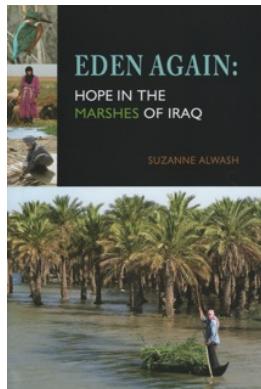


## BOOK REVIEW



### **EDEN AGAIN: HOPE IN THE MARSHES OF IRAQ**

by SUZANNE REYNOLDS ALWASH

ISBN: 978-0-98886514-2-5

Tablet House Publishing, 2013, 242 p.

“The *ahwar* (marshlands) of southern Iraq represent one of [Iraq’s] most valuable natural treasures. Dr. Alwash has portrayed the environment of the *ahwar* and its people with sensitive and accurate detail, providing an authoritative account of how the marshes were destroyed under Saddam Hussein’s regime and then restored through the spontaneous actions of the local community. In contrast to the stories of sectarian violence that fill the world’s newspapers, this is a tale of successful cooperation across all of Iraq’s religious, political, and class sectors — a tale of Shia and Sunni, Kurd and Arab, male and female, destitute and wealthy, peasant and professor — joined with the assistance of Americans, Italians, British, Canadians, and Japanese, all reaching out to help one other, in a true story of the possibility of intercultural harmony in the rich and complex tapestry of modern Iraq. Every library should have a copy of this important book.”

— Dr. Ayad Allawi, Prime Minister of Iraq (2003-05)

“In a world where paradoxically nature is being destroyed at an ever faster pace in spite of our deeper understanding of its crucial values to us, there are few success stories more inspiring than those of restoring nature to its original splendour. Loaded with symbolism, historical, cultural and biological values like few other places, the restoration of the vast Mesopotamian marshes in Iraq, illustrated so beautifully in *Eden Again*, provides the hope and the inspiration for the ultimate challenge - and splendid opportunity - to live in harmony with nature.”

— Marco Lambertini, CEO, BirdLife International

“In 1964 Wilfred Thesiger brought to life the fascinating culture and mysterious world of the Marsh Arabs or “Madan” of the Mesopotamian Marshes of Iraq. Thirty years later the culture and the marshes were nearly destroyed by the Hussein regime. In *Eden Again* by Suzanne Alwash we now have the inside story of how the marshes were drained and partially restored, and how some of the Madan survived both environmental genocide and untold political hardships to return to the marshes following their reflooding. Having dedicated the last ten years of their lives to try to and save the marshes and this ancient culture has given Alwash and her husband Azzam unique insights into the political, social, and scientific struggles that have gripped the region. More importantly their scientific and environmental field work in Iraq has given us a view of how restoration can be accomplished under often perilous political and seemingly insurmountable environmental conditions. Alwash gives the reader a rare first-hand view of the trials and tribulations of doing marsh ecosystem restoration work in a war zone filled with civic disorder, tribal conflicts, and limited water supplies due to drought and regional water conflicts. Like the phoenix, the marshes have risen from the ashes of fire and this book recounts how ‘getting the water right’ provides hope for the future.”

— Dr. Curtis J. Richardson Professor and Director Duke University Wetland Center Nicholas School of the Environment

“This highly readable story of one of humanity’s great wetland civilizations is a dramatic, captivating tale. Thoroughly researched and based on first-hand information, Suzanne Alwash provides an all-round account of southern Iraq’s marshlands—from the resilience of the age-old culture of the Marsh Arabs and their enchanting water-world with its spectacular birdlife and rich fisheries to the battle for water in the Middle East and the intrigues of international development assistance. *Eden Again* provides a stunning testament to nature’s incredible capacity to self-heal in one of the planet’s most disturbed environments. Over the past decade, the Alwashes have been on the frontline battle to bring the marshes back to life and have privileged insights on the challenges and opportunities faced. If the promised *Eden Again* is not to fade into mirage, reaching a water sharing agreement between the Tigris-Euphrates riparian countries and preparing for the dire impacts of climate change are key to securing a sustainable future for the marshlands, its people, and exceptional wildlife.

— Hassan Partow, Program Manager, United Nations Environmental Program

“Suzanne Alwash has provided a vivid and elegantly written account of the struggle for survival, against all odds, of the ancient Mesopotamian marshes—domain of an extraordinary ecosystem, history, and culture that have survived for millennia, world-famous as the “cradle of civilization” and legendary as the alleged site of the Biblical Garden of Eden. The book weaves together environmental knowledge and scientific data with the colorful personal tales of individuals, chief among them the author and Azzam Alwash, who were captivated by the wetlands and labored tirelessly before and after 2003, sometimes in great danger, to overcome the political and environmental challenges to the restoration of the endangered marshlands of Iraq.”

— Rend al-Rahim, Iraq Ambassador to the United States of America, 2003-04