



STOP NATURE BANKRUPTCY

SOCIETY FOR THE PROTECTION
OF NATURE IN LEBANON

S P N L

ANNUAL
REPORT

2 0 2 0

HIMA FOR PEACE

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HIMA FOR PEACE



Anahita's parents © Volen Arkumarev

Cover photo:

Anahita's story is one of hope, and foremost of human partnership between 14 countries protecting the Egyptian Vulture. The story of this injured Egyptian Vulture -rescued and treated in our aviary- began with her father Boris, who resides in the Balkan region and is famous for his very fast pace migration. Boris was tagged with a GPS transmitter in 2015 by BSPB. Anahita's mother is not tagged but she is recognizable by a specific marking on her face. In 2020, the couple laid one egg, and out of it, Anahita hatched in early June. If Anahita's migration journey is over, her next journey will be to join the captive breeding program in Bulgaria, giving life to a new generation of Egyptian Vultures.



The Extinct reintroduced Nubian ibex © Shouf Biosphere Reserve



المجلس العالمي للطير—ور يضم ممثلين عن ١٢٠ جمعية غير
حكومية في العالم. جمعية حماية الطبيعة في لبنان هي
الشريك الوطني

BirdLife International is the global partnership of
Non-Governmental Organisations working for nature
in over 120 countries. SPNL is BirdLife in Lebanon
www.birdlife.org | www.spnl.org



The Jordanian wild stock of reintroduced Nubian Ibex in Lebanon - year 2000 © Assad Serhal

FOR A SUSTAINABLE TOMORROW

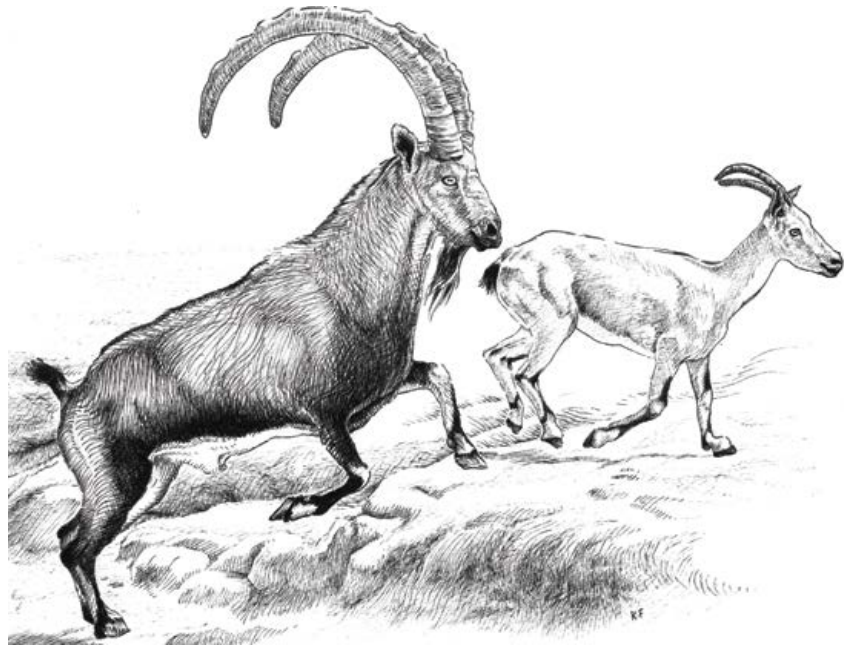
Reviving the Hima Concept to stop nature bankruptcy, promote sustainable livelihood, human wellbeing and human rights.

**THE HIMA
REPRESENTS
A HOLISTIC
APPROACH TO
ENVIRONMENTAL
PROTECTION
AND SOCIAL
EQUITY**

Al Hima, literally meaning “a protected place and sanctuary” in Arabic, is a traditional system of resource tenure that originated in the Arabian Peninsula 1500 years ago and spread all over the West Asia and North Africa (WANA) region. In response to the harsh environmental conditions and resource scarcity characterizing that region, tribes announced resource-rich areas as Hima, customarily held and managed. In general terms, they have regulated the use of available resources, mostly natural pasture and rangelands, to secure their livelihoods. Remarkably, still standing traditional Hima comprise the best-managed rangelands in the Arabian Peninsula. As such, Hima is believed to be one of the oldest long-standing models of protected areas.

Al Hima, an instrument for conservation

With the emergence of Islam, religious ethics and values reshaped the governance and management structure of the Hima. The system was further enhanced with a social justice dimension, acknowledging that natural resources are for the common good and shall serve the public welfare, especially the poor and the vulnerable. Further, Hima got anchored as an instrument of conservation, as all Earth's creatures are equivalent communities to Humans' and shall be caused no harm. As such, Hima was governed by multiple principles including i) being established in the “Way of God”, that is for the public welfare; ii) avoiding causing people undue hardship, depriving them of essential resources to their subsistence; iii) and, realizing greater benefits to society than detriments. Practically, Hima were managed through consensus decision-making, upon which different groups held specific responsibilities. Allocating direct benefits from resource conservation, communities were incentivized to invest in maintaining and protecting natural resources from abuse. Those principles have granted Hima wide social acceptance and economic viability, contributing much to its application across the WANA region and sustainability throughout the past 15 centuries.



The Nubian Ibex from the 'Field Guide to the Mammals of the Middle East', published by SPNL-2016

SPNL, sets successful examples of Hima Revival in Lebanon

The Society for Protection of Nature in Lebanon (SPNL) has been working for nearly 40 years to protect the biodiversity of Lebanon, resulting in 15 declared IBAs and KBAs across the Lebanese territory. Since 2004, and upon the discovery of a documented proof of Hima pre-existence in Lebanon, SPNL has evolved its mission to revitalize the Hima approach, through merging the traditional knowledge and practices with modern scientific research. Along with a network of partners and donors, SPNL adopted the Hima Revival approach to promote the conservation of IBAs, through the sustainable use of natural resources, while empowering local and traditional knowledge, culture and heritage. A total of 25 Hima, representing 6% of Lebanese territory, have been established in collaboration with respective municipalities. Those include Hima for sustainable hunting, sustainable fishing, sustainable grazing, and sustainable use of water resources. Throughout 16 years of partnership, empowerment and advocacy, SPNL has trained hundreds of women and youth, guides and guards



Assad Serhal
SPNL Director
General
Birdlife International
Global Councillor

as well as school children and scouts, and has created hundreds of job opportunities for local communities across the Hima. In parallel to setting successful examples of Hima Revival in Lebanon, SPNL has been promoting the approach across the region and beyond, receiving national and global recognition. Two milestone achievements are the adoption of the Hima internationally as a form of community-based conservation in IUCN Resolution 122 (2012) and nationally as a fourth category to the protected Areas of Lebanon (Law 130/2019).

Hima and Sustainable Development Goals

The Hima certainly contributes to achieving a more sustainable, equitable and liveable world. It represents a holistic approach which embraces the three pillars of sustainable development, economic viability, environmental protection, and social equity. As such, while conserving and promoting the sustainable use of terrestrial and marine ecosystems, Hima contributes to alleviating poverty from marginalized rural communities, promoting sustainable agriculture, reducing inequalities among targeted groups, empowering women economically and socially, providing job opportunities especially for marginalized groups, ensuring sustainable production and consumption patterns across Hima sites and thus allowing communities to become more sustainable and resilient in the face of global changes.

Harmony between Humans and Nature

More than ever, people around the world are coming to realize the interconnectedness of human survival, wellbeing, and nature conservation. As a community-based approach to conservation, Hima has long-established this harmony between Man and Nature, which became rooted as a way of life. Within the Hima, communities have embraced the notion of sustainability, long before its acknowledgment, to safeguard their resources and secure their livelihoods, for generations to come, building resilience to harsh climatic conditions.

AL HIMA, ONE OF THE OLDEST LONG- STANDING MODELS OF PROTECTED AREAS





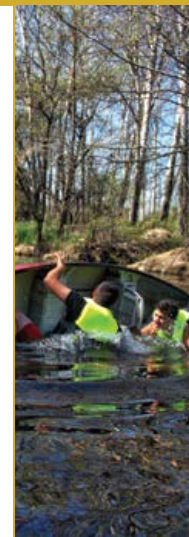
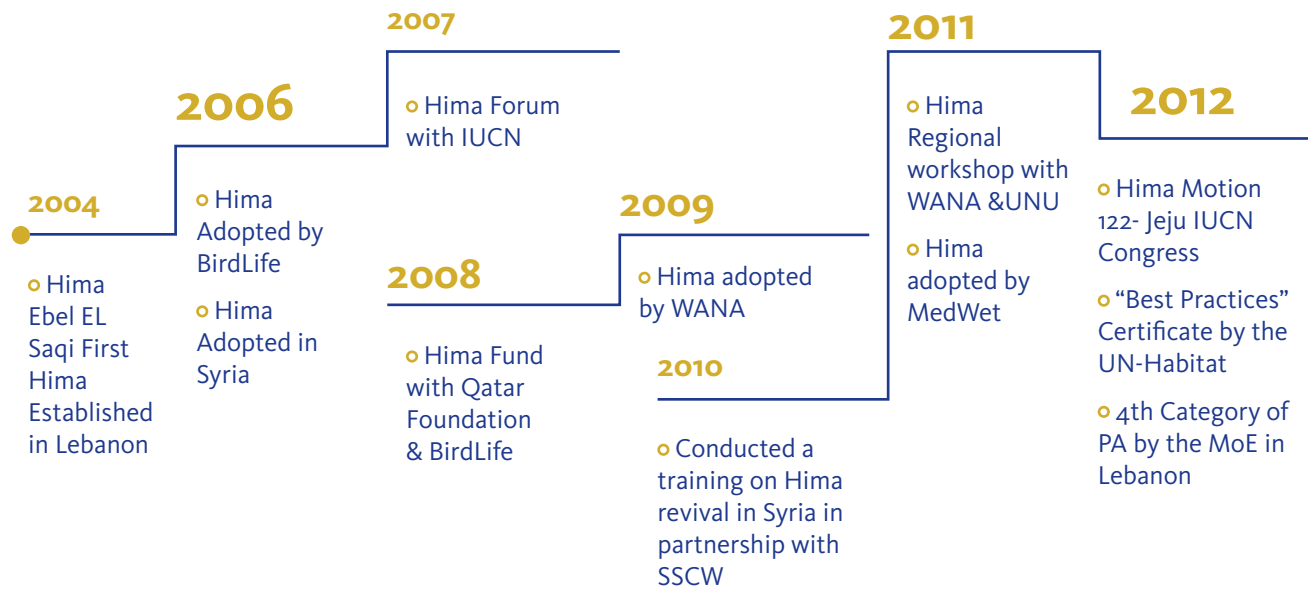
The offsprings Nubian ibex © Shouf Biosphere Reserve



Palestine sunbird © Fouad Itani

Nowadays, as the WANA region suffers at the front lines of Climate Change, adopting the Hima Revival concept would be one of the effective strategies to cope with and adapt to the actual and expected drastic consequences of a changing climate.

By all means, Hima is founded on the right of local communities to a healthy environment. Success in achieving conservation management objectives has been all the way lined up with respecting and fulfilling people's right to life and livelihood.



2013

- BirdLife Hima Award
- Hima a part of Birdlife strategy
- SPNL initiated Homat al Hima, SNOW & Souk al Hima

2014

- Hima Adopted by UN-Women for Gender Equality

2015

- Hima adopted in Cyprus & Greece

2016

- Hima Guideline Manual & HH Guideline Manual Published

2017

- 19 Himas established in Lebanon
- Initiated Mount Lebanon Hima Centre

2018

- 22 Himas established in Lebanon
- Hima West Baalbak First Regional Hima Established in Lebanon
- AEON MIDORI Prize for Hima Revival
- Hima For Peace, Tokyo, Japan

2019

- Lebanon passed a new protected areas Law 130 , Year 2019
- 25 Himas established
- Hima to Stop Nature Bankruptcy, Yancheng, China

2020

- SPNL established the HH Center in West Beqaa, Hima Center in Mount Lebanon and Hima Farm in Hammana





Hima Fektra © Asaad Saleh



Cream-coloured courser © Fouad Itani

الطيور (IBAs) والتنوع البيولوجي (KBAs) في جميع أنحاء الأراضي اللبنانية. منذ العام 2004، وبعد اكتشاف دليل موثق على وجود حمى في لبنان، طورت الجمعية مهمتها لتنشيط نهج الحمى، من خلال دمج المعرفة والممارسات التقليدية مع البحث العلمي الحديث. جنباً إلى جنب مع شبكة من الشركاء والمناخين، اعتمدت جمعية حماية الطبيعة في لبنان نهج إحياء الحمى للحفاظ على (KBAs/IBAs)، من خلال الاستخدام المستدام للموارد الطبيعية، مع تمكين المعرفة والثقافة والتراث المحلي والتقليدي. بالتعاون مع البلديات المعنية، تم إنشاء 25 حمى في مختلف المناطق اللبنانية، وتشمل هذه الحمى الصيد المستدام وصيد السمك المستدام والرعي المستدام والاستخدام المستدام لموارد المياه. على مدى 16 عاماً من الشراكة والتمكين والدعوة، دربت SPNL مئات النساء والشباب، والمرشدين والحراس، بالإضافة إلى أطفال المدارس والكشافة، وخلقت المئات من فرص العمل للمجتمعات المحلية عبر نظام الحمى. بالتوازي مع وضع أمثلة ناجحة لإحياء نظام الحمى في لبنان، عملت جمعية حماية الطبيعة في لبنان على تعزيز نهج الحمى عبر المنطقة وخارجها، وحصلت على اعتراف وطني وعالمي. اثنين

الإنسان ويجب الايسبب لها أي ضرر. على هذا النحو، كانت الحمى محكومة بمبادئ عديدة بما في ذلك:

- 1) تأسيسها في "طريق الله"، أي من أجل المصلحة العامة.
- 2) تجنب التسبب بأي معاناة لا حاجة لها، أو حرمان الناس من الموارد الأساسية لكسب لقمة عيشهم؛
- 3) وتحقيق منافع للمجتمع تُمد من إلحاق الإضرار.

من الناحية العملية، تمت إدارة الحمى من خلال صنع القرار بالإجماع، حيث تحملت مجموعات مختلفة مسؤوليات محددة. بتخصيص الفوائد المباشرة من الحفاظ على الموارد، تم تحفيز المجتمعات على الاستثمار في الحفاظ على الموارد الطبيعية وحمايتها من سوء الإستعمال. منحت هذه المبادئ الحمى قبولاً اجتماعياً واسعاً وقابلية للحياة الاقتصادية، مما ساهم كثيراً في تطبيقها عبر منطقة غرب آسيا وشمال أفريقيا والاستدامة طوال القرون الخمسة عشر الماضية.

تعمل جمعية حماية الطبيعة في لبنان (SPNL) منذ 40 عاماً على حماية التنوع البيولوجي في لبنان، مما أثمر عن إعلان 15 من المناطق المحمية الهامة من أجل



Al-Hima, initiated over 1500 years in Arabia, for the sustainable use of range lands and grazing, as the Transhumance created in Spain - West Bekaa © Asaad Saleh

كلمة "حمى" هي كلمة عربية تعني حرفياً "مكاناً محمياً"، وهو نظام تقليدي للحفاظ على الموارد، نشأ في شبه الجزيرة العربية منذ حوالي 1500 عام وانتشر في جميع أنحاء منطقة غرب آسيا وشمال إفريقيا.

نظراً للظروف البيئية القاسية وندرة الموارد التي تميز تلك المنطقة، قررت القبائل أن تعتبر بعض الأماكن الغنية بالموارد كحمى، والتي تتم إدارتها بشكل تقليدي. بشكل عام، قاموا بتنظيم استخدام الموارد المتاحة، ومعظمها من المراعي الطبيعية، لتأمين سبل عيشهم. ومن اللافت للنظر أن مناطق الحمى التقليدية التي لا تزال قائمة تضم المراعي الأفضل لإدارة في شبه الجزيرة العربية. على هذا النحو، يعتقد أن نظام الحمى هو أحد أقدم النماذج للمناطق المحمية.

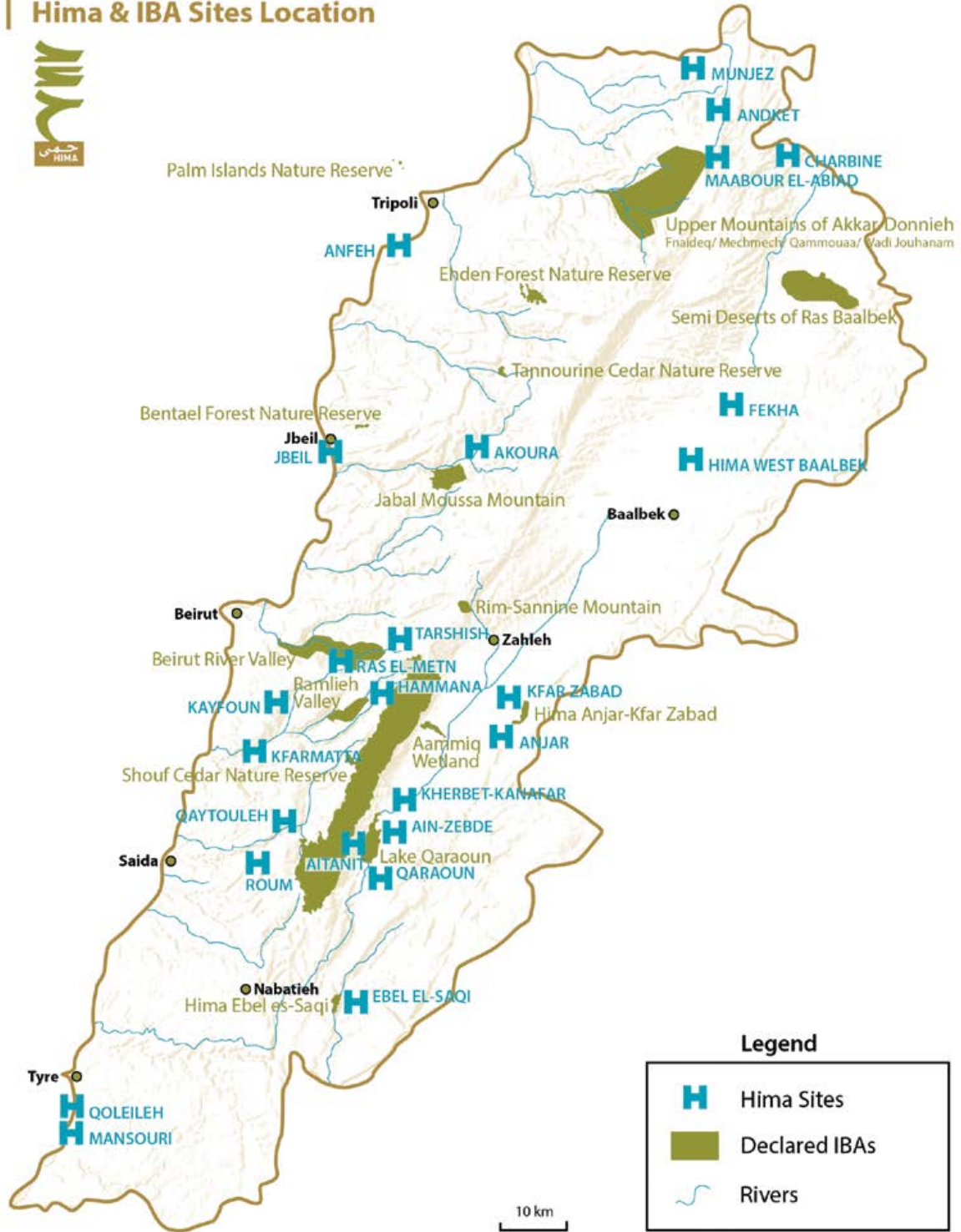
مع ظهور الإسلام، أعادت القيم الدينية تشكيل هيكل الحوكمة والإدارة في الحمى. وقد تم تعزيز النظام من خلال بُعد العدالة الاجتماعية، مع الاعتراف بأن الموارد الطبيعية هي مصلحة عامة، وسوف تُخدم المصلحة العامة، ولا سيما الفقراء والضعفاء. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، تم إرساء الحمى كأداة للمحافظة، حيث أن جميع مخلوقات الأرض هي مجتمعات متساوية مع

إحياء نظام الحمى لوقف إفلاس الطبيعة وتعزيز سبل المعيشة المستدامة ورفاهية وحقوق الإنسان

أسعد سرحال

المدير التنفيذي لجمعية حماية الطبيعة في لبنان SPNL

Map of Lebanon with Hima & IBA Sites Location



map designed by karim farah



© Asaad Saleh

من الإنجازات البارزة هي اعتماد الحمى دولياً كشكل من أشكال المحافظة المجتمعية على الطبيعة في القرار 122 للـ IUCN عام 2012 وعلى الصعيد الوطني كفئة رابعة للمناطق الحمية في لبنان (القانون 2019/130).

لا شك أن نظام الحمى يساهم بتحقيق عالم أكثر استدامة وإنصافاً وقابلاً للعيش. إنه يمثل نهجاً شاملاً يشمل الركائز الثلاث للتنمية المستدامة: الجدوى الاقتصادية وحماية البيئة والعدالة الاجتماعية. على هذا النحو، أثناء الحفاظ على الاستخدام المستدام للنظم الإيكولوجية الأرضية والبحرية وتعزيزه، يساهم نظام الحمى بالتخفيف من حدة الفقر في المجتمعات الريفية المهمشة، وتعزيز الزراعة المستدامة، والحد من التفاوت بين الفئات المستهدفة، وتمكين المرأة اقتصادياً واجتماعياً، وتوفير فرص عمل خاصة للفئات المهمشة، وضمان أنماط الإنتاج والاستهلاك المستدامة عبر مواقع الحمى، وبالتالي السماح للمجتمعات لتصبح أكثر استدامة ومرونة للتغيرات العالمية.

اليوم أكثر من أي وقت مضى، بات الناس في جميع أنحاء العالم يدركون الترابط بين بقاء الإنسان ورفاهه والحفاظ على الطبيعة. كنهج محافظة قائم على المجتمع، أرست الحمى هذا التناغم بين الإنسان والطبيعة منذ زمن بعيد، والذي أصبح متأصلاً كطريقة حياة. داخل منطقة الحمى، تبنت المجتمعات فكرة الاستدامة، قبل الاعتراف بها بوقت طويل، لحماية مواردها وتأمين سبل عيشها للأجيال القادمة، وبناء المرونة في الظروف المناخية القاسية. في الوقت الحاضر، حيث تعاني منطقة غربي آسيا وشمال إفريقيا في الخطوط الأمامية لتغير المناخ، فإن اعتماد مفهوم إحياء الحمى سيكون أحد الاستراتيجيات الفعالة للتعامل والتكيف مع العواقب الوخيمة الفعلية والمتوقعة لتغير المناخ.

في جميع الأحوال، تأسست الحمى على حق المجتمعات المحلية ببيئة صحية. لقد كان النجاح في تحقيق أهداف إدارة الحفظ متوازياً دائماً مع احترام وإعمال حق الناس في الحياة وسبل العيش.



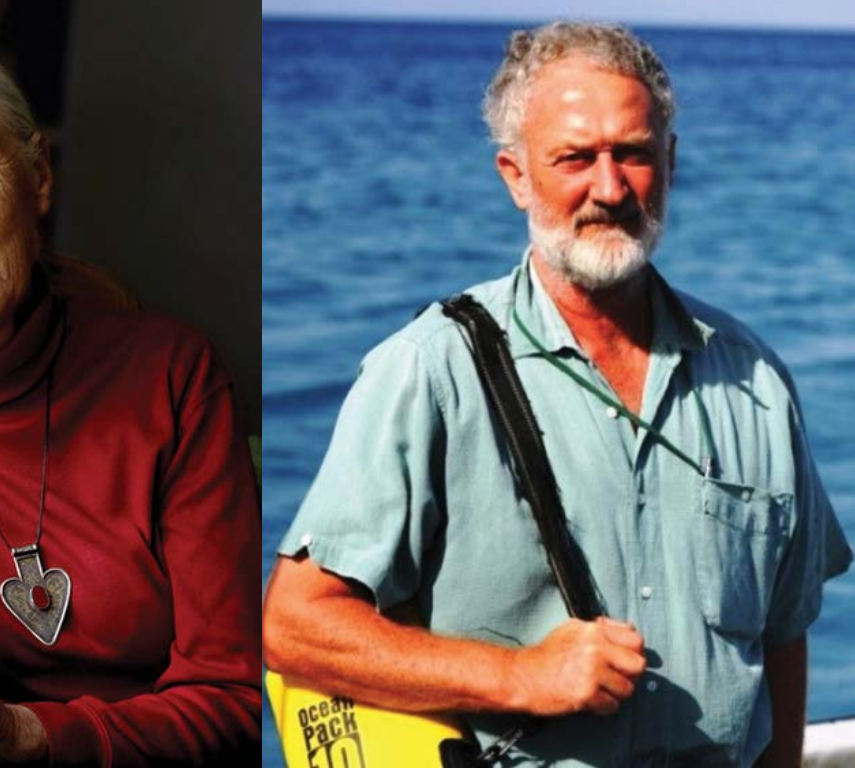
The four nominees to the Honorary Membership of IUCN

ASSAD SERHAL, RECOGNIZED FOR 35 YEARS OF DEDICATION TO THE CONSERVATION OF NATURE

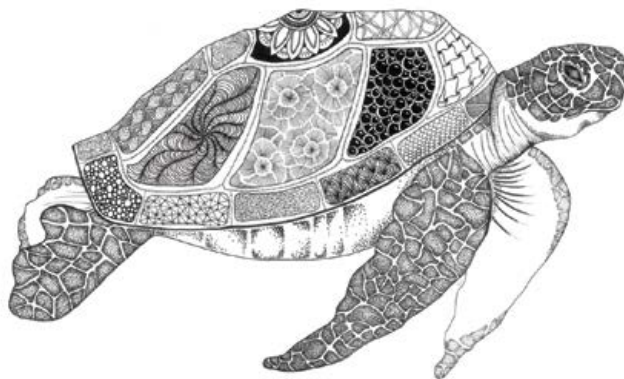
Nomination to IUCN conferral
of honorary membership

**IUCN TO
RECOGNIZE
OUTSTANDING
SERVICES OF
ASSAD SERHAL
TO NATURE**

After receiving the prestigious Midori Prize in 2018 and the Silver Lebanese Order of Merit Medal in 2019, Assad Serhal, SPNL Director General, has been nominated in February 2020 to the Honorary Membership of IUCN, along with Dr. Jane Goodall, Dr. Richard John Watling and Mr. Ropni Metyktire. The honorary membership was proposed by the IUCN Council, representing the Union's worldwide constituency of over 1,300 Members, and will be subjected to the approval of the World Conservation Congress, which was to be held in June 2020 but got postponed to 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Created at the founding of IUCN in 1948, the Honorary Membership is awarded once every four years on the occasion of the IUCN World Conservation Congress to recognise outstanding services to the conservation of nature and natural resources, and exceptional contributions to furthering the goals of the Union. SPNL family is thrilled to congratulate its leader on this well-deserved award, representing a ringing endorsement for the exceptional dedication, inspiration and achievements that Assad Serhal has brought to Lebanon and the region in the areas of nature conservation and local empowerment for the past 35 years.



THE MIDORI PRIZE HONOURS INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE MADE OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE USE OF BIODIVERSITY AT GLOBAL, REGIONAL, OR LOCAL LEVELS. M. SERHAL IS AMONG THEM FOR HIS WORK ON REVIVING THE HIMA



SPNL 2021 NOMINATIONS

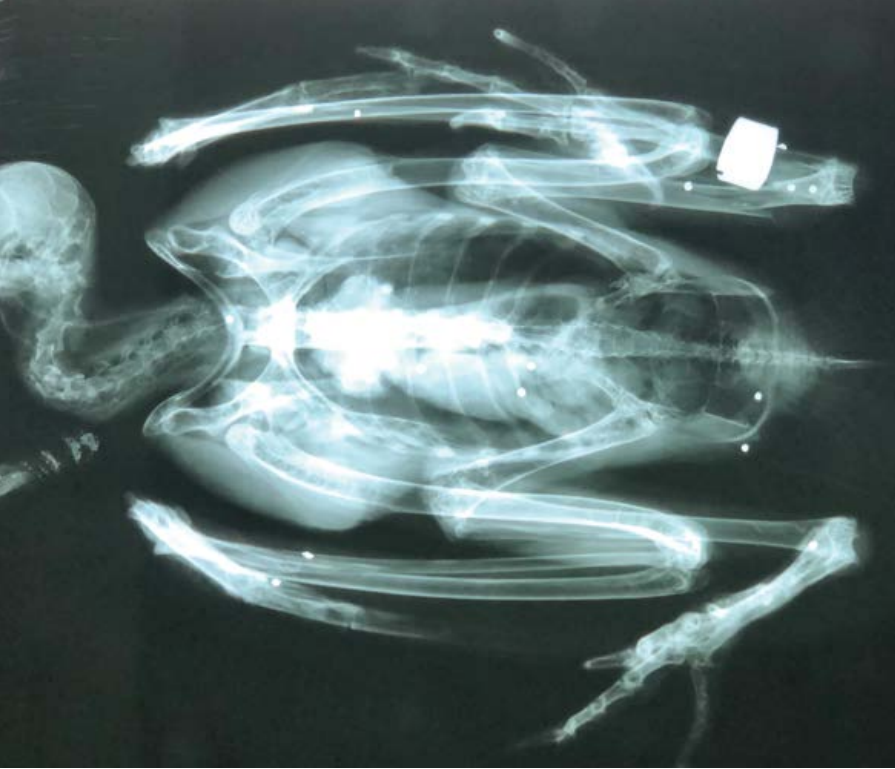
The Earthshot Prize

December 2020, the Hima was nominated to the most prestigious global environmental prize of the decade: The Earthshot Prize. Run by the Royal Foundation of the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, the prize is designed to incentivise change and help repair our planet. It is centred around five “Earthshots”, which if achieved by 2030 will improve life for generations to come. The five Earthshots are: Protect and Restore Nature, Clean our Air, Revive our Oceans, Fix our Climate, Build a Waste-free World. Five, one million-pound prizes will be awarded each year for the next 10 years. Proudly, the Hima has been nominated by BirdLife to the “Protect and Restore Nature” Earthshot for 2021. Undeniably, the Hima satisfies most of the targets under this Earthshot and presents a deep-rooted yet innovative approach to nature conservation that goes parallel to community-based sustainable development in the Middle East region.

Worldwide Award for Biodiversity Conservation

SPNL has been also invited to participate in the BBVA Foundation Worldwide Award for Biodiversity Conservation in its 16th edition. The award recognizes and supports the efforts of conservationist organisations institutions and agencies in carrying forward environmental conservation policies and projects.

We hope 2021 to bring further global recognition for SPNL conservation efforts and the Hima, and we keep our fingers crossed for both awards.



Injured Anahita's x-ray image at the vet's clinic



THE INCREDIBLE JOURNEY OF ANAHITA

An Egyptian vulture, victim of a new pandemic: Illegal Killing.

10th of September, Anahita, a three-month-old Egyptian vulture (EV), left the Balkans to travel thousands of kilometers to winter South. The journey for young birds is often a very perilous one that leads to significant mortality. Before she left, the Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds (BSPB) had tagged her with a GPS transmitter, as part of an interesting project to strengthen the “Balkan Population of the Egyptian Vulture and Secure Its Flyway”.

On her way to Africa

There she was, child of the sky, enjoying her freedom, with wings wide open. The EV travelled through Turkey, followed step by step by BSPB team tracking her transmitter. On the 6th day of her journey, a mail popped up at SPNL from partners in Bulgaria. The transmitter of Anahita stopped emitting. *“Has she been shot? Is she wounded? Is she dead?”*

There was no time to waste. SPNL anti-poaching unit moved swiftly but cautiously, with the help of the Internal Security Forces (ISF). There she was, feathers fluffed, badly injured and barely standing on both legs. Anahita's life was hanging by

a thread. Reacting vividly, SPNL field officer brought her to a veterinary clinic, where she was treated for a broken wing and a body riddled by 13 pellets.

A space to heal

Yet, neither could she be left at the clinic, nor be sent back to Bulgaria. In a country with no proficient rescue centers, SPNL had to come up with an alternative to host the EV as she healed. Fortunately, Mount Lebanon Hima Center (MLHC) contains an aviary intended for breeding the Syrian serin (*Serinus syriacus*) and releasing the offspring back into the wild, to increase this vulnerable restricted range species' population. However, in response to the urgency of the situation, some adjustments were made to the aviary to accommodate the injured and traumatized EV. First in shock, the EV is now healing calmly in our skillful and caring hands at MLHC.

The rescue of Anahita made headlines on digital media platforms. In parallel, SPNL got an abundance of calls to save wounded migratory birds, mostly cranes, black kites and a pelican. Two cranes joined Anahita in the aviary, of which one has been already released back into the wild.

Poaching in Lebanon, a threat for Migratory Birds

Birds are illegally lured by poachers with electronic decoy callers and met with heavy fire while traveling over Lebanon. This is a common method of migratory bird poaching at migration time in Lebanon. Illegal shooting is among the main factors for the extinction of the Egyptian vulture population. SPNL works hand-in-hand with ISF and responsible hunters to fight this problem, on the grounds and on the level of policy making.

Until we stop these bird massacres, SPNL, with the help of BSPB, is flying on an new journey to equip a bird rescue center that helps expand our reach and treat more

Anahita's treated at SPNL's Mount Lebanon Hima Center aviary



migratory birds. To assist us on our mission to rescue, heal, rehabilitate and release, injured EVs and other migratory birds, please donate to BSPB.

After two months, Anahita, the rescued EV is doing well and feeling better. Unfortunately, she won't be able to join the others on her wintering grounds at the southern edge of the Sahara. She will go back to Bulgaria, where she will hopefully breed a long line of EVs. This story is a story of hope, and foremost a story of human partnership between 14 countries along the flyway of those endangered birds. 14 teams are dedicated to protect the EV and are working to improve the survival of young birds.

We express our deep gratitude to Dr. Abdo, Dr. Ali Hamade, Dr. Neil Forbes from the European College of Veterinary Medicine, and the vets from the Wildlife Rehabilitation and Breeding Center of Green Balkans.



Egyptian vulture © BSPB Kalin Botev

SPNL EMERGING FROM SUCCESSIVE CRISES STRONGER

by **Alice Baghdadi**

As I prepare to narrate my 2020 experience with SPNL, I resorted to my dear notebooks. Browsing the five Hima Notebooks I have filled in eight months, I came to appreciate the saying that “the whole is greater than the sum of its parts”. I joined SPNL last February and had the privilege of attending most meetings, overviewing the running programmes and projects and engaging in the various day-to-day activities at the organisation. Practicing my habit, I have recorded minutes, ideas, queries, arguments, insights, aspirations as well as tidbits of inspiration and countless scribbles. Pondering all the meetings

and conference calls, brainstorming and planning sessions, training and workshop events, I realize that SPNL, with the collective efforts of its team, has emerged robust and resilient against an extraordinary year which has twisted our perception of reality and order across the globe.

We kicked off the year 2020 at SPNL impassioned with much optimism and plans. Visit our office early in the year, and you would have seen me on endless conference calls in preparation for the Hima Regional Workshop with IUCN-ROWA; Rania coordinating with Air France-KLM for their Park opening in Hammana; Elie preparing for the Sun Child Environmental Film Festival; Lena planning the off-hunting and upcoming opening seasons; Wassim and Jamal preparing to officially launch SPNL centers; and the whole team longing for an impactful session at the IUCN World Conservation Congress, initially planned for June 2020.

A lifetime test

And the crises hit. For the rest of the world, it was the COVID-19 pandemic crisis. For us in Lebanon, it was a cascade of civil

CONTRARY TO EXPECTATIONS, THE CONCURRENT CHALLENGES FACED HAVE BROUGHT OUT THE COURAGE IN OUR HEARTS



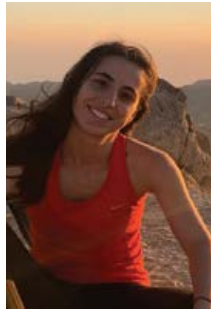
© Mohamed Haimour

unrest, political paralysis and economic collapse, aggravated by the pandemic and wrapped up by a historic explosion at the Beirut Port.

Contrary to expectations, the concurrent challenges faced have brought out the courage in our hearts. It was certain that if succeeded this time, SPNL would have stood a lifetime test which larger organisations could not survive. Instead of shutting operations, we tried to assess the immediate and long-term challenges being faced by our organisation as well as the opportunities and how to possibly adapt. The strengths of SPNL lie in its flexibility, vibrant team and strong network of partners and donors. Despite the challenges of going virtual, the team was able to set emergency plans for the different programmes and centers, and thus raise needed funds to continue to operate and serve our organisation's mission, against all odds.

As 2020 progresses towards its end, we gather as one team to reflect back on the need to adopt and sustain a vigilant and versatile approach. Emerging stronger, we salute 2021 with SPNL's renowned ambi-

tious outlook, only this time driven by an Organisational Development Strategy. SPNL's 2030 Strategy would guide our organisation to refine its direction priorities, partnership, structure, functions and resources to bring more success and achieve an impact while addressing pressing ecological, environmental and socio-economic challenges.



Alice Baghdadi
Head of
Organisational
Development Dept.

منذ إن إنضميت إلى فريق جمعية حماية الطبيعة في لبنان عام 2020، لقد شاركت في مجمل النشاطات في الجمعية، لكن عام 2020 كان عام إستثنائي بتحدياته، فالنشاطات التي كانت مقررة في بداية العام تم عرقلتها بسبب جائحة كورونا. فالمرونة التي أبدتها الجمعية في تغيير مخططها كانت بمثابة إختبار لقدرتها على التكيف مع التحديات المستمرة.



Hawk on the hunt, Kofraya © Mohamed Haimour



SPNL ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2030

A clear vision and direction to generate increased impacts and successes

By Alice Baghdadi

At a time of major changes, especially the rapid recognition and growth of Hima community based protected areas across Lebanon and internationally, it is essential that SPNL have effective realistic plans by which to operate to maximize its impact and minimize any risks facing its operations. Since the last strategy in 2015, the operating context has changed considerably. Evidently, there is also growing urgency for civil society organisations to focus and scale up their activities as part of the coordinated global response to the identified Climate Emergency and Biodiversity Crisis from State sector, the Private Sector and Civil Society alike. Therefore, SPNL has sought redefining its direction priorities, partnership, structure, functions and resource needs at a time when there is clear need for relevance, clarity of purpose and ability to focus on achieving impacts to address Climate Change and restore biodiversity.

With the generous funding of BirdLife Capacity Development Fund (CDF), SPNL

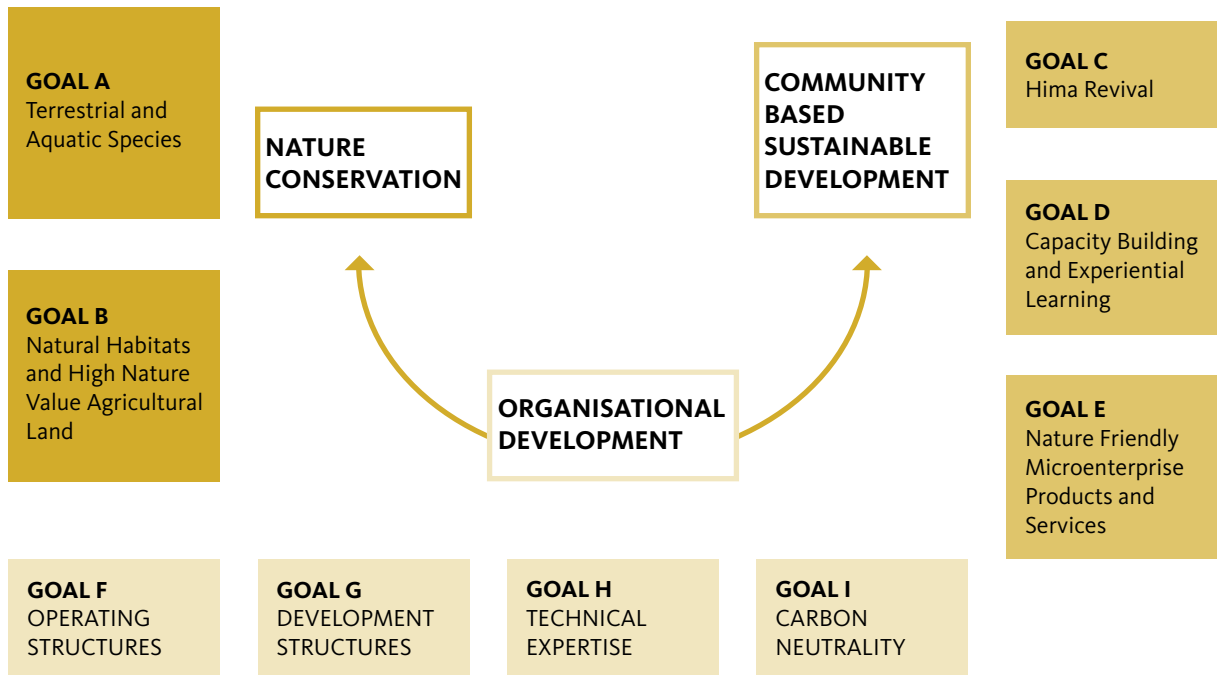
has accomplished its Organisational Development Strategy (2020-2030) along with a 2022 Operating Plan. High-level strategic development goals were developed in the themes of Nature Conservation and Community Based Sustainable Development and underpinning both these, Organisational Development. Backed up with annual operational and financial planning, this Strategy directs SPNL to generate increased impacts and successes.

SPNL is evolving and growing while trying to adapt to constant challenges and changing realities. The 2030 Strategy has granted SPNL a vision, direction, clarity of focus, with realistic targets, financially and legally viable operations and indicators against which to measure progress.



© Fouad Itani

THEMATIC WORK AREAS AND HIGH-LEVEL STRATEGIC GOALS







White Morph Hawk © Mohamed Haimour

INSPIRING OTHERS

SPNL communication and visibility strategy (2020-2023)

by **Bassam Alkantar**

A key challenge faced today is to tackle communications and advertising in a way that does not somehow pretend that the pandemic has truly come to a halt. With rising tensions around restarting economies, going into and coming out of lockdowns has become part and parcel of government strategy. Grappling with such uncertainty, the world of marketing has seen significant shifts in the digital strategies that have proven to drive brand management and consumerism in such times.



Bassam Alkantar
IT and
Communications
Manager

The communication strategy for SPNL for the years (2020- 2023) provides strategic and practical communication solutions to the projects, centers and Hima sites led by SPNL. Partnership for nature and people is the global slogan of Birdlife International and its partners. In addition to this slogan, SPNL is committed to stopping nature's bankruptcy and promoting the concept of the Hima for peace, while working to influence others.

Successful communication is essential. This determines the goal of the Communication Strategy: to facilitate effective and purposeful communication of SPNL. In order to effectively reach out to defined target groups with information about the SPNL programs, we have identified some overarching objectives:

- Conduct a comprehensive communication and visibility campaign for programmes, projects, facilities, products and services at SPNL
- Raise Awareness on key concepts of Hima promotion and nature protection and conservation in Lebanon
- Achieve better visibility for the projects as well as buy in and support among key stakeholders
- Promote the role of SPNL in the protec-

tion of nature and convey the benefits of Hima Centers

- Pave the way for a holistic solution, demonstrating that the Hima Concept is a door opener and inevitable prerequisite for nature conservation and livelihoods' improvement
- Foster public-private partnership
- Proactively preempt any negative attitudes, behaviors, and media coverage about hunting in Lebanon, and SPNL's role in creating a peace agreement with birds crossing our territories.
- Ensure effective communication, visibility, and outreach of SPNL projects and activities to the public entities (i.e. Municipalities, Ministries, etc.), NGOs and citizens within an appropriate media context.

The communication team at SPNL strives to share information, tell stories, protect the brand's reputation, and engage in conversations that inspire people. Images, videos and words compose SPNL stories. Through these stories, we get to inspire people thus drive action. When inspired, people tend to act, be it by donating or volunteering, helping us fulfil our mission.

تمنح إستراتيجية التواصل لجمعية حماية الطبيعة في لبنان لأعوام 2020 - 2023 حلول إستراتيجية وعملية من أجل التواصل للمشاريع والمراكز التي تقودها جمعية حماية الطبيعة في لبنان، فضلاً عن مواقع الحمى. إن التواصل الفعال أمر ضروري لأي مؤسسة، وهدف إستراتيجية التواصل هو تسهيل التواصل الفعال و المجدي لجمعية حماية الطبيعة. أهداف الإستراتيجية هي التالية:

- إقرار وتحليل الموضوع
- تحديد النتائج المطلوبة
- الإجابة عن الأسئلة العملية، كمن سيقوم بالتواصل، وبماذا، ومن خلال أية وسيلة، ولن، من أجل تحقيق النتيجة المقرر عليها مسبقاً.



© Pierre Dawalibi

INSPIRING STORIES INSPIRE PEOPLE THUS INSPIRING ACTION



Injured by poachers, this crane was treated by SPNL at our aviary before being released into the wild



Harrier on the Hunt over Mountains © Mohamed Haimour

WIND OF CHANGE

Communications and Marketing as added values for a sustainable future

by **Valérie Debahy**

THE COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT IS LIKE A BIRD. WE SPREAD OUR WINGS AND FLY AS HIGH AS WE CAN



Valérie Debahy
Head of Communications and Marketing Dept.

From very light winds, or breezes, to strong gales, wind is a force you cannot see but surely can feel. Wind is a powerful force in nature. And in its heart beats change.

My life was turning upside down as the blast blew up our city and swept away our certainties. Yet, a wind of change blew amidst the chaos singing its songs to stir the emotions, bringing the sweet memories of times gone and hopes for a good future ahead. This gentle breeze- at first, hurricane- at last, reminded me that we are here in this present moment, in the gift of living, and called me to help people, protect nature and worship the vast world.

New beginnings

I have always thought of the wind as free and chaotic, yet got a path, even with its infinite possible destinations. In its wake, doors banged, and one opened for me: SPNL. A dream had become solid with a new destination and many challenges. "The answer, my friend, is in the wind", said the song. Indeed, the wind carried me to the door of SPNL with new possibilities. Change was happening!

So, with the summer came the wind that wanted nothing more than to announce its arrival, to say, "I'm here." I am here, to

“change” the way SPNL communicates, to wider our horizons, bring new ideas to make the buzz in town and inspire more audiences around our actions.

Communicating on multiple fronts

And actions... we do have! SPNL's actions are many, more than 15, like a waterfall who brings its own music to the project stream. 15 projects to become the talk of the town! Protecting Fauna and Flora on multiple fronts, reviving the HIMA concept, empowering the community while working on a sustainable future... SPNL's hurricane blows a flash of “green” into the waves of change... and I face the challenge to find the words that will create awareness around biodiversity and how Nature is our Life, our Life insurance. From the project manager and the scientific to the neophyte, Communications will trace the trail of green adventure in protected areas.

A team in progress

SPNL Communication and Marketing department is a team in progress. It will morph, blossom anew, extend and fold: it is a wonderful adventure to take. The wind of change will blow through the office with a powerful passion, scattering old documents as if they were the leaves of fall. With this team, we will reinforce and reestablish SPNL's identity as a powerful and recognizable brand.

Our aim: a sustainable future

We are communicating around 12 projects at the same time, and each needs its “hour of fame”. In this regard, every project's story will tackle a specific segment of people, using their language, helping them identify with our Brand, our projects. A new dynamic is beating in the wind: from lifting the website to revisiting the logo, from creating educational videos for children to revisit the message and the designs on social media, our aim is to open new channels of communications,



**THIS WIND
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ATION,
THE FLUX OF
BUSINESS**



Darwiche Chehade
Marketing Manager

target new audiences. These actions have one objective: driving people to act, donate and volunteer, for a sustainable future. The same passionate breeze is floating over the marketing side of our department, with a strategized approach to fundraising and marketing on our stories and products, reaching new segments, new leads, creating new opportunities for the future. New ideas, new products, new channels of communication, new adventures, yet ONE direction: Sustainability. The windy days of 2021 just shook the last few autumnal leaves from SPNL's branches, awaiting new growth to spring forwards.

Together we can

Changing SPNL Communications is not going to be a task for one person or one type of mind, we are born different for a reason. As the creative mind, I dream up new stories and envision ways to tell them. The Dreamer minds, cherishes the ideal and creates opportunities. The scientific minds map the dreams. The Conservation minds on the ground, make the dreams into realities. This wind carries the fragrance of the change, the essence of sustainability, the heart of communication, the flux of business. Change is for the brave of heart, the ones, like SPNL's team, with a true desire to make the world better for us all.

At SPNL, the marketing department was created at the end of 2020 and integrated into the Communication Department: its main aim is to ensure the sustainability of the organisation's resources in a way that respects people, nature and products. The marketing actions will be diversified and will aim to reinforce the identity and visibility of existing products as well as to create new ones. Similarly, the department aims to develop an offer in SPNL centers, notably through regular activities intended for the public; it will also participate in the launch of communication strategies on social networks and set up fundraising actions. The marketing department will develop the organisation's products and initiatives in order to achieve financial autonomy and increased visibility in Lebanon and internationally.



Road to the Farm Fields, view towards Aana © Mohamed Haimour





Fig.11 Syrian Serin © Ghassan Ramadan-Jaradi

NEW BREEDING SPECIES ON OUR DOORSTEP

UPDATED CHECKLIST OF THE BIRDS OF LEBANON, WITH NOTES ON FOUR NEW BREEDING SPECIES IN SPRING 2020

**by Ghassan Ramadan-Jaradi,
Fouad Itani, James Hogg, Assad Serhal
& Mona Ramadan-Jaradi**

Since the previous published checklist of the birds of Lebanon in 2008, many significant changes to the status and distribution of birds have been recorded. Checklists evolve and the one presented here uses the standardised taxonomic list for the OSME region. Of the 404 species recorded in Lebanon, nine have been added since the 2008 list; 284 (70.3%) are passage migrants or winter visitors (or both); 69 (17.1%) are vagrants; 73 (17.8%) are summer breeders and 65 (16.1%) are breeding residents (some species fall into more than one category). The remaining birds are of uncertain status (Leach's Storm Petrel *Hydrobates leucorhous*, Western Brown Fish Owl *Bubo (zeylonensis) semenowi*, Eurasian Nuthatch *Sitta europaea*, and White-winged Snowfinch *Montifringilla nivalis*), have originated from escapes (Red Turtle Dove *Streptopelia tranquebarica* and Indian Silverbill *Lonchura malabarica*), were introduced (Mute Swan *Cygnus olor*, Rock Partridge *Alectoris graeca* and Common Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus*), or disappeared from Lebanon for over 120 and 70 years respectively but recently reappearing as vagrants (Lesser Crested Tern *Thalasseus bengalensis* and Blue-cheeked Bee-eater *Merops persicus*). The



Fig.1 Squacco Heron © G R-Jaradi



Fig.2 Cattle Egret chicks at Mansoura © G R-Jaradi

paper also describes the first breeding records in Lebanon of four species (Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides* [Figure 1], Western Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* [Figure 2], Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* [Figure 3] and Black-winged Kite *Elanus caeruleus* [Figure 4]) in spring 2020. The first three species were discovered at Mansoura by Maher Osta and documented by Ramadan-Jaradi *et al.* 2020. This paper documents and highlights the most recent changes in the status, distribution and occurrence of all bird species observed in Lebanon. It is based on the previously published checklist of the birds of Lebanon (Ramadan-Jaradi *et al.* 2008), 14 published ornithological papers and two books on the birds of Lebanon between 2008 and 2019, additional published records up to Dec 2019 (from *Around The Region in Sandgrouse*), the results of intensive surveys that are conducted on a continual basis in the country and the reports published by the Raptor Count Lebanon [Figure 5] supported by OSME, BirdLife International and SPNL (the BirdLife Partner in Lebanon). In addition, casual observations by an increasing number of birdwatchers and (unfortunately) illegal hunting have provided some important records. Further

observation has led to an increase in the number of bird species recorded in Lebanon from 395 in 2009 to 404 in 2019. The nine new species are: Cotton Pygmy Goose *Nettapus coromandelianus*, White-headed Duck *Oxyura leucocephala*, Black-eared Kite *Milvus (migrans) lineatus*, Diederik Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx caprius* [Figure 6], Eyebrowed Thrush *Turdus obscurus*, White-crowned Wheatear *Oenanthe leucopyga*, Eurasian Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*, Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus*, and Red Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra*. This paper, updated the information on around 70% of the species listed in Ramadan-Jaradi *et al.* (2008), particularly nine that were proved to breed for the first time in the country (Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus* [Figure 7], Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides*, Eurasian Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*, Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*, Eurasian Stone-curlew *Burhinus oediacnemus* [Figure 8], Black-winged Kite *Elanus caeruleus*, Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*, European Serin *Serinus serinus* [] and Goldcrest *Regulus regulus*), seven species previously considered to be vagrants that are now known to be regular winter visitors, passage migrants or both (Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea*, Crested



Dr. Ghassan Ramadan Jaradi
Ornithologist -
SPNL's scientific
advisor



Fig.3 Little Egret in nest © G R-Jaradi



Fig.4 Black winged Kite © G R-Jaradi



Fig.5



Fig.6 Diederick Cuckoo © G R-Jaradi

Honey Buzzard *Pernis ptilorhynchus*, Little Bustard *Tetrax tetrax*, Armenian Gull *Larus armenicus*, Black-legged Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla*, and three passage migrant species have been found also to regularly winter in the country (Greater Sand Plover *Anarhynchus leschenaultia*, Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*, Sandwich Tern *Thalasseus sandvicensis*). Two species previously considered locally extinct have reappeared after 70 years (Blue-cheeked Bee-eater *Merops persicus*) and 120 years (Lesser Crested Tern *Thalasseus bengalensis*). Some breeding species have shown a decline in numbers or occurrence and their status has changed from common to uncommon or scarce (Bonelli's Eagle *Aquila fasciatus*, European Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur* [Figure 10], Sombre Tit *Poecile lugubris*, Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin *Cercotrichas galactotes*). The following recorded species in Lebanon are globally threatened: Critically Endangered: Sociable Lapwing *Vanellus gregarius*; Endangered: White-headed Duck *Oxyura leucocephala*, Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus*, Steppe Eagle *Aquila nipalensis*, Saker Falcon *Falco cherrug*; Vulnerable: Marbled Duck *Marmaronetta angustirostris*, Common Pochard *Aythya ferina*, Velvet Scoter *Melanitta fusca*, Yelkouan Shearwater *Puffinus yelkouan*, Horned Grebe *Podiceps auritus*, Greater Spotted Eagle *Clanga clanga*, Eastern Imperial Eagle *Aquila heliaca*, Great Bustard *Otis tarda*, Macqueen's Bustard *Chlamydotis macqueenii*, Black-legged Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla*, European Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur*, Syrian Serin *Serinus syriacus* [Figure 11], Rustic Bunting *Emberiza rustica*.

Finally, for localised species, the paper listed the main locations where they have been recorded to help guide future assessment, to fill gaps, and provide a basis for follow-up and monitoring. For all species references are provided for their first occurrence and/or their first breeding record in Lebanon.

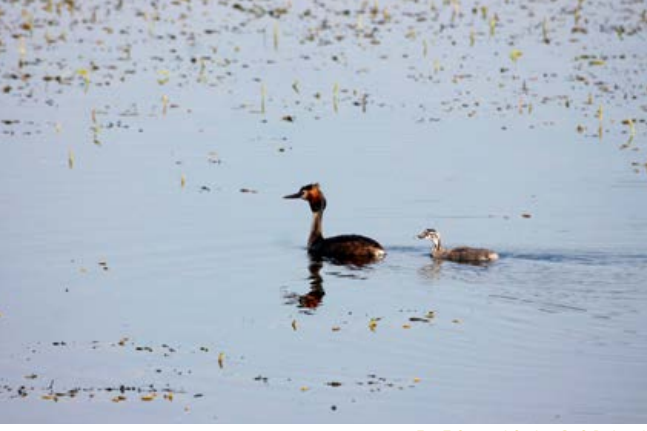


Fig.7 Crested Grebe © G R-Jaradi



Fig.8 Stone curlew juvenile © G R-Jaradi



Fig.9 European Serin © G R-Jaradi



Fig.10 Turtle Dove © G R-Jaradi

منذ عام تقريباً تشكلت مجموعة التنسيق الوطنية لمناطق التنوع البيولوجي الرئيسية في لبنان واجتمعت برعاية الشريك الوطني للمجلس العالمي لحماية الطيور أي جمعية حماية الطبيعة في لبنان وبرئاسة الدكتور غسان رمضان الجرادي، المستشار العلمي للجمعية حيث تم تعريف الأعضاء الخبراء الذين يمثلون الجامعات ومراكز البحث العلمي وبعض الوزارات والجمعيات البيئية بمعايير تحديد مناطق التنوع البيولوجي الرئيسية وحيث تلى ذلك مناقشات علمية ذات أهمية تتحدث عن بعض الثغرات في معايير المناطق البحرية. الأمر الذي دعى رئيس مجموعة التنسيق للإتصال بالمجلس الدولي لصون الطبيعة لتوضيح سبب الثغرات ومناقشة تدابير علاجها. وتم نقل وجهة الإتحاد الدولي إلى أعضاء المجموعة في إجتماعها الثاني، كما تم ترتيب زيارة لخبيرين من الإتحاد الدولي لصون الطبيعة لزيارة هذه المجموعة واللقاء معها في إجتماعها الثالث ومناقشة شتى المواضيع المتعلقة بالمناطق الرئيسية للتنوع البيولوجي. والجدير بذكره أن المجموعة تضم 17 خبيراً حيث لكل منهم إختصاص: علم الطيور البرية وبيئتها، زراعة الأسماك، النباتات البرية، الأسماك البحرية، الأسماك النهريّة أو المياه العذبة، الزواحف والبرمائيات، الزراعة والرعي، الثدييات، الفراشات وأقاربها، النباتات الطبية وخدمات الأنظمة البيئية. ويجري حالياً بمساعدة من جمعية حماية الطبيعة عرض مشروع إلى المانحين لتمويل دراسات في مناطق ذات أولوية حددها مبدئياً أعضاء المجموعة بالإستناد إلى خبراتهم الشخصية المشهود لها.



SPNL Butterfly Garden-WBCC © Mohamed Haimour

BUTTERFLIES, BEES, SOCIAL DISTANCING, AND THE WILDFLOWER SEED HARVEST

by Husein Ali Zorkot

A large part of this year was spent not only wildlife gardening and green landscaping, but also taking precautions. Forest fires, political instability, economic collapse, and a global health crisis had racked the country simultaneously. Social distancing was seemingly the only way to thwart an epidemic viral disease from spreading. Freedom of movement became increasingly limited and the Lebanese currency plummeted, making everyday life considerably more difficult. The first few months of 2020, Lebanon's streets resembled a ghost town, and there was growing anger, fear, and frustration. People were afraid for their lives, their livelihoods, their families, and their future. There was uncertainty, and many people were worried how they would

procure their basic needs. Yet, Lebanese, accustomed to turmoil, war, and upheaval, proved themselves time and time again a resilient people. They were patient and each person had their own way of handling the crisis.

However, I was far from all that, stationed outdoors in a pinewood cabin in the dim, cold, and windy Bekaa countryside, where my time was better spent reading, writing, compiling, painting, managing the butterfly garden, and maintaining social distance. I made my own food, cooked potatoes, sweet potatoes, and onions, and ate a meagre diet consisting of bread, thyme, olives, almonds, dates, fig marmalade, and grape molasses. What it took was some survivalism and common sense to get me through the day.

The butterfly garden has come a long way since our last annual report, despite the problems the country is currently facing. Although the nearby country club closed down temporarily this year, and the tourism sector has experienced major setbacks, our environmental activities are proceeding as planned, with a focus on landscaping projects in preparation for next year. The garden was winterised in January, and

plants were grown from seed in the greenhouse, to be pricked out later in spring. In February, we planted hundreds of trees and shrubs throughout the garden, and a living fence of cypress trees along the eastern hedge, to serve as a windbreak. We also planted garden flowers and roses next to the hima administrative building.

In March, we constructed a tree nursery and planted thousands of wild pine and oak seeds. These young trees will later be supplied to local municipalities to help with nationwide reforestation efforts. We also plan on enlarging this nursery to include many species of native herbs, medicinal and aromatic plants, and butterfly, as well as bee, plants, which we will sell next year to visitors, so that they might start their own butterfly gardens at home, an important first step in butterfly conservation and a primary objective of our long-term sustainable project.

“Honeybee Trail”

April and May were months of social distancing and the country was practically shut down and preparing for a worst-case scenario. We avoided the atmosphere of uncertainty so pervasive at that time, by turning to gardening and the outdoors. Throughout April, I was preoccupied with springtime cleaning, garden maintenance, and butterfly watching. In May, I paved the “Honeybee Trail,” a 70-metre stretch of trail that winds its way through the garden. Beekeeping units will later be placed next to this trail. Our butterfly garden is bee-friendly and supports wild bee populations, including the honeybee (*Apis mellifera*), bumblebee (*Bombus terrestris*), carpenter bee (*Xylocopa violacea*), as well as a number of other valuable pollinator species. With wild bee populations increasingly threatened and dwindling around the world, a beekeeping program is needed to educate people on the importance of these animals. Plainly stated, without animals like bees and butterflies, there would be no plants, and thus no food. Wild edible



A new record for the brimstone

plants would not propagate from year to year. With the world going through health crises, economic problems, and climate change, and people on the verge of hunger, these animals and their roles as pollinators become more important.

Hima farming

We also turned to farming. A potager of kitchen greens was established nearby to produce emergency food that will be distributed to the poor and elderly. My Syrian gardener and his family were instructed to help with hima farming efforts. They worked long hours in the field to ensure a good yield this year. Hima farming provides a standard that, when practiced around the country, will alleviate many of the problems encountered by Lebanese people. Organic farming, like wildlife gardening, is a responsible, sustainable, and ecofriendly activity. No pesticides and herbicides are used, and thus ecosystems are not disturbed. Beneficial insects outweigh deleterious ones, and the ecologic balance is preserved. There is less risk of pollution to the environment, and less risk of invasive species. When farming



Husein Ali Zorkot
HHI Park Butterfly
Garden & Pavilion
Manager /
Lepidopterist



The beauty of pollination

equipment and materials become more expensive, and when hunger becomes a possibility, organic farming, specifically hima farming, might be the way to go.

Ecofriendly wildlife pond

Environmental activities keep arising, and are enjoyable. We are now constructing a large ecofriendly wildlife pond that will attract frogs, toads, salamanders, water turtles, and other animals. This pond, an outdoor herpetarium, is built on a slope and engineered to fill up with water each winter and spring. Rather than caging animals in indoor terrariums, animals will have the freedom to move and maintain their breeding and developmental cycles out in the wilderness. Furthermore, a picnicking space for outdoor events and buffets will be constructed in a specific location within the garden that will cause minimal damage to the environment, an example of green landscaping. Educational programs, including butterfly gardening lectures and tours will also be developed soon. Such activities will boost ecotourism and attract people to our garden. We are also preparing the wildflower seed harvest for 2020, as part of the Lebanon Native

Plant Seedbank (LNPS). Seeds of native wild plant species will be collected ecologically from hima locations throughout the country several days per week, July through November. *Butterfly Plants, Bee Plants, Medicinal Plants, Pollinator Mix, Meadow Wildflower Mix...* These seeds will then be processed and sold in envelopes in the gift shop next year.

A garden, home to numerous species

The time away from society also gave me a rare chance to better study the butterfly garden, its ecosystems and wildlife communities, particularly the pollinators. One doesn't appreciate the diversity of wildlife within a given area unless they study it, especially at night, when the place seemingly comes alive. The garden supports 11 mammal species, including shrews, hedgehogs, mole rats, voles, wood mice, dormice, stone martens, wild cats, foxes, and jackals, the last of which are highly vocal and observed in packs. The avifauna is represented by around 20 bird species, some winter visitors and some resident, not to mention the numerous birds that pass through on the migratory flyway. The melodies and notes of a number of charac-

teristic species could be heard throughout the year, especially bramblings, chaffinches, redstarts, serins, great tits, and robins in wintertime, blackbirds and goldfinches in early spring, and flycatchers, wheatears, and shrikes in early summer. A number of warbler species made their presence known year round. Bee-eaters could be heard and seen flying around and perching down on trees in flocks in spring and autumn. Swallows heralded early spring mornings while swifts could be observed flying erratically just before dusk. An occasional kestrel or hooded crow would pass through the garden.

The herpetofauna includes 11 species of reptiles and several amphibians, such as green toads, observed in large numbers after dusk, and fire salamanders, seen following rainshowers making their way to ponds where they breed. Insects are represented by hundreds of species of beetles, bugs, butterflies, moths, bees, ants, grasshoppers, crickets, locusts, mantids, earwigs, craneflies, and dragonflies. Many of these insects, particularly butterflies, moths, and bees, are beneficial and important pollinators. Furthermore, a butterfly species, the brimstone (*Gonepteryx rhamni*), was recorded for the first time this summer in our garden. The garden is also home to a huge number of spiders, centipedes, millipedes, pill-millipedes, and pillbugs. Garden snails are highly ubiquitous and associated with rainy spring mornings and evenings. And this is only the animal life above ground.

Below the surface, the soil is teeming with earthworms and other animals. The plant life is no less diverse. The garden supports more than 160 species of native wildflowers, herbs, vines, and grasses, around 29 species of trees, and several species of ferns, mosses, and mushrooms. Many of these species are melliferous and provide food for butterflies, moths, and bees throughout the season. They also host larval development and provide shelter during windy and overcast days, and in cold weather. More details might be gained from butterflies.spnl.org

**WHILE WE
HAVE BEEN
MADE FAR
FROM ONE
ANOTHER
THROUGH
SOCIAL
DISTANCING,
TO PLANTS,
ANIMALS,
AND THE
EARTH, WE
HAVE BEEN
BROUGHT
CLOSER.**



We are planting thousands of trees this year

Scientific research

The book, *A Pictorial Guide to the Butterflies of Lebanon*, got published this year as well. This is the first photographic butterfly guide of its kind, with short, concise descriptions of 150 Lebanese species and colour drawings of host plants. With the recent discovery of an invasive butterfly near Tripoli in the north of the country, the publication of this book becomes more pressing. *Luthrodes pandava*, a South Asian species that breeds on sago palms, might pose a problem for local *Chilades* butterflies, with which it probably shares the same ecological niches. This invasive species, originating from nurseries selling tropical plants for local gardens, could potentially compete with *Chilades* for local nectar sources. Butterfly gardening, a sustainable type of wildlife gardening which employs native plants, and thus encourages native butterflies, minimizing the risk of invasive species. This is what my books, website, and educational programs are trying to get across. The book, *A Guide to the Amphibians of Lebanon and the Middle East* got also published later this year. Amphibians in Lebanon and around the Middle East, like elsewhere in the world, are in danger of

mass extinctions from pollution, the use of pesticides, global warming and the drying up of wetland, and from fungal diseases, threats we might mitigate by ponds and wildlife gardening. I am also compiling the books *A Pictorial Guide to the Moths of Lebanon*, *A Pictorial Guide to the Animals of Lebanon*, and *A Guide to the Reptiles of Lebanon and the Levant*.

Getting ready to go and harvest seeds, I'm taking the needed precautions. With no end in sight yet to the global health problem, social distancing seems to be the right course of action. But one byproduct of social distancing might be something positive to the environment. How we have been made far from one another through social distancing, to plants, animals, and the earth, we have been brought closer.

شهد عام 2020 عدد من الأزمات في لبنان، لكن أنا شخصياً كنت بعيد عن كل ذلك، مع اقامتي في ريف لبنان البقاعي، وكنت أمارس التباعد الإجتماعي إلى جانب نشاطاتي المعتادة، كالعمل على حديقة الفراشات وغرس المزروعات من أجل جذب هذه الفراشات. في الظروف الصعبة التي تمر بها البلاد، قمنا أيضاً بزراعة المزروعات من أجل الطعام، ضمن برنامج مزارع الحمى. إحدى نتائج الجائحة العالمية هو التحسن البيئي الذي شهده الكوكب.







WhiteStorks © NCE Wattar Al Bahri

CHANGING ATTITUDES

Building a constituency for the conservation of migratory soaring birds

by **Bassima Khatib**

Lebanon lies on the second most important flyway for bird migration in the world and at least 400 species of birds have been recorded with 291 regularly occurring in Lebanon. Unfortunately, however, all of these species are being illegally killed, and in significant numbers. A conservative estimate by BirdLife International in 2015 put the estimated number of illegally killed birds in Lebanon around 2,600,000 annually, although the actual figures are likely to be much higher.

HUNTING HAS DEEP CULTURAL ROOTS IN MANY VILLAGES OF LEBANON

Migratory Soaring Birds depends on thermals for their migration. Because thermals do not form over large areas of water or tall mountain ranges, MSBs are restricted to traditional routes or “flyways” with large concentrations of birds occurring at migration “bottlenecks” during their migration from Europe and West Asia to North Africa (37 species). As a matter of fact, Lebanon is widely recognized as a hotspot for the migration of diverse soaring bird species, with around 1.5 million MSBs passing over Lebanon.

MSB aims and actions

The MSB project aims to integrate conservation management objectives into targeted economic sectors in 11 countries along the Rift valley / Red Sea flyway. The targeted sectors are the following: Agriculture, Energy, Hunting, Waste Management, and Tourism.

Lebanon concentrates during the MSB project stage II on 3 targeted sectors, namely: Hunting, Tourism, and Agriculture. The aim of mainstreaming MSB concerns within these economic sectors is to change the attitudes and behaviour toward MSBs and build constituency towards their

conservation. The main target audience are decision-makers, hunters, guides, tour operators, farmers and agriculture companies, young generation and wider Lebanese citizens. Mainstreaming at national level aims at inducing policy change towards MSB conservation. Thus, targeting decision makers change in policy documents such as responsible hunting areas-RHA map on all land tenure, adding MSB conservation needs in agricultural strategic document, or mobilizing adoption of biodiversity training module for national guides.

Proactive work on the ground

Working with stakeholders in each sector is crucial in order to demonstrate the benefit of MSBs for nature in general, and for the sector in specific. Action in the hunting sector along the years led to progressive change from shooter attitude to professional hunters – becoming an ally to MSB conservation. Proactive work with farmers led to their understanding of MSBs benefit to nature and agriculture, to better quality crops with less cost, thus becoming their guardians in agricultural lands. As a practical example of mainstreaming with farmers and capacity building efforts, women got trained on jam-making techniques of fruits selected from farmers adopting nature-friendly practices with minimal agrochemical use. These trainings promote awareness on the impact of agrochemicals on birds especially MSBs, nature and habitat, as well as human health. Further, they provide technical techniques in jam making, which is income generating, thus stressing on the higher value of such products with the adoption of nature friendly practices.

Further, tour operators; guides have seen the added asset of MSBs migration over Lebanon; thus an added ecotourism potential in Lebanon.

Young generation are the future leaders. SPNL always targets youth in awareness and capacity building programmes in order

THE SHIFT TOWARDS A SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE MODEL NEEDS TO CONSIDER THE BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION DIMENSION, OF WHICH BIRDS ARE A MAJOR COMPONENT



Imperial Eagle © Michael Dvorak TagBLAustria

to build future eco-friendly citizens who value the connection with nature. Working with youth also has an indirect positive impact on their peers, friends, and family members.

There is always hope in every action when it is planned and implemented correctly!



Bassima Khatib
Head of
Conservation Dept.

يقع لبنان على أحد أهم الممرات للطيور المهاجرة في العالم، وهو أيضاً أحد النقاط الساخنة لقتل هذه الطيور. فقامت الجمعية بحملات التوعية من أجل توعية الناس، ولا سيما الشباب، عن أهمية المحافظة على الطيور المهاجرة المحلقة، والتميز بين الصيد المسؤول والقواس الفوضوي العشوائي.



SPNL anti-poaching team

SAFE FLYWAYS

Ending illegal killing in the Mediterranean (SAFE FLYWAYS IKB)

by Bassima Khatib

On 1 April 2020, SPNL started phase II of the project entitled “Safe Flyways – Ending Illegal Killing in the Mediterranean (Safe Flyways IKB)” for a period of 30 months, ending on 31 October 2022, when MAVA ceases to function.

Hunting / IKBs is one of the main threats to birds in Lebanon. Hunters will try to kill anything that flies using rifles, mist nets, glue, calling machines, etc. A lot of developments have occurred over the years including awareness material, policy documents, advocacy, collaborations, part-

nerships. We are now at the stage of law enforcement where SPNL is promoting:

- Responsible Hunting Areas-RHAs as solution for law enforcement, restricting hunting in specific areas.
- Organizing missions with CABS for identifying, documenting, and reporting on hunting law violations.

Six strategies define the framework of the Safe Flyway project.

- 1 Sustainability, building Partnership to continue work on IKBs beyond 2020
- 2 Knowledge baseline and information on IKBs in the Mediterranean.
- 3 Advocacy and policy against IKBs
- 4 Increasing awareness of IKBs as a crime and ensuring public demand to end IKB.
- 5 Site-level Actions to reduce IKBs at site level and allow replication
- 6 Implementing Legislation and Effective Enforcement.

Monitoring efforts along the years have shown a decrease of 5% in the number of IKBs noted in the main blackspots (Qaraoun and Akoura), while estimates from CABS's missions show that IKBs was down this autumn at Eghbe bottleneck, due to all efforts of the anti-poaching unit in partnership with CABS.

MONITORING EFFORTS ALONG THE YEARS HAVE SHOWN A DECREASE OF 5% IN THE NUMBER OF ILLEGALLY KILLED BIRDS

في 1 نيسان 2020، بدأت جمعية حماية الطبيعة في لبنان بتنفيذ مشروع تأمين العبور السليم للطيور في المتوسط. ونحن الآن في مرحلة تطبيق القانون، حيث تدعو الجمعية لإقامة أماكن محددة من أجل الصيد، وإلى ضبط مخلفات قانون تنظيم الصيد وإصدار تقارير عنها، بالتعاون مع لجنة مكافحة ذبح الطيور - CABS



Egyptian vulture © BSPB Bogdan Boev

Egyptian Vulture project

by Louis Jr. Saad

SPNL is the implementing partner for the regional “Egyptian Vulture New LIFE” Project, funded by EU, A.G. Leventis, MAVA and Green Funds. Lebanon is situated on the main flyway for this migratory vulture, travelling from the Balkans to Africa. Playing a pivotal role as a scavenger that consumes carcasses, the EV is classified as endangered species according to the IUCN Red List. In Lebanon, the EV is threatened by illegal killing and poisoning, according to studies executed by SPNL. Many awareness sessions were delivered to community members in localities were



Louis Jr. Saad
EV Project Manager

EVs have been spotted, such as Hammana, and other hunting-prevalent areas. Moreover, SPNL took part of the International Vulture Awareness Day, celebrated simultaneously across 14 countries. On the World Migratory Day, SPNL presented an online session on the role of Himas in the conservation of birds, including the EV. Indeed, this project has supported SPNL to achieve its anti-poaching objectives and provide life support services to injured birds.



SPNL team - EV campaign



Mist nests being removed by SPNL team

THE FIGHT AGAINST ILLEGAL HUNTING IS GOING COMMANDO

How the APU became the
Guide to the Unwritten
Rules of Responsible
Hunting in Lebanon

by Adonis Khatib

Businesses cannot succeed without a collaborative culture! Our best example, today, is the signed partnership between SPNL and the World Bird Council that offered SPNL actions on the ground an international dimension and gave the Council an eye to protect Birds in Lebanon.

Being a former and experienced hunter himself, Assad Serhal knew the conversation between environmentalists and hunters was impossible due to the mistrust and misconceptions in both groups. But, given that both hunters and environmentalists are interested in land conservation, Assad Serhal asked the question whether joint conservation efforts would prove beneficial to both groups' interests. In 2010, SPNL launched a partnership with Public Hunting magazine which spawned a sister company called the Middle East Sustainable Hunting Center (MESHC).

Linguistic Turn

Through awareness campaigns and training on bird protection, MESHC started a communication funnel with hunters, using their language, their terminology, and their words. The conversation switched; hunters could relate to this new speech:

*Responsible hunting as opposed to poaching
A hunter as opposed to a poacher or shooter
Prey as opposed to a bird*

This language became an effective communication tool, as it allowed the hunter to distinguish himself from poachers. It even boosted some of them to help us protect nature and birds, which in Lebanon are subject to large-scale killings. Most of the time, it happens during the night, when poachers use electro-acoustic lures, lighted trees and nets to target protected species. Even worse, painted trees on wall are lit to deceive birds which die upon collision with the fence.

Adapting the language allowed the hunter to contribute to awareness-raising and to join the anti-poaching unit launched, 3

years ago by SPNL and the MESHHC. This unit partnered with CABS to carry out common missions in most areas of Lebanon. Missions on the ground and arrests could happen in cooperation with the ISF, the army and environmental prosecutors, and with special assistance from Mrs. Claudine Aoun Roukoz, adviser to the President of the Republic on environmental affairs.

When hunters join the Force

“Awareness camps” were held every year in Lebanon, during 20 days. Over the years, Adonis Khatib, Head of MESHHC, developed a clear and effective anti-poaching unit. Strategic alliances with major actors of the hunting sector have been established. The structure of the APU has opened its doors to volunteers who document violations with detailed data. All over Lebanon, responsible hunters have been appointed as trustees who in turn have appointed sustainable hunters and bird experts to be their “eyes” on the ground.

Following a well-established protocol, violations are quickly transferred from the observing hunter to the APU who handovers the data directly to the General Directorate of ISF. From the Public Relations Division headed by Colonel Joseph Msallam, to the direction of Director General, Major General Imad Othman, and the security sector, the data collected (Violation, name and even phone numbers) helps implement arrest reports for violators.

This work protocol could be adopted abroad in the fight against bird slaughter. Its effectiveness lies in the fact that a responsible hunter becomes a partner in bird protection and a fighter in legalizing the pastime of hunting from random shooters and poachers. Turning random hunters into responsible ones has spared security forces a great deal of physical and financial effort. Today, the hunter is nature’s guarantor of safety and a partner to the security forces in implementing the law.

Since the creation of the APU in Lebanon, CABS noted that it helped reduce by 60

TALKING THE LANGUAGE OF THE HUNTER CONTRIBUTED TO AWARENESS-RAISING AROUND IKBs



Injured Honey buzzard recovering in our MLHC aviary

percent, the killing of migratory birds such as falcons, vultures, storks and pelicans. Teamwork is key!

For a sustainable future

The APU is looking for a support project to offer skills and equipment for patrol, adapted to situational contingencies. For example, wireless communication devices, photographic equipment would allow the trustees to document the violations from a distance without being attacked and hurt by armed snipers. Four-wheel drive cars and ATVs would help the patrol get into the rugged areas frequented by poachers. But one of the most important needs is to continue the work on the ground by transforming volunteering work into career opportunities for trustees.



Adonis Khatib
Anti-Poaching Unit
Field Officer

TODAY, THE HUNTER IS NATURE’S GUARANTOR OF SAFETY AND A PARTNER IN IMPLEMENTING THE LAW



ANTI-POACHING OPERATIONS
CABS
BIRD GUARD



لا يمكن لعمل ان ينجح دون فريق متكامل، فشراكة جمعية حماية الطبيعة في لبنان SPNL مع المجلس العالمي للطيور اعطت للجمعية بُعداً دولياً ورؤية عميقة للأمور، وأعطى للمجلس عيناً ساهرة مسؤولة على حماية الطيور في لبنان. من هذا المنطلق المنطقي العملي الذي إنطلق منه أسعد سرحال، مدير عام SPNL، فأطلق شراكته مع مجلة "صيد" عام 2010 لأنه أدرك انه لا يمكن التواصل بين جماعات البيئة والصيد في لبنان دون حلقة وصل تلغي الحذر والعداوة القائمة بين الطرفين، فأراد مخاطبتهم بلغتهم عبر هذه الشراكة التي انتجت جمعية شقيقة تدعى "مركز الشرق الأوسط للصيد المستدام". وهكذا فقد تولى المركز حملات التوعية والتدريب على حماية الطيور والتواصل مع الصيادين عبر لغة عربية مختصرة سهلة واضحة المعالم، ليتم التمييز بين:

صيد مسؤول - صيد جائر، صياد - قواص، طريدة - طير.

ومن هنا أضحت هذه اللغة قاموس تواصل فعال، إذ سمحت للصياد ان يتخلص من لعنة القواص عليه، ويتحمس لمساعدة الطيور التي تتعرض للابادة بسبب الصيد الجائر العشوائي. كما سمحت للصياد المسؤول أن يخرط في "وحدة مكافحة الصيد الجائر" التي اطلقتها الجمعية والمركز، والتي بدأت عملها منذ أكثر من 3 سنوات بعد ان أقامت شراكة عمل مع منظمة CABS العالمية وتم تنفيذ مهمات مشتركة في مختلف المناطق اللبنانية بالتعاون مع قوى الأمن والجيش والقضاء، والمساعدة الخاصة لفخامة رئيس الجمهورية السيدة كلودين عون روكز. وهكذا فان هذه التجربة التي تطورت من خلال حاجات العمل ومخاطره، تحوّلت الي نموذج واضح وفعال. وبهذا غدت المخالفة الموثقة تنتقل من الصياد المراقب الي هاتف الوحدة بسرعة كبيرة، فتقوم إدارة الوحدة بنقلها مباشرة الي المديرية العامة لقوى الأمن الداخلي - شعبة العلاقات العامة فتحول الي القطاع الأمني الذي وقعت المخالفة ضمن نطاقه، فتتحرك قوى الأمن لقمع المخالفة. من هنا يمكن القول ان هذه السيرة لهذا العمل أصبحت اليّة فعالة يمكن اعتمادها في محاربة اباداة الطيور في العديد من الدول. هذه الالية الناجحة كتركيبة عمل ما زال ينقصها مشروع دعم مالي يؤمن كافة احتياجاتها.



Blackcap © RSPB

INSIDE THE FIGHT

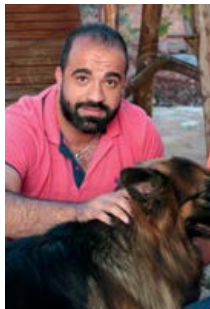
Combating the scourge of mist nets

By Mazen Yassin

A new plague has hit town: the mist nets! Bird trapping with mist nets in Lebanon is extensive, contributing to the large scale killing of birds.

Typically suspended between two poles, they're called mist nets because they're made of thread so fine that birds don't see them. They can hold up to 400 birds.

In the face of this "decimation", SPNL and MESH, ISF and municipalities, introduced measures to combat bird trapping, by introducing deterrent sentencing and educating people.



Mazen Yassin
Head of
Finance and
Administration
Dept.

Acting to suppress violations

Months later, another plague hit Town! Coronavirus..., reviving the use of mist nets. The virus did not prevent us from carrying out our tasks. Sustainable hunters were on the watch. As part of the team, despite being SPNL financial officer, I coordinated with the anti-poaching unit, Security Forces, and Municipal Police to carry out raids on the locations of these nets.

Committed to addressing the issue

Together we are committed to stem this plague. Many mist nets, with a total length more than 2000 meters, were confiscated. The birds trapped were released. The material found was handed for investigation, as were shooters.

رغم كوني محاسب الجمعية، لم أتردد بالمشاركة بأعمال قمع الصيد الجائر، ولا سيما ذلك المتعلق بالشباك المعلقة من أجل القبض على الطيور، وهي بمثابة افخاخ. فتم تفكيك حوالي 2000 متر من الشباك، وتم تسليمها إلى الشرطة.



Trapped in the net, birds were released unharmed

THE RECENT SURGE IN ILLEGAL ACTIVITIES, SUCH AS TRAPPING, IS ENDANGERING MANY THREATENED SPECIES



The mist nets can hold up to 400 birds

TEAM ON PATROL

True Adventures of a first-time patroller

by Léna Farran

Alarm set for 5:00am

I stayed awake in bed most of that night. I was going on my first field mission as a member of the Anti-Poaching unit.

Patrolling experience

We reached the village of Barja in Mount Lebanon at the crack of dawn. We explored the town in order to locate nets and devices to lure birds. After two hours, we identified six active trapping sites moths, butterflies,

and birds were confined in the nets. My heart ached.

I spotted a struggling blackcap. Without thinking, I held the trapped bird and caressed it gently so it could feel safe. That was the first time I ever touch a bird. Thinking about this exceptional experience, I felt I can really change the life trajectory of a helpless creature.

Victims to the bullets of illegal shooters

Millions of migratory birds cross over Lebanon each year. Almost 400 bird species have been identified as breeding or migratory birds. Many fall victim to the bullets of illegal shooters and poachers. According to local studies, between three and five million migratory birds are murdered in Lebanon annually.



Léna Farran
IKB Manager

إن مشاركتي في رحلات محاربة الصيد الجائر كانت ملحمة للغاية واعطتني أملاً بإمكانية المحافظة على الطيور في بلدي لبنان، فهناك عدد من الدلائل التي تدل على أن كمية الطيور المقتولة عشوائياً تتضاءل شيئاً فشيئاً.



Farming Fields in the West Bekaa © Mohamed Haimour

BETWEEN MAN AND NATURE, THE HIMA APPROACH

Making grade A compost from cow manure

by **Maher Osta**

WINNING THE TRUST OF THE COMMUNITY IS A SURE BET FOR LONG-TERM NATURE CONSERVATION

As a project manager and field officer working for SPNL, I have witnessed first-hand how the Hima concept works, and how working closely with the local population and winning their trust is a sure bet for long-term nature conservation.

Compost to reduce waste and pollution of waterways

The project I'm working on this year is a very ambitious micro-project funded by AFD, FFEM and monitored by TDV. It is based on teaching local dairy farmers in the Mansoura village, near Ammiq wetland, how to compost the cow manure produced by their farms, instead of discharging into the waterways and eventually polluting the Litani River and the Quraoun Lake. It showcases how the produced Grade A compost could be sold or spread on their agricultural fields. Out of the 16 small-grant projects granted for 9 countries around the Mediterranean, our project was the first to get launched, despite the disruptions caused by the global pandemic and the local political and economic crises.

A journey of knowledge exchange between a local farmer and a scientist

Local partners involved in this project are the Taha family, located in the village of Mansoura, in particular Izzat Taha. An ethical hunter and avid farmer, Taha have a dairy farm and plants wine grape orchards, alfalfa (as feed for his cows), in addition to potatoes. The exchange of knowledge and experience was very evident through project implementation. I would teach him how natural ecosystems work and help him identify and learn about the rich biodiversity of the West Beqaa area. In return, he would provide insights on the marvellous ways the farmers work, the problems they face and techniques they use.

This partnership between a field officer from a conservation NGO and an ambitious local stakeholder proved very successful. Not only did we produce grade A compost and use it on an experimental plot of agricultural land generating impressive results, but we also cooperated in opening the doors for many conservation activities in the area.

For example, on May 7, while giving an interview to TRT World and The Guardian in Mansoura, Izzat and I discovered a breeding colony of herons and egrets in an artificial pond in a public park that has been created and managed by the municipality of Mansoura. Last year, we observed dozens of herons and egrets coming to roost in the trees that were planted on an island inside the artificial pond. However, they were only roosting there. This year, we were very surprised to see tens of active nests with chicks and fledglings in them. In those nests were three new breeding records for Lebanon: the cattle egret, little egret, and squacco heron. Though we also saw nests for black crowned night herons, we knew they were recorded before as breeding in Lebanon.

This discovery was recorded and documented by birding friends of mine who happened to be birding with their cameras in nearby Ammiq, and later officially confirmed by Dr Ghassan Jaradi, who also published an article in Sand Grouse magazine on this important finding. Later in the year, I have seen the egret



We produced grade A compost with amazing results on crops from our experimental site

chicks fledge and fly. Further, I have documented by photo and video evidence these birds spending their days in the nearby agricultural fields, ridding the crops of harmful pest invasions. They were indeed paying back the local community and farmers for giving them that safe haven and protecting them from potential poachers.

I intend to use these pictures and videos to further spread awareness among the local community of Mansoura and farmers on the importance of bird preservation for their crops and own wellbeing. This is only one of many recorded successes how the Hima approach engages and empowers the local community to respect and protect nature.

PS: Izzat is really considering buying a camera to shoot pictures of birds instead of shooting them with his gun.



Maher Osta
Conservation Field Officer

بصفتي مدير مشروع في جمعية حماية الطبيعة، لقد خبرت عن كثب نظام الحمى وكيفية عمله. وأنا الآن أعمل على مشروع يهدف إلى إستعمال روث البقر كسماد زراعي، كي لا يتم رميه في نهر الليطاني وبحيرة القرعون.

**A HEART WITHOUT DREAMS IS LIKE
A BIRD WITHOUT FEATHERS**





Discussion between Jamal Hamzeh, project manager, and Mediterranean Partners in the Monitoring and Community Exchange (MCE) & Midterm Evaluation (MTE) Meeting in Morocco, 2019

SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF CULTURAL LAND-USE PRACTICES

Strengthening the ecological and socio-economic resilience of West Bekaa and Mount Lebanon Hima sites through sustaining their cultural practices

by **Jamal Hamzeh**

Under the MAVA M6 “Cultural Landscapes” Mediterranean programme, SPNL has started phase 2 of the project entitled “Building the ecologic and socio-economic resilience of the Shouf Mountain Landscape by restoring and strengthening the socio-cultural fabric which sustains its biodiversity and cultural values” by scaling up to include Mount Lebanon Hima sites in the project, which has started in August 2020 and will last till MAVA’s “sunset” in October 2022.

Nowadays, the landscape and it is associated cultural practices (CPs) (grazing, dry stonewall terraces cultivation, and harvesting of wild medicinal/edible plants) are impacted by various threats including forest loss and degradation, forest fires, climate change, overgrazing, uncontrolled harvesting of non-wood forest and pasture products, and intensive farming. The sustainable management of the cultural practices supported by the project helps maintain healthy and biologically diverse systems displaying greater stability and resilience, reduce environmental risks, and improve livelihood and rural economies.

SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF CULTURAL PRACTICES HELPS MAINTAIN HEALTHY AND BIOLOGICALLY DIVERSE SYSTEMS



Agricultural traditional Lebanese dry stone wall terraces

The project is framed along 8 strategies

Strategy 1 Building regional partnership for Cultural Landscapes beyond 2022, between 12 Mediterranean partners.

Strategy 2 Generating knowledge to understand the link between CPs, biodiversity and human/socioeconomic wellbeing, through scaling-up from farm/pilot site level to landscape level and implementing an ecosystem services assessment and economic valuation.

Strategy 3 Effective communication to showcase the project outcomes and impact locally and regionally.

Strategy 4 Supporting economic diversification and livelihoods of local communities, through capacity building, promotion and marketing of the traditional products associated with CPs, and commercialization of those products and services through SPNL newly established centers.

Strategy 5 Building on lessons learned and best practices to advocate for relevant national policies in favor of cultural practices.

Strategy 6 Fostering the Hima communal governance system and adapting its traditional essence to the actual context of pilot sites, while addressing gaps and capacities.

Strategy 7 Addressing the capacities and knowledge needed to optimise practical conditions for the management and restoration of the landscape and its associated CPs, including mountain pastures restoration, dry-stone wall agricultural terraces restoration, and sustainable harvesting of wild medicinal and edible plants.

Strategy 8 Expanding and scaling up the application of CPs in the wider landscape and in new Hima sites across Mount Lebanon, contributing to replication in other eco-cultural landscapes of high ecological value.



Jamal Hamzeh
Land-use
Management
Manager

إن مشروع M6 الممول من قبل مافا يهدف إلى المحافظة على الممارسات الثقافية في حوض المتوسط، في ظل المخاطر التي تهدد هذه الممارسات، كالتصحر، النيران، تغيير المناخ، الرعي المفرط والزراعة المفرطة، إلخ. إن حماية الممارسات الثقافية التي يدعمها المشروع تساهم في حماية التنوع البيولوجي والحد من المخاطر البيئية والمساعدة الإقتصادية المجتمع المحلي.



Shouf Biosphere Reserve landscape showing Cedar of Lebanon forest © ACS

SUPPORTING CONSERVATION ENTERPRISES TO ACHIEVE SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Promoting biodiversity conservation and building economic resilience around the Shouf Biosphere Reserve

by **Alice Baghdadi**

As part of the overarching MAVA M6 project, the Support Programme for Rural Enterprises Promoting Sustainable Use of Natural Resources and Biodiversity Conservation in Lebanon (RESP) aims at supporting rural entrepreneurs to promote sustainable land-use practices. Funded by MAVA and led by Mowgli Mentoring, the project is co-implemented by IES-Social Business School, along with local partners including SPNL, Al Shouf Cedar Society (ACS) and Rural Entrepreneurs, and targets enterprises in the Shouf Biosphere Reserve zone.

Building entrepreneurs' capacity and resilience between training and mentoring

The project targets natural resources/conservation entrepreneurs whose activities revolve around the traditional CPs and conservation of natural resources, fostering by that an environment where such rural enterprises can thrive. Through two key target sectors, sustainable agriculture and sustainable tourism, the project aims to harness and enhance their potential, help them to grow as active stakeholders and effectively drive sustainable development in the region.

THE PROGRAMME ALLOWS THE ENTREPRENEURS TO GROW THEIR BUSINESS IN AN INTEGRATED AND JOINED UP MANNER BY CREATING NETWORKS OF SUPPORT



Shepherd tie sheep (head to tail) for milking - Hima Tarchich

According to the criteria set by partners, 15 entrepreneurs and 15 mentors have been recruited between July and August 2020. Towards late September, mentees went into an Impact Bootcamp, led by trained coaches to help entrepreneurs build and refine their business models, bring the impact to the core of decision making and build their soft skills through a 10-step process. Afterwards, mentors got trained on the 360 mentoring by Mowgli and matched with the mentees. Then came the time to start the 6-month mentoring journey to enable entrepreneurs to develop their leadership skills and professional capacities, to gain confidence and build resilience. In parallel, ongoing support and training on specific topics will be provided by partners as well as guidance to access small funding opportunities answering entrepreneurs' business needs.

Tools to grow Businesses

In sum, the programme allows the entrepreneurs to grow their business in an integrated and joined up manner by creating networks of support. Through this project, local partners are aligning and integrating their programmes of support to

“We had all the ideas right there in our mind but to put them in this systematic way, was great”

Rola Faraj, an entrepreneur from Ain Zebde, working on Mouneh

“... passion feeding openness and perseverance where learning and growth has no age...”

Nadine Asmar, coach describing the Bootcamp

back up these entrepreneurs. SPNL, as a local partner and member in the working group, has helped mobilize their network to raise awareness and encourage interest, participate in the recruitment of mentors and mentees and the selection process of entrepreneurs and will provide training in specific topics during the mentorship period and co-organize graduation in Spring 2021. It will further offer space for high potential selected entrepreneurs and allow them to participate in various training sessions and networking events.

In reflection, the programme has embraced an enriching ecosystem where mutual learning is enabled between partners, coaches, mentors and participants. It is heart-warming to witness rural entrepreneurs, especially the old ladies from West Bekaa Rola Faraj, Suzzane Nakhle and Lina Saade, showing enormous capacity to learn and develop. Managing through the different cutting-edge tools and adapting to the virtual world, they were eager to acquire new skills and have been actively engaged throughout the different activities implemented so far.



Group of students studying the biodiversity - Ammiq wetland. In the back, the Mount Hermon (2814m), recently declared a nature reserve, still has snow at the end of April

A STRONG COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Al Hima: A successful CGS to sustain NRM and biodiversity conservation in the region

By Rania KHALIL

**WE WORKED HAND-
IN-HAND WITH
THE COMMUNITY
TO EVALUATE THE
THREATS AND
STRENGTH OF
EACH CGS**

With the support of the MAVA Foundation, SPNL has completed a three-year project entitled “Communal Governance Systems, Community Engagement and Public Participation”. It is part of MAVA’s “M6 Program”, focusing on identifying, analysing and supporting approaches of existing Communal Governance Systems (CGSs) that sustain Natural Resources Management (NRM) and biodiversity conservation in the Mediterranean Basin, particularly the Agdal, Dehesa, Montado and Hima.

Encouraging engagement

Enabling local community to participate and develop leadership in decision-making, especially the marginalized groups, our CGS-the Hima, has presented a successful model across the region. In this context, the Encouragement of Public Participation, Community Engagement Overarching Initiative’s (laid down by MAVA Foundation) main objective is to study and analyse CGSs practicing the sustainable use of natural resources and their approaches to community engagement through NRM planning and decision-making processes. It also aims at identifying the best methods and prac-

tices for the encouragement of community engagement and public participation to support biodiversity conservation.

As an implementing partner, SPNL has shared experiences and knowledge with partners, working together towards identifying the threats and strengths of each CGS and how to improve it. In practice, we had evaluated our actions at the Himas, by studying community's level and method of participation, taking their opinions into consideration, understanding their vision, learning about threats, asking them to evaluate the Hima and its role, as well as community's involvement and direct actions. This evaluation was based on two pilot sites, Anjar and Kfar Zabad, chosen at the start of the project as successful examples.

Strengthening links with authorities

Post-evaluation, Anjar and Kfar Zabad sites were investigated as potential case studies of Indigenous Peoples' and Communities' Conserved Territories and Areas (ICCAs) in Lebanon. We developed a report including updated information on the diversity and context of these two villages, providing a clear general understanding of the degree of recognition and support of potential ICCAs in Lebanon.

Additionally, we worked on strengthening links with local authorities for public land management. In Anjar, with the dedication of the municipality and community engagement, we initiated the establishment of a public park. The public land was arranged to become a space for local communities and visitors to peacefully meet in nature, under trees planted in memory of the Armenians' martyrs.

Maximize sustainability

Wrapping up the project's activities, partners in Portugal, Spain and Morocco, with SPNL's lead, have elaborated a biodiversity and socio-cultural threat matrix relevant to the CGSs in selected pilot landscapes. This matrix represented a tool to compare

ENABLING LOCAL COMMUNITY TO PARTICIPATE AND DEVELOP LEADERSHIP IN DECISION-MAKING, ESPECIALLY THE MARGINALIZED GROUPS, OUR CGS, THE HIMAS, HAS PRESENTED A SUCCESSFUL MODEL ACROSS THE REGION



Women preparing the milk to make goat cheese and chanklich

existing community-based NRM systems, based on the types and degree of threats faced in the Mediterranean Basin. Furthermore, a Regional CGS report was prepared to consolidate project's achievements by all the partners.

Indeed, the project has successfully achieved its aim to maximize the sustainability and security of key cultural land practices and to benefit biodiversity and local communities around the Mediterranean basin.



Rania Khalil
Hima Education
Manager and
Agricultural
Coordinator

إن الهدف من نهج الحمى هو اشراك المجتمع المحلي، وخلق جو من العلاقة المستدامة بين الطبيعة والبشر هو هدف جمعية حماية الطبيعة في لبنان. لقد أنجزنا هذا العام، بدعم مادي من مؤسسة "مافا"، مشروع يتعلق بأنظمة الحوكمة المجتمعية وتم اشراك الشباب والنسوة على حد سواء. ان الهدف الأساسي من المشاريع التي أنجزت هو تأمين الحد الأدنى من الاستدامة للممارسات الثقافية المتعلقة بالأرض وإيصال الفائدة للتنوع البيولوجي والمجتمعات المحلية في حوض المتوسط.



Our hima farm introduces best farming methods along with a biodiversity-friendly component

HIMA HAMMANA

A Model Hima for Going Back to Roots

by **André Bechara**

Humankind's tremendous adaptability in the face of challenges will never cease to amaze me. The global COVID-19 pandemic has shown the fragility and precariousness of the global economic system; unemployment, mass layoffs and bankruptcies to name a few. Within few weeks, the world has turned into the unpredictable, the unexpected. The carelessness and levity suddenly disappeared, people flocked to the shops for supplies, for fear of starvation. The earth is sending a message, for those who know how to listen. A Cree proverb comes to mind. "When the last tree has been cut down, the last fish caught, the last river poisoned, only then will we realize that one cannot eat money".

A call for action

This call has not gone without action, and the Hima farm is the answer for years to come. The Hima farm is a program of SPNL which aims at "returning back to the roots" of a traditional culture of the land, which is implemented by reviving old, simple and effective farming methods. Implementing Hima Farms implies the return of townspeople to earth, a reversed exodus, so to speak. In 1914, war and famine following

HIMA FARM AIMS AT “RETURNING BACK TO THE ROOTS” OF A TRADITIONAL CULTURE OF THE LAND, WHICH IS IMPLEMENTED BY REVIVING OLD, SIMPLE AND EFFECTIVE FARMING METHODS

Hammana's star: delicious cherries eco-friendly grown in the Hima Farm



the locust invasion drove the inhabitants of Mount Lebanon to the cities. In 2020, the pandemic drove people back to their traditional refuge since antiquity, to the fertile lands of the Bekaa and the Lebanese mountains.

A healthier way of living

In close cooperation with local farmers, Hima Farm programme builds on their traditional knowledge, tools, methods, and understanding of ecological diversity, and further introduces new ecological and sustainable farming methods that are biodiversity-friendly. Practically, Hima Farm ensures the adoption of a set of Best Practices, based on Good Agricultural Practices while maintaining the traditional cultural methods, believed to have a positive impact on the region's biodiversity. The program also seeks to awaken anyone who has a piece of land to cultivate it, something that can help improve the quality of life while in harmony with nature. This implies much healthier way of living than those in mass agriculture where pesticides and other chemicals are used intensively. With the high-quality yield of the Hima Farm, a Hima kitchen will be the next step

in providing exposure and adding value to the produce. This, in fact, will better present the local regional cuisine while making use of the authentic methods of preparation, complementing the say “from the earth to your kitchen”.

All this could be done with the kind and permanent support of Birdlife, CDF and SRT Capital.



André Béchara
Hima Centers
Coordinator

إن لدى الإنسان قدرة هائلة على التكيف مع التطورات والتحديات الجديدة، فمع انتشار جائحة كورونا، ظهرت هشاشة النظام الإقتصادي العالمي و إنزلق العالم إلى أزمة إقتصادية بسبب الجائحة. فكانت لدى جمعية حماية الطبيعة في لبنان، فكرة إقامة مزارع الحمى، وهي عبارة عن مزارع نموذجية في مواقع الحمى، تهدف إلى تشجيع الزراعة المستدامة في هذا الزمن الصعب. فكما إن الحرب العالمية الأولى والمجاعة التي رافقتها أدت إلى مغادرة اللبنانيون للقري، ففي عام 2020، أدت جائحة كورونا إلى عودة اللبنانيون إلى الأرض.



Hammana is an ideal environment to cultivate wide range of fruits and vegetables

HAMMANA: Food Symbols and Heritage

by **Christelle Salah Bou-Mitri El Debs**

Doctor in Food Science and Agricultural Chemistry, proudly from Hammana and volunteering at the Hima Hammana

Hammana village is rooted in a fertile valley surrounded by cliffs, mountains and irrigated by various water springs, making it an ideal environment to cultivate a wide range of fruits, vegetables, legumes, and cereals.

Cherish the cherries

Cherries are a symbol of identity for Hammana residents. Cherries blossom early April just when the harsh winter fades. As in Japan, cherry blossoms are highly venerated, and cherry fruits are considered a symbol of renewal, regeneration, purity, prosperity, ephemeral beauty, and evolution. Nutritionally, cherries are superfood rich in antioxidant, with a good source of fiber, vitamins and minerals, including potassium, calcium, vitamin A and folic acid. The color, skin texture and fresh juicy taste are unique to this fruit. The sweetness, tartness and flavors are highly craved all year long. Unfortunately, cherry season is very short, and cherries are ephemeral. To taste its delicacy throughout the year, locals are continuously looking to preserve it in various ways such as producing jam, syrup, sauce, and alcohol.



Yvonne Bou Habib Bou-Mitri posing with the cherry blossom 1981



Salah Bou-Mitri venerating his cherries in 2020

Traditional gestures: making the Mounet Hammana is also known for its delicious beans. Residents have been very knowledgeable in its cultivation and creative in extending its shelf life. Moreover, Hammana offers sunny pasture having nectar and diverse pollen plants essential for the production of unique honey quality. During the summer and early fall, families benefit from the sunlight and dry season to prepare the “*mounet*” for the harsh winters. The “*mounet*” extends from “*kishk*” (fermented yogurt and bulgur), “*awarma*” (preserved meat in fat), “*Zaatar*” (mixed herbs with sesame), to grape molasses, jams, dried herbs, raisins and pulses.

Revival of the traditional cuisine

Authentic dishes are also well known in this village such as the “*mjadarit loubye*” (strained cooked beans with rice and onion), “*kasaza*” (dried flat green bean with pod, boiled and mixed with lemon juice, olive oil, sumac, garlic and salt). These dishes are mainly consumed during the lent period and more specifically on the Ash Monday and Good Friday. Food culture is central to Hammanian. Unfortunately, this healthy culi-

nary heritage is disappearing with our elderly generation. Accordingly, there is a high need to conserve the Hammanian collective memory, their knowledge and know-how through the cultivation, preservation, documentation and revival of the traditional food heritage. There is also a dire need to encourage the rural populations, small producers and farmers especially women to produce safe, high quality products and sell it at fair prices.

At Hima Hammana and with the help of SPNL, we envision to drive the economic development of the village through the promotion of local food heritage, documentation and revival of the traditional cuisine. At the Hima Farm, we visualize to encourage sustainable bio-farming and promote the livelihood of rural producers and processors through the creation of generation-to-generation linkage. Ideally, the old generation got to teach the know-how while the younger leads in science, technology and innovation.

HAMMANA MODEL FOR THE HIMA SYSTEM

by Fadi Slaybi

Mayor of Hammana

As sons of Hammana, we have a privilege, one in which we take pride. The beauty of our town's nature and geography, place on our shoulders a double responsibility to conserve Hammana's nature, environment, and unique model.

Pioneering ideas

The municipality has, therefore, issued decisions for conserving the nature of Hammana: from appointing the guardians of the hima, banning hunting and banning grazing of livestock in the town's commons, establishing an observatory for migratory birds and preserving forest trees, in addition to working on the afforestation of large areas. All of these decisions aim at reducing environmental pollution through projects and showing the implementation can be done with discipline, precision, and trustworthiness, making Hammana a model for the Hima system around the world.

An example for future generations

By stimulating the environmental, social and touristic factors, activating integration between the public sector, non-governmental organizations, and private institutions, we aim at setting an example for future generations.

The cooperation between the municipality, SPNL and Air France is one example of this integration and a roadmap for success to be emulated by other municipalities.

A safe Haven for Birds

One of our dreams is to turn the skilled hunter into a conservationist of birds. For this to happen, we urge the Ministry of Environment to protect the migration of birds and regulate hunting on all Lebanese territory. Today, we are preparing a project to establish the Hammana Hima as a focal point for building the first project to monitor bird migration in the Middle East.

**WE ARE
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MONITOR
BIRD MIGRA-
TION IN
LEBANON
AND THE
MIDDLE EAST**



Fadi Slaybi
Mayor of Hammana



© Etie Khalil

نموذج حمانا لنظام الحمى

بقلم فادي صليبي
رئيس بلدية حمانا

نحن كأبناء حمانا نعلم جيداً نحظى بميزة وهبنا إياها الخالق نعتز ونفتخر بها، هذا المشهد الخلاب والتناغم البيئي الرائع يحتم علينا مسؤولية مضاعفة ترمي الى الحفاظ على طبيعة حمانا وبيئتها ونموذجها الفريد. فكانت بلدية حمانا على قدر هذه المهمة إذ عمدت الى إصدار عدد من القرارات الرامية الى الحفاظ على بيئة حمانا وطبيعتها من تعيين حماة الحمى، ومنع الصيد العشوائي، والصيد بشكل عام، ورعي الماشية في مشاعات البلدة، وإشياء مرصد للطيور المهاجرة والحفاظ على الأشجار الحرجية، والعمل على تشجير مساحات كبيرة من النطاق الجغرافي. كل هذا يهدف الى تخفيف التلوث البيئي من خلال مشاريع بالتعاون مع الإتحاد الأوروبي، بالإضافة الى توقيع إتفاقيات البلديات البيئية والطاقة، كما كان هناك تعاون مع جمعية حماية الطبيعة في لبنان SPNL. أما الأهم فهو التنفيذ الذي كان بغاية الإنضباط والدقة والأمانة لتكون حمانا نموذج للحمى في لبنان والعالم.

إن التعاون بين البلدية وال SPNL وال Air France هو نموذج للتكامل في العمل البيئي والإجتماعي وخارطة طريق للنجاح يحتذى بها للبلديات في لبنان. ونحن اليوم بصدد إعداد مشروع لتكوين "حمى حمانا" نقطة إرتكاز لبناء أول مشروع لمراقبة هجرة الطيور في لبنان والمنطقة.



SECURE THE CONTINUITY OF THE SONS OF HAMMANA

Development of a new strategy
aimed at re-activating tourism
in Hammana

by **Bashir Fouad Farhat**

Former mayor of Hammana

Since the beginning of the last century, Hammana has been one of the most prominent summer villages in Mount Lebanon and is famous for tourism. Because of all the painful events of 2020, traditional tourism has declined and no longer provides the townspeople with continuity, permanence and a dignified livelihood. That is why I, in cooperation with the current municipal council since our election, we have worked hard to develop a new strategy aimed at re-activating tourism. Several environmental projects have had a positive impact and contributed to the activation of ecotourism in terms of the economic, social, cultural and even religious dimensions.

Conserving our natural wealth

Different municipal decisions were taken to strengthen ecotourism and protect nature. Establishing the HIMA puts legal protection, strengthens man's attachment to his land and the inheritance of his ancestors, preserves nature from fire hazards and organizes sustainable use of natural resources.

Establishing a bird observatory will attract people both locally and internationally, and puts Hammana on the world map through Birdlife International.

Establishing "Le Parc Air France" contributes to limiting and reducing thermal emissions, encouraging agriculture, and reviving green areas.

Together, we work at preserving our natural wealth while improving our society for the better.

WE PROTECT BIODIVER- SITY WHILE IMPACTING POSITIVELY HAMMANA'S PEOPLE AND TOWN



Bashir Fouad Farhat
Former mayor of
Hammana

ضمان ديمومة أبناء حمانا تطوير إستراتيجية جديدة تهدف إلى إعادة تفعيل السياحة في حمانا

بقلم بشير فؤاد فرحات
رئيس بلدية حمانا السابق

.. قمّت وبالتعاون مع المجلس البلدي الحالي منذ إنتخابنا جاهدين بوضع إستراتيجية جديدة تهدف إلى إعادة تفعيل السياحة بخلق وتحفيز سياحات بديلة عن السياحة التقليدية وهنا لا بد من القول ان الارث البيئي أخذ الحيز الاكبر من هذه الاستراتيجية، لذا تم التعاون مع عدة جمعيات ومؤسسات بيئية من أهمها التعاون والعمل المتبادل مع جمعية حماية الطبيعة في لبنان SPNL فقامت الاخيرة بتوظيف كامل قدراتها في العمل والاستثمار وطرح الافكار، وفعلاً تم إنجاز وإنجاح عدة مشاريع بيئية أهمها:

- إتخاذ قرار بلدي باقامة "حمى" ضمن مشاع وعقارات عائدة ملكيتها الى بلدية حمانا.

- إقامة برج لمراقبة الطيور المهاجرة الذي يستقطب عدداً هائلاً من الاشخاص محلياً ودولياً وأصبحت بلدة حمانا على الخريطة العالمية من خلال جمعية BirdLife.

- إتخاذ قرار بلدي آخر باقامة حديقة تحت إسم شركة Air France بهدف تمويل مشروع يساهم في الحد وتخفيف الانبعاثات الحرارية ويقوم بتشجيع الزراعة وبعيداً إحياء المناطق الخضراء.

FOR THE LOVE OF NATURE

A sustainable hunter who enjoys watching migratory birds soar in Hammana skies

by **Fadi Skandar**

I was born into a family that, from one generation to another, has always loved hunting. Over time, our love of hunting has taught us to love nature, something that has made me feel certain that if we conserve the environment (nature, birds...), this will positively impact us and our children, especially in the future.

We in Hammana are fortunate to have a municipality that is aware of this issue and that has worked in coordination with SPNL and the children of Hammana to create the Hammana hima, a sort of nature reserve that I was one of the first to visit for the purpose of hunting, and where I watched the passage of the many diverse birds that pass through it (such as the wild pigeon, roar swallow, and many types of sparrows ...) and I enjoyed watching them without disturbing them, and even requested the hunters who frequent the site to leave them alone.

As sustainable hunters, we believe in maintaining the hobby of sustainable hunting for our children and educating hunters as much as possible to troll with awareness and sophistication, respect for nature and birds, and to maintain the cleanliness of their surroundings, which is essential and important.

Fadi Skandar



Bird Observatory - Hima Hammana © Martin Káč



**WE BELIEVE
IN
SUSTAINABLE
HUNTING
WITH
RESPECT
FOR NATURE
AND BIRDS**

FROM AVID HUNTER TO BIRD LOVER

A fierce Homat al Hima

by **Chadi Saad**

I was a fierce hunter, and hunting was in my blood. I started as a child and grew fiercer with age. My hunting theatre was the mountains and plains of Lebanon, where I would kill dozens of birds. One day, I realized that local birds were part of the cycle of life. A little later, this feeling grew, after an encounter with international bird-watchers from OSME and Birdlife International. Starting that day, I took part in bird count operations and observed birds' migration from the Hima Bird Observatory, step by step changing my tune.

Today, I listen to birds' songs, understand species, work actively against illegal hunting and capture the beauty of our feathered friends from behind my lens. I shoot them with passion, capturing their flight or revealing their cuteness... and my new rifle is... a Camera!

Every day, I send SPNL beautiful pictures of Birds and have become a fierce member of Homat al Hima, protecting nature and birds from my beloved Hima in Hammana.



© Etie Khalil



CONFESSIONS OF A PHOTOGRAPHER

By Elie Louis Khalil

As a retired architect and amateur photographer, mainly landscape and macro photography, I love nature and hiking.

Last September, I was invited to Hima Hammana by Chadi Saad. That day, while hiking in the mountains of Hammana, I was introduced to the concept of bird watching. Upon spotting a feathered species each time, the sheer excitement made me realize what a wonderful experience I was living. Since that 17th September, I started going daily to the Hima. Hima Hammana is the fruit of relentless efforts of SPNL in preserving and regulating nature ecosystem, beauty, welfare and health of the human being.

Once you get hooked onto the fine art of bird photographing, it can get very addictive and you begin to appreciate the music in the air! Photographing birds is an enticing challenge and an enjoyable pastime. Seeing how they moved, watching their way of flight, encouraged me to learn everything about our feathered friends. From the different species, to their nesting and breeding habits, I am eager to know all about birds, including migration.

I believe that to love nature is to preserve it by all means while enjoying the beauty of God's creation in a safe and clean environment.

I BELIEVE THAT TO LOVE NATURE IS TO PRESERVE IT BY ALL MEANS



Chadi Saad

Elie Louis Khalil





AirFrance Team yoga session at Hammana Hima Farm

SPNL*AIRFRANCE: A SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIP WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR

Reforestation project to
compensate for CO₂ emissions

By **Rania Khalil**

**BY MID 2020, WE
REACHED HAPPILY
OUR TARGET: 5000
TREES WERE PLANTED
IN THE LEBANESE
MOUNTAINS**

SPNL has been focused lately on creating links with the private sector, to depict conservation work as a financially viable option. In parallel, AirFrance-KLM was looking to support a local environmental NGO in line with its reforestation project, that is part of a worldwide project entitled “Trip & Tree” to compensate for CO₂ emissions. Several meetings and site visits resulted in signing a partnership agreement to plant trees in the Lebanese mountains and establish several green parks for local communities in different areas.

By mid 2020, 5000 trees were planted with the help of municipalities across Mount Lebanon and West Bekaa, including Hammana, Ras El Metn, Kafarmatta, Ein Zebdeh and Keyfoun. The campaign was named “A tree for someone you love”. It aimed at enhancing the spirit of association with the Hima, through the establishment of a social and emotional relationship between man and earth with the act of planting trees. As for parks, the first was “Le Parc Air France”, in Hammana, which was inaugurated on the 14th of October, with the support of the municipality.

By all means, SPNL-AirFrance KLM partnership has exceptionally succeeded to showcase a win-win partnership between a conservation NGO and a private sector

MORE AND MORE CITIZENS JOIN OUR CAUSE TO REFOREST LEBANON

Matthieu Tetaud, GM AirFrance, and Assad Serhat, DG SPNL, signing the strategic agreement between AirFrance-KLM *SPNL



entity. While generating real impact, the project has restored and strengthened people's connection to land and commitment to preserve natural resources, through an eternal connection with their beloved.

في هذا العام المنصرم، تم إبرام إتفاق بين جمعية حماية الطبيعة في لبنان والخطوط الجوية الفرنسية، بهدف غرس الأشجار في مناطق معينة. وبالتنسيق مع بلدية حمانا، تم إختيار حمى حمانا كأول مكان لغرس الأشجار تحت عنوان "شجرة لمن تحب"، ثم تبعها غرس الأشجار في عدة أماكن أخرى، وتم، بنهاية المطاف، غرس خمسة آلاف شجرة. ومن الواضح أن أفق التعاون بين الجمعية والخطوط الجوية الفرنسية واسع للغاية.



SPNL *AirFrance reforestation agreement ceremony planting a cedar





Plant of rice

COEXISTENCE BETWEEN NATURE AND HUMAN IN JAPANESE SATOYAMA LIFE

Linking Satoyama to
the Hima

By **TAKESHI HOSHIDA**

Professor, YASUDA WOMEN's University, Hiroshima, Japan

Japan is a forest nation where forests cover about 70% of the country. Japanese life has been deeply connected to forests since ancient times. Among these forests, Satoyama is a nature that humans have access to, and they represent a state where both nature and humans coexist. A Sato is literally a village, and a Yama is a mountain. However, this coexistence between nature and humans has not been easily realized. For thousands of years, Japanese people have been seeking out to coexist with nature, by protecting nature and over-fishing for thousands of years alternately. Today, let's look at four examples of how Japanese people have raised Satoyama.

The first example is the relationship between cherry blossom viewing and the Japanese. Japanese people have historically liked the season when cherry blossoms in spring are in full bloom. Every March to April, you can see many people gathering under cherry blossoming trees such as forests, parks, and riverbanks. While enjoying the beautiful cherry blossoms, they seem to enjoy the instinct that has been historically incorporated into the nation. Japan is a nation whose main staple is rice, which can be obtained from rice cultivation.



Cherry blossoms

When people did not have precise calendar and the certain sense of the season, the blossoming of cherry blossoms was a signal to soon plant rice. The Japanese had prayed to the cherry blossoms in full bloom and the good harvest of rice for that year to the cherry blossoms. The cherry blossoms loved by people since ancient times are the original scenery of Satoyama.

Let's look at an example of realizing the preciousness of lost nature. The second example is the relationship between forest and sea. Kesenuma, Miyagi Prefecture, 300 km north of Tokyo, has been a source of oysters since 16th century. Here, white oysters began to turn red from the 1960's when Japanese economy had grown rapidly. The cause was red tide caused by household and industrial wastewater. They were called blood oysters and could not be shipped, and many fishermen gave up on the sea and landed. Then the wastewater was controlled by the subsequent tightening of regulations by the local government, but oysters could not be harvested as before. "Is there any other cause?" One fisherman, Hatakeyama, visited palaces to harvest oysters in other parts in Japan and Brittany, France, where oysters had been

THE SATOYAMA INITIATIVE PROMOTES INTEGRATION OF CONSERVATION AND THE SUSTAINABLE USE OF BIODIVERSITY IN PRODUCTION LANDSCAPES, OUTSIDE OF PROTECTED AREAS

transported from Miyagi, in order to find out initiative to restore the sea for oysters. Such rich fishing grounds had big rivers which had rich forests upstream. The forest upstream of the Okawa River pouring into Kesenuma was damaged by overfishing during the high economic growth period and then neglected to take care. The rich fishing grounds do not exist alone. The rich forests are nurturing rich seas with rich fishing grounds. Hatakeyama found that "The forest is longing for the sea; the sea is longing for the forest".

From 1989, Hatakeyama began planting trees upstream of Okawa River. It is the beginning of fishermen's tree planting. In 1993, the study by Hokkaido University proved that "90% of the iron, nitrogen, and phosphorus that nurture the plant phytoplankton in the sea of Kesenuma is supplied by Okawa." The source of Okawa River's nutrients is the fallen leaves of broad-leaved trees in the Satoyama forest of the basin. Satoyama's bounty nutrients grow phytoplankton. Oysters that cannot swim eat phytoplankton that live in the sea. The oysters make people's tables lively. Ten years after the tree planting, the former sea has returned to Kesenuma. The rich

oysters have grown, and the eel fry that has disappeared has returned. Satoyama and Satoumi (Village Sea) are networked through rivers. Hatakeyama's tree-planting campaign has become an NPO, and is also planting forests in people's mind networks.

Let's look at initiatives by companies. As the third example, I introduce the making of Satoyama in a city. Housing manufacturer Sekisui House has been promoting the "Five Trees" plan for a landscaping and greening project that considers biodiversity since 2001. By creating small "Satoyamas" in their home garden, they are trying to connect with the local nature and maintain and restore the dying ecosystem network. The Five Trees plan envisions three native bird species and two for butterflies. By carefully planting native tree species that are closely related to the life of living creatures in harmony with the climate of various parts of Japan, they aim to create gardens that coexist with familiar nature and deepen residents' attachment over time. Even if a small garden is set up in a city with trees planting, the area of such house becomes a place where insects such as butterflies, birds and other creatures come to visit. If we create any such space in a city, the city will be a place where these creatures live and a corridor for movement of these creatures by creating a food chain between creatures and ecological networks. This ecosystem network enriches local and eventually all over the Japanese biodiversity. These spaces are not only accessible places for birds and insects, but also places where residents can enjoy the richness of nature. For example, deciduous broad-leaved trees that serve as feed for wild birds not only block strong sunlight due to the shade of greenery in summer, but also produce cool air due to the transpiration of leaves. Evergreens, on the other hand, maintain a green landscape all year round, providing shelter for small wild birds to hide from birds of prey. In addition, it becomes a blindfold for the residents from the street, adding color to the town in winter. The deliberately developed green



The forest is longing for the sea, the sea is longing for the forest

THE SATOYAMA EFFORTS SHARE THE TRADITION AND VALUES OF HIMA, WHICH HAS BEEN WORKING ON THE COEXISTENCE OF PEOPLE AND ALL LIVING THINGS



is an important element that grows over time, cultivates attachment to the living environment and increases the asset value of houses and towns. The total number of trees planted by “Five Trees” plan has exceeded 15 million, making it a new type of Satoyama.

The fourth example introduces the case where AEON, the largest distribution company group in Asia, cooperates with UNESCO's Biosphere Reserve (BR). Aya BR, one of its representatives, carries out tree planting and environmental education, and local community, local government and corporate stakeholders work together to carry out Satoyama conservation activities. This is a good example of creating a sustainable ecosystem.

Satoyama's efforts share the tradition and values of HIMA, which has been working on the coexistence of the people in the region and all living things such as wild animals, birds, insects and trees. The wisdom that Lebanon and Japan have each nurtured will be in a position to disseminate insight and best practices a model of a global community that seeks sustainability.



Sekisui House has been promoting the “Five Trees”

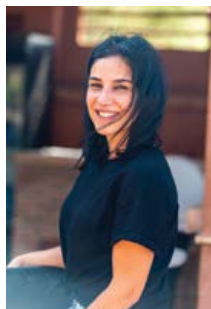


SPNL team at Mount Lebanon Hima Center - MLHC, Kayfoun

HIMA CENTERS, PROMOTE AND CONNECT COMMUNITIES & BIODIVERSITY

Mount Lebanon
Hima Center -
MLHC, Kayfoun

by Jamal Hamzeh



Jamal Hamzeh
MLHC Manager

Funded by the MAVA Foundation, the Mount Lebanon Hima Center (MLHC) is located at Kayfoun, halfway between all Hima sites, and 35 minutes away from Beirut. It is also strategically situated in the upper region of the Beirut River Valley IBA/KBA, the most important bottleneck for migratory soaring birds during Autumn migration.

Hima to Hima

The center aims to strengthen, promote, and connect the different Hima sites in Lebanon to expand the benefits for communities and biodiversity. In addition, it seeks to increase awareness and inspire people, especially children through the Schools with No Walls- SNOW Programme, to connect to nature, appreciate ecological value of Hima sites and get engaged with conservation work.

The center is a source of unrestricted funding for SPNL. It offers unique educational packages and outdoor experiences for schools and children as paid service, capacity development for youth and local communities, a gift shop for marketing awareness material and local community

products, a Hima home exhibit/museum area, a snack stand, a high-tech training and conference area, a bird aviary for awareness, an outdoor garden, and a guestroom.

Adaptation is key

Going in and out of lockdowns, majority of schools have not opened their doors this year, posing a major challenge for the centre's initial operational plan. However, adaptation measures have been followed to turn these challenges into opportunities and help support local communities, especially women, children and the youth highly affected by the crisis.

Efforts are tenfold

Accordingly, environmental, educational, and recreational activities were offered for children free of charge. Additionally, several capacity development trainings tackling different environmental, social, and economic issues were organized for the youth and local conservation groups. Besides, traditional local community food products have been promoted and marketed in the centre to help create income and improve livelihoods of marginalized groups. Lots of fundraising efforts are being put to reach a higher number of beneficiaries from the local community and further implement free of charge environmental, educational, and income generating activities, which will help support people in those hard times.



Educational and recreational activities with children at MLHC

SPNL's 2030 Strategy Presentation at MLHC



يتميز مركز حمى كيفون بموقعه الإستراتيجي الوسطي بين كافة المناطق اللبنانية، و يحتوي على عدة مرافق حيوية، بالإضافة إلى كونه المركز الرئيسي لبرنامج سنو - إي المدرسة بدون جدران



Part of our nature education programs aims directly on educating the youth about the direct impact of illegal hunting on bird populations

A SAFE HAVEN FOR BIRDS

Mount Lebanon
Hima center aviary

by **Maher Osta**

As BirdLife partner in Lebanon, SPNL was spearheading the fight against the illegal killing of birds for years with measurable successes. Yet, the illegal killing of birds still remains a major threat to this day due to the sheer number of hunters and shy law enforcement.

Considered a black spot for illegal killing of birds, Lebanon probably hosts the largest ratio of hunters to Kilometres squared of hunting land in the world. Every year, we see thousands of new-comers to the hobby buying cheap shotguns and joining the already staggering number of hunters around the country (estimated around 600,000).

As part of Hima Education, SPNL aims at spreading awareness among the local communities and educating the youth and children the direct impact of illegal hunting on bird populations and its indirect impact on nature, biodiversity, and human health.

Bird rescue center

The aviary at MLHC was built with the initial purpose of breeding endangered species, like the Syrian serin, then releasing them into the wild to replenish the numbers of the wild populations. However,



Anahita will be joining the captive breeding program in Bulgaria



Injured birds are undergoing rehabilitation in our aviary

that has changed when Anahita dropped on us from the sky (literally!).

Anahita is a young Egyptian Vulture who was shot in Lebanon recently. We rescued her and after many vet visits and a major operation on her leg, she passed the danger zone now and is residing at our MLHC aviary. She is joined with other shot birds undergoing rehabilitation to be released later, like cranes, black kites, and other raptors. Sadly, Anahita will never be released back to the wild due to her severe handicap. Hopefully, she'll be flown later to her homeland in Bulgaria where she'll join in the captive breeding program.

As one of Europe's rarest birds, Anahita will help us educate the younger generation about the atrocities of illegal hunting, and how an ignorant human with a shotgun and a single shot can undermine years of efforts and thousands of man-hours spent to preserve her kind.

Nature warriors

Children and youth would also learn about the success story of the rehabilitated and released birds, like "Osmat", a young common crane who spent a few weeks with Anahita in the aviary recovering from an

CHILDREN VISITING OUR CENTER WILL LEARN THAT THEY CAN BECOME THE NEW NATURE WARRIORS, AND BIRD DEFENDERS

injured wing after being shot by another poacher. Osmat was recently taken by SPNL's field officers to the furthest point South of Lebanon, where it got released to fly back free and join the rest of Europe's migrating birds on their epic journey to their wintering grounds in Africa.

Children visiting our center will learn that they can become the new nature warriors, and bird defenders, instead of joining the ugly trend of becoming poachers.

A wild crane got released to join migrating Birds on their epic journey





LEEDS Workshop at HHIC / The whole group in front of HHIC overlooked by Shouf Biosphere Reserve

A STORY OF SUCCESS AMID THE CRISIS

How Homat Al Hima
International Centre
stood resilient

by **Wassim el Khatib**

While moving strategically to decentralize its operation to remote areas, SPNL established Homat al Hima International Center (HHIC) at Kherbet Qanafar, in the Western Bekaa Valley of Lebanon, funded by MAVA and SRT. The center, which has been founded on the basis of a feasibility study, ensuring its success being central to the West Bekaa Country Club (WBCC), a resort attracting thousands of customers annually, has yet stood resilient to the closure of

**THE HHIC
LAUNCHED
AN
EMERGENCY
PLAN TO
SERVE FOOD
TO 400
CITIZENS OF
THE BEQAA**

the latter, following the health and financial crisis hitting Lebanon.

A success story

Indeed, it a story of success and perseverance at global and national crisis times. February 2020 marked the soft opening of the HHIC at WBCC, while hosting a workshop event of the Praxis Team at the University of Leeds entitled “Heritage for Global Challenges”. The academics and researchers, who chose HHIC and WBCC as their workshop destination, have proudly reported contentment with the setting, the surrounding Hima sites and the hospitality of the local communities. Inspired by the Hima approach to natural and cultural preservation, the group generously donated to the local communities through purchasing products from HHIC gift shop and planting cedar trees, as part of SPNL and Air France-KLM campaign, “A Tree for your Beloved”. The organizer, Ms. Lauren Wray, expressed her gratitude ending her letter of appreciation saying “I would strongly recommend anyone considering booking an event at the WBCC and HHIC to do so, they will have an unforgettable stay in the best possible way!”.

Following this propitious start, HHIC was getting prepared to host the Hima regional workshop co-organized by SPNL and the International Union for Conservation of Nature-Regional Office for West Asia (IUCN-ROWA). By late February however, Coronavirus had started sweeping into Lebanon and the whole country was under lock-down by mid-March. To the virus which has shattered lives, disrupted markets, and challenged governments' competencies, Lebanon was no exception. Unfortunately, the economic collapse and the civil unrest which began in the autumn of 2020, have been aggravated by the pandemic, and pushed the Lebanese well beyond their capacity. Unfortunately the WBCC, which had commanded high visibility for HHIC, could no longer sustain its operation and was compelled to shut down.

Serving local communities

SPNL founded the Hima revival approach as means to ensure nature conservation, cultural preservation as well as sustainable livelihoods. Serving local communities has been a core mission of SPNL in peace and war. As expected, SPNL stood by the Hima communities to fight the economic and health crisis. The HHIC launched an emergency plan to respond to the crisis, including serving local people. A total of 400 food portions were distributed to locked-down, disadvantaged families at the Hima of Kherbet Qanafar and Ain Zebde in West Bekaa as well as Hammana and Keyfoun in Mount Lebanon. To aid municipalities in responding to the pandemic, the HHIC, in cooperation with the Litani River Authority (LRA), refurbished a center at Kherbet Qanafar to serve as a quarantine facility for the region, with a capacity of seven beds.

Hima Farm

As part of its emergency plan, the HHIC launched its own Hima Farm, a model of small-scale sustainable farms, under SPNL's Hima Farm program. The farm targets employing nature-based farming methods



HHIC Gift Shop

to provide healthy high-quality produce while ensuring environmental preservation, biodiversity conservation and economic viability. In addition to providing support for interested community members to replicate this farming model, HHIC started to offer its fresh produce across Hima villages.

A window of hope

It seems there remains a window of hope in Lebanon. People are starting to acknowledge the role of nature conservation in sustaining their lives and livelihoods and to appreciate the surrounding natural world. HHIC intends to invest in this opportunity through offering nature-based products and services. HHIC is promoting, through its Souk el Hima, an online gift shop, locally produced, nature-friendly food products, including wine, honey, jam, distilled products and natural syrups. In addition, the center is providing various eco-touristic packages pertaining to different forms of responsible tourism. So far, visiting groups have been extremely satisfied with the products and services offered by the HHIC and have commended on the role which the HHIC and SPNL play in connecting people back to nature in Lebanon.



Wassim el Khatib
HHIC Manager

أسست جمعية حماية الطبيعة في لبنان مركز حماة الحمى الدولي في قرية خربة قنارفار في البقاع الغربي، ومع تطور الأزمة وانتشار جائحة كورونا، تم إغلاق النادي المجاور، وهو نادي البقاع الغربي الريفي، لكن المركز إستمر بأعماله رغم إنف الأزمة. ومع تفاقم الأزمة، بدأ المركز بالقيام بالمساعدات الإنسانية، مثل توزيع المواد الغذائية على المعوزين، على سبيل المثال. فكان بذلك دليل على مرونة جمعية حماية الطبيعة في لبنان وعزمها في وجه الأزمات المتتالية.







Planting and crafting session with scout's group at MLHC, Kayfoun

CONNECTING CHILDREN TO NATURE THROUGH SNOW

An environmental education program to evolve children's knowledge, behavior and values

by **Elie El-Haddad**

In a world where everything is turning grey, nature is the only bright touch left to bring back life to our society. Nowadays, people are becoming busier but less productive. The economic and social lives are stuck in a vicious circle, leading to an observable lack of advancement and development among our communities.

Wondering why? People are becoming more distant to nature, spending their time

WHEN EDUCATION IS LINKED TO NATURE, WE ACHIEVE FAR MORE THAN WE SEEK

in confined spaces rather than connecting to the outside world. This daily routine has inhibited efficiency, creativity, and learning capacities, especially when it comes to children. As it is them who will induce change in the society, it becomes inevitable to educate them at early ages, especially on ecological and environmental topics, to connect them to nature. In fact, this is the core of School With No Walls (SNOW) programme.

An environmental education programme targeting children

SNOW is an SPNL initiative that comprises a comprehensive educational extra-curricular program with a clear framework and an eco-friendly vision targeting children between 8 and 12 years old. This curriculum of education is developed to spread awareness, deliver environmental and ecological knowledge as well as promote pro-environmental behaviour, while highlighting values associated with nature. All educational material adopted by SNOW is based on the concept of learning by fun, adopting interactive and entertaining methods for effective delivery. Target groups include children from schools, civil society organ-

izations and local community groups. This year was a tough one, but there is always a way to deliver environmental education and build a bridge to connect our children to the surrounding nature.

Making a Significant impact

In 2020, through a technical support project funded by BirdLife CDF in collaboration with Birdlife Malta, the SNOW programme got framed in a three-year strategy with over-arching strategic aims and objectives. This strategy allowed the development of a clearly-defined annual workplan to implement SNOW across Lebanon.

In 2020, SNOW managed to have significant impact on the young generation, targeting them through outdoor educational events as well as a virtual competition on social media. Children were invited to feel the value of nature while safe at home during extended lockdowns.

When Nature challenges children

While transportation and live communication means were restricted, SNOW succeeded to reach children through an online competition entitled “Bird Alive”. This virtual competition was conducted over SPNL’s social media pages, under the “Spring Alive” campaign. The latter is an international project organized by OTOP, Poland’s Birdlife partner, to encourage children’s interest in nature and birds as well as engage them in conservation activities and events. The competition consisted of educational quizzes and weekly multidisciplinary challenges tailored to be executed at home. The results were creative and reflected a special connection that children have established with nature while locked down.

Our participation in this international campaign was impactful and ended with announcing SPNL as the winner of the “Action of the Year” contest of Spring Alive for Asia and Europe regions. This achievement emphasized the potential

“WE NEEDED IT”,

a spontaneous comment by a boy scout during a SNOW session at Mount Lebanon Hima Centre – MLHC, summarize all the story about the importance of nature in the mental and physical well-being of our children.



Bird Alive - Drawing by Mauricio Mourakesh

of the virtual implementation of SNOW programme.

“Like music and art, love of nature is a common language that can transcend political or social boundaries”

Jimmy Carter

Reunite children with nature

To help breaking all unnecessary boundaries and reunite our children with nature, despite restrictions and limitations, SNOW will be validated soon to become a virtual environmental programme. It will be delivered through a customized platform designed to be used by children, under the supervision of teachers and parents. Environmental education is the key to induce a positive change to this world and as David Sobel have said: **“If we want children to flourish, to become truly empowered, let us allow them to love the earth before we ask them to save it”.**



Elie El-Haddad
Research and Conservation Manager and Educational Officer

إن مشروع “سنو” هو مشروع المدرسة بدون جدران، إي المدرسة بدون جدران، هو إقامة برامج تثقيفية وترفيهية للأطفال، في الطبيعة.

بالإضافة إلى ذلك، يتعلم الأطفال عن موضوع البيئة وأهميتها وكيفية المحافظة عليها بإطار ترفيهي و مسلي.



Harrier on the attack © Mohamed Haimour

HOMAT AL HIMA “The Fighter’s Salute ”

By Rania Khalil



Homat al Hima capacity building training at MLHC, from different Lebanese Himas

It is said “a nation’s strength is in its youth”. I am sure you keep asking yourself: “What keeps those young Lebanese people standing?” They have always got one clear answer: “Our dreams and our hope!” So, let us stand for our young generation in a simple gesture of respect. Let us talk louder about our Homat Al Hima (HH), Guardians of the Hima, standing resilient in the face of challenges.

Training the protectors of the land

Working on ground was tough this year, but the enthusiasm of the local youth at Hima sites was much inspiring. Our Homat Al Hima (HH) were always ready to take action. With persistence, we have developed our HH two-level curriculum, including various conservation, ecological and environmental modules. We have further implemented the two levels in multiple Himas. After conducting the workshops, the trainees became more skilled at protecting their Himas. In fact, each training was getting them closer to nature, more involved in their communities and better connected to each other.

“What is youth? It is the inner strength not to stagnate or grow resistant to change but to stay open to new possibilities. It is the power of the spirit that refuses to succumb to complacency and strives ever forward.”

Daisaku Ikeda

The book of life

This year propelled us to start working on a manual which documents the whole journey of Homat Al Hima programme, with all its activities, guidance, trainings, and divisions. The manual will be a book of life, to read and explore the Hima “way of life”, discover more about our engaged youth and learn how they are acting to protect the Hima and their natural and cultural heritage.

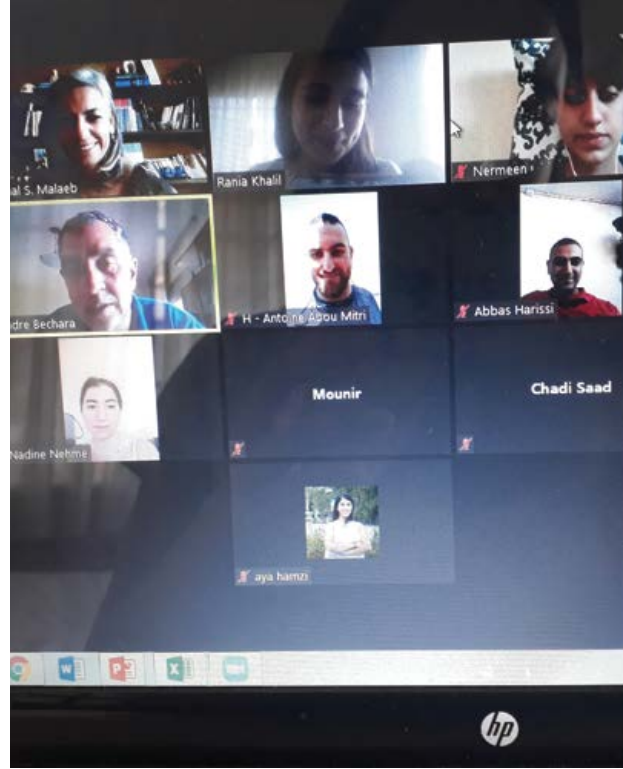
Homat Al Hima are together standing tough in every hard path, facing an uncertain future with hope and beliefs. We strive to empower and capacitate them to become skilled and lead on the management of their Himas. We teach them strong values:

INTEGRITY, RESPECT, SOLIDARITY, BELIEF, ENTHUSIASM, EQUITY, ENGAGEMENT, and COMMITMENT.

It is said that history has always been shaped by the power of youth. Hopefully, the history of Lebanon and the Hima will get engraved by the HH brilliant minds and courageous hearts. We recognize your impact at your Himas, around your communities and on nature. What a positive impact indeed to bring together nature and people to live in harmony!

Yes, each one of you deserves a fighter’s salute!

HOMAT AL HIMA ARE TOGETHER STANDING TOUGH IN EVERY HARD PATH, ENSURING A FUTURE YET UNCERTAIN BUT WITH HOPE AND BELIEFS



Homat al Hima online workshop



Homat al Hima are the leaders of tomorrow

لقد كان هذا العام المنصرم مليئاً بالصعاب بالنسبة للعالم أجمع وللبنان بشكل خاص.

لكن رغم كل الصعاب، ما زال الشباب اللبناني متمسكاً بأرضه و وطنه، وما يعطيه القوة هو الأمل بمستقبل أفضل. وروح الأمل والتفاؤل هذه ممثلة بشباب حماة الحمى، الذي يستحق كل منهم تحية مناضل.



Great Egret © Mohamed Haimour

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Activating SPNL's volunteer program

By Amer Saidi

Since May 2018, I have been part of the SPNL team in the capacity of volunteer coordinator. My job is to be SPNL's liaison with anybody who is interested in doing volunteer work under SPNL's auspices, whether at our headquarters in Hamra, Beirut, or otherwise in the field. A large part of SPNL's focus is the Hima, an ancient conservation system whose global revival SPNL has pioneered. Building relationships



Amer Saidi
Volunteers and Outreach Coordinator

My experience so far has been very rewarding and stimulating, as it has helped me to learn more about the business of nature conservation and how SPNL goes about it. In addition, I have met many interesting people as I liaise with and build good, working relations with volunteers and potential volunteers, both foreign and local. Most of the volunteers are relatively young people who are eager to make a difference when it comes to nature conservation in Lebanon.

In the course of my job, I have also liaised with various other NGOs and entities concerned with nature conservation, something that has opened my eyes to the workings of the conservation community in Lebanon, and the importance of the work done by environmental NGOs, who often battle against great odds to get things done and to get their work across.

The conservation of nature and biodiversity is badly needed and is pivotal to human survival and wellbeing. It is very rewarding to be involved in this kind of work, as it is of real benefit to my country and beyond.

منذ ايار 2018 وأنا موظف في جمعية حماية الطبيعة في لبنان، بصفة منسق المتطوعين. المطلوب مني أن أكون منسق العلاقات مع كل من يريد أن يتطوع في الجمعية، إما في المكتب أو في إحدى المراكز أو مواقع الحمى. لقد قابلت العديد من المتطوعين والمتطوعات، واغلبهم من الشبان والشابات اللواتي يرغبن بالقيام بعمل تطوعي في جمعية حماية الطبيعة في لبنان. وأعجبت بكمية الإهتمام التي رأيتها عند المتطوعين، ولقد كانت تجربة إيجابية للغاية حتى الآن.



Female Blue Rock Thrush © Mohamed Haimour

MEET THE ADMIN TEAM

Alexandra and Malake are the backbone of our office in Hamra.



Alexandra Baka
Central Administration Officer



Malake Daher
Administration Officer

Both tireless and brilliant, they are the inspiring people who work behind the scenes and make our journey as a NGO, a smooth one. They make our job a whole lot easier and give us a real sense of inclusion

AWARDS 2020



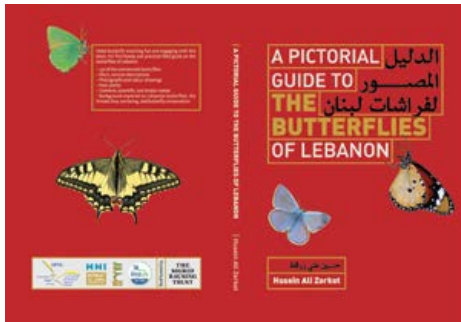
SOUK AL HIMA

List of the different items Year 2020

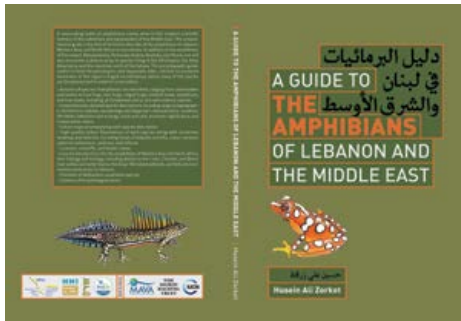
PUBLICATIONS

- Guides

A Pictorial Guide to the Butterflies of Lebanon



A Guide to the Amphibians of Lebanon and the Middle East



The natural world is one of our most precious resources. Learning about nature and animals and how to protect it, is vital for a sustainable future. Our book section on butterflies and amphibians is written and illustrated by Lepideptorist, Hussein Ali Zorkot

BOARD GAMES

- Educational Material

Risky Flyway



Match the beaks



Foster creativity

Children's curiosity is easy to foster, especially with a board game about birds. An exclusive game developed by SPNL to inspire fun and entertainment while learning about birds..

To buy our products online visit: soukalhima.spnl.org

PRODUCTS

• Food



• Soaps



Welcome to Souk al Hima, SPNL's online-market

We host a range of healthy, natural products. We make it easier for our health-conscious customers to find eco-friendly products made by the Hima community. Through Souk al Hima, SPNL aims to make it easier for the local community to market their products.



Nubian Ibex offspring © Shouf Biosphere Reserve

FINANCIAL SITUATION FOR YEAR 2020

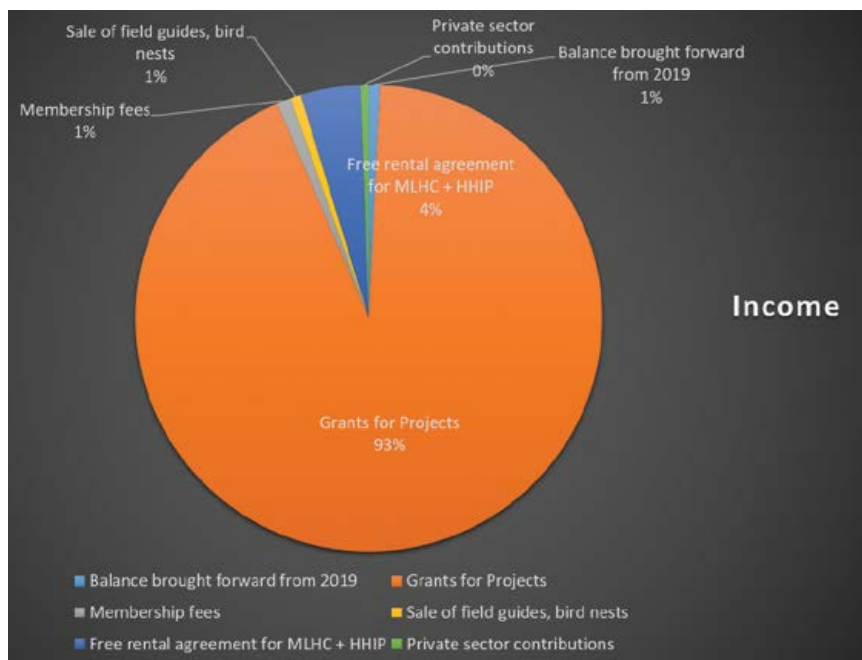
by Bassima Khatib & Mazen Yassin

Income

In 2020, SPNL regular donors continued their support to SPNL conservation and community efforts in Lebanon, as well as capacity building, awareness, and environmental education. Donors included European Union, MAVA Foundation, Global Environment Fund-GEF, Agence Française De Développement-AFD, Fonds Français pour l'Environnement Mondial - FFEM, Sigrid Rausing Trust-SRT, Capacity Development Fund-CDF and Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund – CEPF.

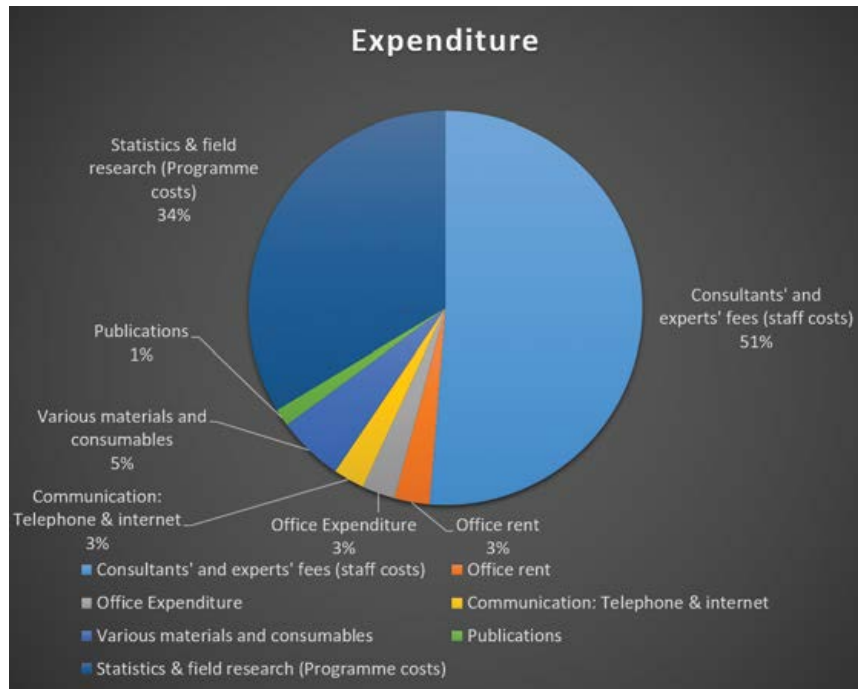
In addition to annual membership fees, Sale of field guides and bird nests; and private sector contributions which supported SPNL conservation work through cash and in-kind contribution.

As displayed in the figure below, 93% of SPNL is restricted funding kindly funded by our donors.



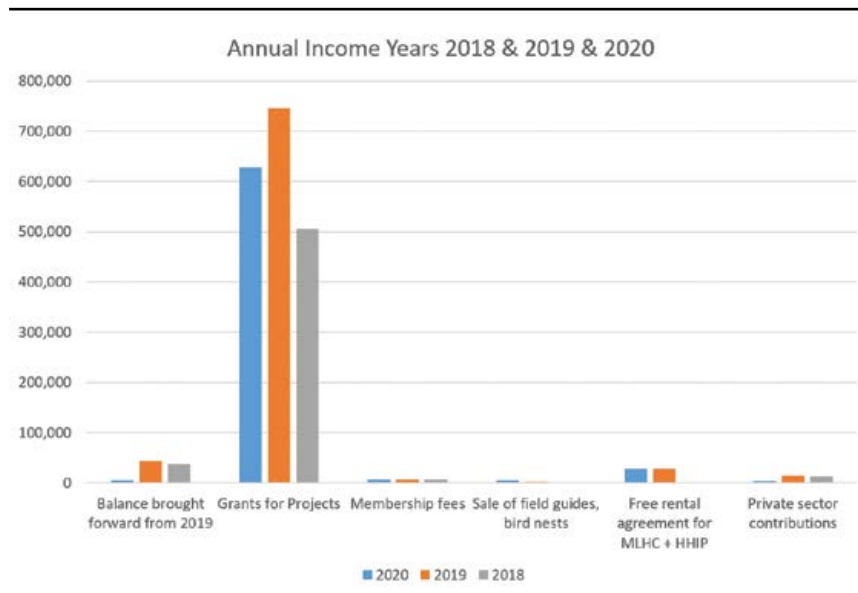
Expenditure

Human resources, research, conservation and community livelihood efforts are the essence of SPNL work. Thus, the main shares of expenditure cover community work and research, in addition to consultants and expert fees. In addition to minor percentage on administrative running costs.

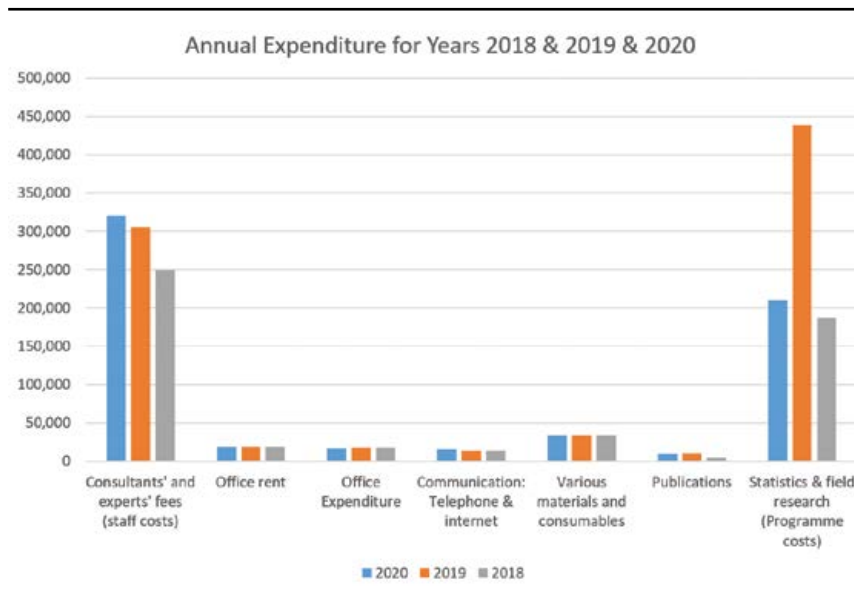


Trend in Financial Stability

Looking at the trend between 2018 & 2020, an increase in “Grants for Projects” has been mobilized. This was mainly materialized through MAVA & SRT kind support to establish our 2 income generating centers. This is in addition to a small increase in un-restricted funding has been noticed (membership fees, sale of field guides, free rental agreements, and private sector contributions). Unrestricted funding remained small in year 2020 due to the overall stressful situation in Lebanon (political & security problems, financial restrictions, COVID 19,...) which affected the smooth launching of the centers operation.



The increase in income has supported growth in our conservation programmes and the plans for our financial sustainability.



Future Plans for Financial Sustainability

SPNL has realized that funding for conservation has experienced fundamental decrease in the latest period. Social issues were more supported within the current status of insecurity, war, refugees, COVID 19,....especially within the Mediterranean region. Based on the above, SPNL had taken strategic decisions in order to plan for financial sustainability including the establishment of 2 new centers- with Free rental agreements:

- o **Mount-Lebanon Hima Center-MLHC, Kayfoun – Aley district (half an hour from Beirut), concentrating on Hima programme, and Hima School.**
- o **Homat Hima International Park-HHIP in West Bekaa, including butterflies garden, Homat Al Hima Academy, etc... (an hour & a half from Beirut).**

With special thanks for the **MAVA Foundation** for their belief in SPNL work and the feasibility of our plans, the construction of

Homat Al Hima International Center-HHIC and rehabilitation at Mount Lebanon Hima Center-MLHC are finished. The centers have both of them been handed to SPNL by mid. November 2019.

The success story does not end here in finalizing the construction deliverables before time; but the centers has already started operation before they are finished. MLHC managed to host its first training course for Homat Al Hima extending for 3 days on 21, 28, & 29 September 2019, and the International School-IC one of the most leading private schools in Beirut has reserved for 3 days of eco-education days early October for more than 160 students. While HHIC received more than 1000 school & university students before it was finished. Both centers started getting income through these activities even before they were finished & fully operational.

So, our vision has proved to be realistic and achievable!

Further support has been mobilized from the Sigrid Rausing Trust granting SPNL a core fund grant which will help us to keep conservation work at the forefront and strengthen our institutional foundation, including the organisation's health and viability.

Success Stories

- **SPNL has mobilized a grant from the MAVA Capacity Development Fund-CDF project, for the development of the school educational programme for MLHC as a paid service.**
- **SPNL is working on development of systematic curriculum material for Homat Al Hima capacity building programme with the help of an educational consultant from the American University of Beirut. Level 1 has been developed earlier through SDC funded projects (Swiss Agency for development and Cooperation). Year 2020 witnessed the development of Level 2 concentrating on MSB concerns within economic sectors: Hunting, Tourism, and Agriculture through GEF funded project.**

Unfortunately, year 2019 - 2020 carried with it a lot of pressing problems in the country including social uprising on October 2019, political & security situation, government resignation, financial restrictions on foreign currency, in addition to COVID 19 drastic pandemic outbreak. All these factors have impacted our plans for our centers & frozen our aspirations for mobilizing unrestricted funding.

Main Next Steps

SPNL has successfully developed its strategic plan for 10 years 2020 – 2030, supported by a grant from the MAVA Capacity Development Fund-CDF project. As the rehabilitation/construction of the centers is finished, SPNL is planning to develop the centers operational plans in a participatory approach and in collaboration

with experts in the field, supported by the same grant to cover the expenses of this process.

Thus, Hima and Homat Hima would become models for Lebanon and the Middle East and the Mediterranean region. SPNL had previous successful experience in transferring Hima experience to Jordan, Greece, and Cyprus in SPAs, and Natura 2000 respectively. Hima in its participatory framework was considered as model for community involvement in distinctive landscapes.

On 30 April 2019, Law for protected areas management was finally issued. This is an achievement since Hima was adopted as the forth category for protected areas management on national level.

All these efforts aiming to decrease SPNL dependence on project based restricted funding, and to diversify its sources of funding.

But SPNL will always continue project development & seeking funding from donors (for realizing its conservation and community objectives).

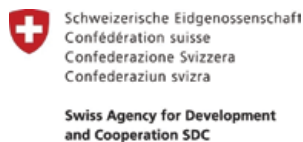
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A visual transition that draws a relationship between the form of a bird and the arabic letter H, as featured in the untranslatable 'Hima'

As part of SPNL's restructuring and new vision, we are in the process of rebranding the whole visual identity. The aim is to combine the different (Hima) programs under a unified visual language and umbrella that merges the 'Nature Conservation' and the "Community Based Sustainable Development". In order not to break with the recognized SPNL bird that was used for the past decades, the starting point was set, a bird will remain as part of the new identity. On another hand, the Hima revival, with its several programs, was a milestone that set the path for the coming years. The question arose, how to combine and merge the emblem of a bird with the letter ح (H in arabic)? Looking closer at a flying soaring bird's gesture and at the motion of the letter H in some of the main Arabic scripts, a relation between both manifests. A relation that gave birth to SPNL's Hima-Bird.



SPNL THE WORLD LEADER IN HIMA REVIVAL

Society for the Protection of Nature in Lebanon (SPNL) is a national non-governmental organization established under a no.6.A.D. in 1986.

SPNL is the national partner for Birdlife International in Lebanon, and the first IUCN member in Lebanon.

SPNL aims to conserve birds, and biodiversity in Lebanon; and to promote the sustainable use of natural resources. SPNL is a leader in reviving the "Hima" community based approach as a decentralized approach for managing natural resources in a sustainable way. www.spnl.org

