



SOCIETY FOR THE PROTECTION  
OF NATURE IN LEBANON

**S P N L**  
ANNUAL  
REPORT  
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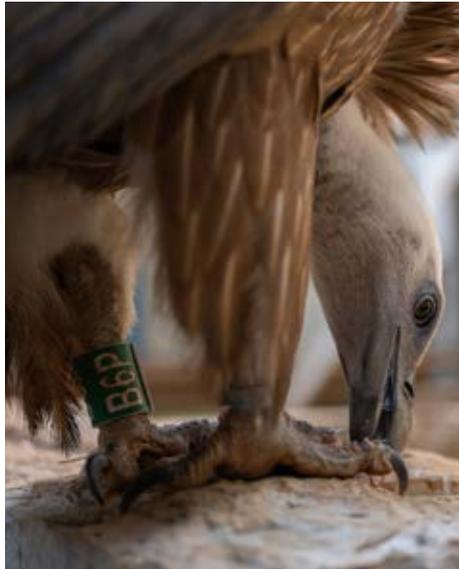
FROM NATURE  
RESERVES TO HIMA



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**Cover photo / THE GRIFFON VULTURE** - another species, victim of poaching, find refuge and recovery at the Luc Hoffman Hima Home Rescue Center, Hima Kafoun / GEO, Germany-Lebanon, Bird Poaching, 02.04.23 © David Chancellor

# EDITORIAL

## / FROM NATURE RESERVES TO HIMAS... together for people and nature

### *A blast from the past.*

Forty years ago, in the scope of my "Wildlife Ecology Management" studies in the United States of America, I submitted a research paper entitled "The Need to Create a System of Protected Areas in Lebanon", in collaboration with the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). Upon my return to Lebanon in 1982, I was happy to hear about the Ministry of State for the Environment, through which I was introduced to the members of the Bentael National Park. I was then appointed as a consultant, and my main mission revolved around ensuring the Bentael National Park became a member of the IUCN.

### *That was only the beginning.*

Indeed, thanks to my determination and strong commitment, I collaborated with fellow enthusiasts who shared the belief in the importance of establishing nature reserves in Lebanon, even amidst the challenging war conditions that engulfed the country.

Thus, we embarked on a challenging journey and founded the Society for the Protection of Nature and Natural Resources in Lebanon (SPNL) in 1983. Among its paramount objectives were the preservation of wildlife, the establishment of natural reserves, and the promotion of environmental awareness.

In this context, we proposed several ambitious projects aiming at establishing four natural reserves: the Tyre Beach Marine Reserve - Ras al-Ayn, the Mashghara Jabal al-Barouk Reserve (Al Shouf Cedar Nature Reserve at present), the Khallet Khazen Reserve in Rayhan Mountain, and the Ammiq Wetland. We succeeded in Mashghara Al-Barouk and Ras Al-Ain, which



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Chairman of the  
Middle East region

were declared nature reserves based on the decision of the Minister of Agriculture, the late former Speaker of the Lebanese Parliament, Adel Osseiran, an ally of nature conservation. Khallet Khazen was also approved as a private reserve by the late Sheikh Najib Alameddine and his son, Sheikh Karim Alameddine. At that time, I deployed efforts that led to the recognition of Khallet Khazen as the first private nature reserve in Lebanon to join the IUCN. However, we failed to obtain the approval to declare Tyre Beach as a protected area. We nevertheless persevered through the SPNL and managed to produce, in collaboration with the State broadcaster, Teleliban, a documentary film entitled "The Beach If It Spoke". The latter highlighted the extent of the Lebanese coast deterioration and the subsequent importance of protecting the remains of its natural environment. A case in point was the declaration of the sandy beach of Tyre, which had a unique value, a nature reserve. In the same spirit, a documentary film entitled "Ammiq Drawing its Last Breath" was produced with Teleliban as well. This film underscored the significance of designating the Ammiq Wetland in Western Bekaa as a protected area, despite its status as private property.

During that period, various environmental NGOs were actively engaged in efforts to designate similar reserves across Lebanon. Notably, the Environment Protection Committee (EPC) in the North worked towards declaring Tripoli's Palm Islands a Nature Reserve. It was recognized as one of the few remaining breeding grounds for the endangered Loggerhead Turtle. Simultaneously, the Friends of Nature pursued the declaration of the Ehden forest as a reserve, with the support of the Minister of State for Environmental Affairs at the time, Hagop Joe Khedrian, and several conservationists. The SPNL also contributed to these endeavors, collaborating with Teleliban, to produce a documentary entitled "The Palm Islands [ought to be] a Natural Reserve." Ultimately, these efforts bore fruit when both sites were declared nature reserves through Law No. 121, passed by the Lebanese Parliament in 1992. Furthermore, steps were taken to establish the Lebanese Environment Forum (LEF), which received official authorization from the Interior Ministry in 1993. This union served as an umbrella organization, bringing together seven established environmental NGOs into a cohesive network. Additionally, this period saw the establishment of a dedicated Ministry of the Environment in Lebanon, marking significant progress in environmental governance.



Griffon vulture at LHHH rescue center © GEO, David Chancellor

SPNL persisted in its endeavors and collaborated with the LEF and the IUCN. Consequently, an ambitious project aimed at enhancing Lebanon's nature reserves was developed. This initiative was launched in cooperation with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the Lebanese Ministry of the Environment. Subsequently, our efforts extended to include the incorporation of the Lebanese Ministry of the Environment, the LEF, the Green Line, and the Forest Development Association as members of the IUCN. Besides, we endeavored to curb wild hunting activities by advocating for regulatory measures. Collaborating closely with the Ministry of the Environment, we worked towards the ratification of the International Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

Furthermore, our league spearheaded a comprehensive environmental planning initiative for Lebanon with the support of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation and a team of environmental experts. This program prioritized the conservation of biodiversity and the establishment and management of natural reserves. In 1994, under the leadership of HEM Walid Jumblatt, the Al Shouf Cedar Society was established. Contributing to this cause, we partnered with Tele Liban to produce a documentary titled "The Cedar [ought to be] Protected."

Through concerted efforts led by HEM Jumblatt, MP Akram Chehayeb, and the Al Shouf Cedar Society, Al Shouf Cedar was officially declared a nature reserve under Law No. 532 in July 1996. All criteria for financial aid from the Global Environment Forum (GEF) were met. A project draft for managing reserves—Al Shouf Cedars, Ehden Forest, and the Palm Islands—secured a grant of \$2.5 million. During this period, we, at the League, along with the Amwaj Environmental Association, UNDP, and activists, drafted a law for Tyre Beach Reserve. Ammiq, the Palm Islands, Ehden Forest, and Al Shouf Cedar were declared Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBBAs) in the Middle East by the International Council for the Protection of Birds (Birdlife International). This declaration followed our participation in the Convention on Wetlands in Venice, Italy.

In fact, in collaboration with the Ministry of the Environment, and with the support of HEM Akram Chehayeb, UNDP, and the French Ministry of the Environment, we worked on a project to finance the management of three wetland reserves in Lebanon: Tyre Beach, Ammiq Wetland, and Ras al-Shaqaa (Ras Chekka). The project draft was prepared by a group within the Lebanese Consortium for

the Protection of the Environment, and initial approval for financing was obtained from international parties. However, our progress has been limited thus far. We succeeded only in declaring Tyre's sandy beach protected by Law No. 708 dated 10/28/1998. The Ammiq project is still under study by parliamentary committees, and we have faced obstacles advancing the Ras al-Shaqaa project due to the land's ownership by religious endowments.

The approval from the Church for converting this significant area into a reserve has not been granted yet. Recognizing this, the League identified the necessity of organizing training courses for NGOs involved in establishing nature reserves. A visit to Tunisia was arranged to explore ecotourism, the insights from which were documented in a previous booklet. Additionally, a training session held in southern France marked a crucial milestone for Lebanese environmental NGOs in reserve management. This session, attended by the Lebanese and French Ministries of the Environment, UNDP, the Lebanese League for the Protection of the Environment, and numerous Lebanese and French institutions, NGOs, and nature reserves, emphasized the importance of implementing the recommendations for future reserve management.

We were determined to document and disseminate the details and outcomes of this groundbreaking initiative to extend its benefits to those unable to partake directly. Moreover, it served as an expression of SPNL's gratitude towards all contributors to its success. A heartfelt thank you is extended, especially to the host country, France. Conservationists, SPNL members, government officials, NGOs, civil society organizations, and reserve managers deeply appreciate their exceptional organization and invaluable expertise. Special recognition goes to Mr. Hassan Suhail, Ms. Sandra Laurie, and Mr. Abbas Zahreddine for their outstanding contributions. With the dedicated efforts of our passionate individuals, the Lebanese Forum for the Protection of the Environment, and the leaders of NGOs and nature reserves in Lebanon, we hold great hope for a brighter future for wildlife, natural reserves, and the people of Lebanon.

Four years ago, in April 2019, the Lebanese Parliament ratified Law No. 130 on natural reserves. This much-awaited legislation marked another crucial step in our ongoing journey to safeguard biodiversity, which continues to diminish with each passing day. Encompassing 23 articles, Law No. 130, ratified



by the Lebanese Parliament, is aimed at regulating Lebanon's natural areas, prioritizing their preservation and protection as integral components of rural development policy and ecotourism. The law outlines several key objectives, including:

**(i)** Protecting the various components of biological diversity, particularly those that are endangered, rare, unique, or vulnerable. **(ii)** Rehabilitating and restoring the natural biodiversity landscape. **(iii)** Preserving ecosystems. **(iv)** Safeguarding bird populations, both sedentary and migratory species. **(v)** Conserving landscapes and distinctive natural features.

#### Protected areas are classified into four main categories:

1. Nature reserves
2. Natural parks
3. Natural landmark sites / monuments
4. Hima (sites incorporating a natural ecosystem along with sustainable utilization of natural resources).

For each natural reserve, a volunteer committee is established to oversee effective management and financial budgeting. Working in coordination with a designated group, each committee proposes a management plan tailored to the reserve's unique characteristics and needs, with a duration determined accordingly.

The United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity provides guidelines for countries to safeguard biological diversity. During the Conference of the Parties held in late November 2022, participating nations committed to the "30x30 plan," aiming to protect at least 30 percent of land, inland waters, and coastal areas by 2030. The 30x30 plan seeks to preserve and enhance our natural world by establishing effectively managed, ecologically representative, and well-connected systems of protected areas. Crucially, this endeavor must prioritize increasing access to nature for all individuals, with a particular focus on marginalized communities.

Since the 1990s, the SPNL has embarked on reviving the "Hima System". This strategic decision marks a historic milestone aimed at bolstering the conservation of biodiversity and natural resources. Rooted in the heritage of Arab communities and a longstanding tradition among Lebanese villages and towns, the Hima System emphasizes sustainable land use practices. It ensures the responsible utilization of natural resources while safeguarding the environment's capacity to replenish its riches.

More information about SPNL's Hima initiative can be found at [www.spnl.org/hima](http://www.spnl.org/hima).

Today, Lebanon boasts 33 Hima sites scattered across different regions of the country. Despite the significance of enacting legislation by Parliament to formally recognize the Hima system as one of the four categories of protected areas, this endeavor did not necessitate a parliamentary law. Rather, it demanded unwavering determination, resilience against despair, and sustained dialogue and collaboration with municipal councils.

Municipal councils serve as robust and enduring allies in nature conservation efforts, representing a vital link in preserving Lebanon's biodiversity. By engaging in long-term partnerships with municipalities and fostering a shared understanding of the importance of nurturing and enhancing the Hima system, progress can be achieved in safeguarding Lebanon's natural heritage. More information about Hima sites in Lebanon can be found at [www.spnl.org/category/hima-sites](http://www.spnl.org/category/hima-sites).

From Ebel el Saqi, Qoleileh, and Mansouri in the south, to Kfar Zabad, Anjar, and Aitnit in the Bekaa, and further to Anfeh and Andket in the north, all the way to Aaqoura, Kaifun, Shemlan, Kfarmatta, and Ras el Matn in Mount Lebanon, the Hima system extends across diverse regions of Lebanon. Its applications range from sustainable grazing and hunting practices to water resource management, organic and responsible agriculture, biodiversity conservation, and forest protection.

The Hima system initiative receives support from BirdLife International ([www.birdlife.org](http://www.birdlife.org)). The latter has integrated the Hima concept into its strategy by associating it with areas globally significant for bird conservation. In 2013, BirdLife International announced that the Arab Hima system was among the 20 most notable achievements worldwide in the history of preserving birds and their natural habitats. This international recognition was solidified by a decision from the IUCN ([www.iucn.org](http://www.iucn.org)), acknowledging the Hima as a pivotal accomplishment in nature conservation. The decision underscores the importance of judicious resource investment and the preservation of the environment's capacity for renewal. Moreover, the IUCN decision recognizes various local community contributions to natural resource conservation, encompassing terms such as Hima, Al-Muhjar, Agdal, Koruk, Adat, or similar systems managed by local communities in West Asia and North Africa. This inclusive approach reinforces local and cultural knowledge and heritage while simultaneously safeguarding natural resources and improving livelihoods.



أن هناك ضرورة للقيام بالدورات التدريبية للجمعيات العاملة في حقل المحميات الطبيعية فكانت زيارة التجمع إلى تونس للتعرف على السياحة البيئية والتي تم نشر تفاصيلها في كتيب سابق، ومن الدورة التدريبية إلى جنوب فرنسا والتي تشكل محطة مهمة لعمل الجمعيات البيئية اللبنانية في إدارة المحميات مستقبلاً في حال الملاحقة الجدية للتوصيات التي انبثقت عن هذه الدورة بمشاركة وزارتي البيئة اللبنانية والفرنسية وبرنامج الأمم المتحدة الإنمائي والتجمع اللبناني لحماية البيئة وعدد كبير من المؤسسات والجمعيات والمحميات اللبنانية والفرنسية.

وكان إصرارنا على طباعة حيثيات ونتائج هذه التجربة الرائدة، لتعميم الفائدة على من لم يتسنى لهم المشاركة والإستفادة منها وإظهار إمتنان التجمع لكل من ساهم في نجاحها من جهة أخرى، وخاصة للدولة المضيفة فرنسا - فكل الشكر من البيئيين وأعضاء التجمع اللبناني لحماية البيئة وللقيمين على المؤسسات الحكومية والجمعيات والمؤسسات الأهلية، والمحميات على حُسن التنظيم وعلى الخبرات القيمة، مع الشكر الخاص للأستاذ حسن سهيل وساندرا لوري عباس زهر الدين. أملنا كبير بمستقبل أفضل للحياة البرية والمحميات الطبيعية والإنسان في لبنان بفضل مساعي المخلصين، والتجمع اللبناني لحماية البيئة والقيمين على الجمعيات والمحميات الطبيعية في لبنان.

وقبل أربعة أعوام صادق مجلس النواب اللبناني على القانون المتعلق بالمحميات الطبيعية. فكانت هذه الخطوة التشريعية التي طال انتظارها خطوة إضافية في رحلة الألف ميل لحماية التنوع البيولوجي الذي يتضائل يوماً بعد يوم.

وتحدد اتفاقية الأمم المتحدة للتنوع البيولوجي المبادئ التوجيهية للبلدان لحماية هذا التنوع البيولوجي. وبموجب مؤتمر أطراف الاتفاقية الذي عقد أواخر شهر تشرين الثاني ٢٠٢٢ وافقت كل دولة مشاركة على تحقيق "خطة ٣٠×٣٠" لحماية ٣٠ بالمئة على الأقل من الأراضي والمياه الداخلية والمناطق الساحلية بحلول سنة ٢٠٣٠. منذ تسعينات القرن الماضي اختارت جمعية حماية الطبيعة في لبنان (SPNL) أن تعيد



نحو خطة بيئية في لبنان بمساعدة مؤسسة فريدريش ايرت وعدداً من خبراء البيئة مع التركيز على الحفاظ على التنوع البيولوجي وانشاء وإدارة المحميات الطبيعية. وتم تأسيس جمعية أرز الشوف برئاسة الوزير وليد جنبلاط عام ١٩٩٤، كما ساهمنا بإنتاج فيلم وثائقي بمساندة تلفزيون لبنان بعنوان "الأرز محمية". ونجح الوزير جنبلاط والنائب أكرم شهيب وجمعية أرز الشوف بإعلان أرز الشوف محمية طبيعية بقانون رقم ٥٣٢ في تموز/يوليو ١٩٩٦. وبهذا تحققت جميع الشروط المطلوبة للتقدم بالمساعدة المالية من مرفق البيئة العالمي GEF حيث تم وضع مسودة مشروع إدارة المحميات: أرز الشوف، حرج اهدن وجزر النخيل، والذي كان نتيجته حصول المحميات على منحة مالية قدرها مليونان ونصف مليون دولار اميركي. وخلال هذه السنوات استمرينا بالمطالبة، أعني التجمع بالتعاون مع جمعية امواج البيئة وبرنامج الأمم المتحدة ومجموعة من الناشطين البيئيين، قمنا بوضع مشروع قانون لحماية شاطئ صور. كما استطعنا إعلان عميق وجزر النخيل وحرج اهدن وأرز الشوف من خلال المجلس الدولي لحماية الطيور Birdlife International مناطق مهمة للطيور والتنوع البيولوجي في منطقة الشرق الأوسط Important Bird Areas (IBAs) وفور عودتنا من مناقشة ومشاركة اتفاقية الأراضي الرطبة في فينيسيا - إيطاليا عملنا في التجمع على وضع مشروع بالتعاون مع وزارة البيئة وبتشجيع من الوزير أكرم شهيب وبرنامج الأمم المتحدة ووزارة البيئة الفرنسية لتمويل إدارة ثلاثة محميات رطبة في لبنان وتحديد شاطئ صور الرملي ومستنقع عميق ورأس الشقعة، حيث تم وضع مسودة المشروع من قبل مجموعة في التجمع اللبناني لحماية البيئة وتمت الموافقة المبدئية على تمويله من قبل الأطراف الدولية ولكن لم نوفق حتى الآن إلا بإعلان شاطئ صور الرملي محمية بقانون من مجلس النواب رقم ٧٠٨ بتاريخ ٢٨/١٠/١٩٩٨، فيما لا يزال مشروع عميق قيد الدرس من قبل اللجان النيابية، ولم نستطع التقدم بمشروع رأس الشقعة كون الأرض تابعة للأوقاف الكنسية ولم يتم المصادقة على تحويل هذه المنطقة الجميلة والمهمة من قبلهم إلى محمية حتى الآن. وظهر لنا جلياً في التجمع

# من المحميات إلى الحمى

أسعد سرحال

المدير العام لجمعية حماية الطبيعة في لبنان (SPNL)

خاصة في لبنان إلى المجلس الدولي للحفاظ على الطبيعة، لكننا لم نوفق بالحصول على قرار إعلان شاطئ صور محمية، وبالرغم من ذلك ثابرتنا من خلال جمعية حماية الطبيعة وبالتعاون مع تلفزيون لبنان على إنتاج فيلم وثائقي تحت عنوان "الشاطئ إن حكى" بهدف تسليط الضوء على درجة تدهور الشاطئ اللبناني وأهمية حماية ما تبقى من بيئته الطبيعية؛ وعلى وجه الخصوص شاطئ صور الرملي المميز من خلال إعلانه محمية طبيعية. ومع تلفزيون لبنان أيضاً تم إنتاج فيلم وثائقي بعنوان "عميق الرمق الأخير" وقد سلط الضوء على أهمية إعلان مستنقع عميق في البقاع الغربي محمية مع العلم انه ملك خاص.

وفي ذلك الوقت، كانت جمعيات بيئية أخرى تعمل على إعلان محميات مشابهة في لبنان وتحديد لجنة رعاية البيئة في الشمال من أجل إعلان جزر النخيل محمية، واصدقاء الطبيعة لإعلان حرج أهدن أيضاً محمية بمؤازرة من وزير الدولة لشؤون البيئة في حينها هاغوب جو خديان وعدد من البيئيين، كما كانت المساهمة من قبل جمعية حماية الطبيعة بالتعاون مع تلفزيون لبنان أيضاً من خلال فيلم وثائقي تحت عنوان "جزر النخيل محمية طبيعية" وبالفعل فقد تم إعلان هاتين المحميتين بقانون رقم ١٢١ من قبل مجلس النواب سنة ١٩٩٢، كما بوشر بالعمل على تأسيس التجمع اللبناني لحماية البيئة والذي حصل على العلم والخبر من وزارة الداخلية عام ١٩٩٣ بنواة ٧ جمعيات بيئية مؤسسة، وفي تلك الأثناء تم قيام وزارة أصيلة للبيئة في لبنان.

وواصلت جمعية حماية الطبيعة عملها ومن خلال التجمع اللبناني لحماية البيئة والاتحاد العالمي لصون الطبيعة فوضع مشروع طموح لإدارة المحميات في لبنان بالتعاون مع برنامج الأمم المتحدة الإنمائي UNDP والاتحاد العالمي لصون الطبيعة IUCN ووزارة البيئة اللبنانية. عملنا حينها على إدخال وزارة البيئة اللبنانية، ولجنة رعاية البيئة، والخط الأخضر، وجمعية التنمية الحرجية أعضاء في الاتحاد العالمي لصون الطبيعة-IUCN، وعملنا أيضاً على وقف الصيد البري بهدف تنظيمه، كما عملنا مع وزارة البيئة من أجل التصديق على اتفاقية التنوع البيولوجي. واطلق التجمع برنامجاً



وأعود بالذاكرة إلى الورا، فمنذ أربعين سنة وخلال فترة تخصصي في أميركا في مجال إدارة بيئة الحياة البرية والمحميات، قمت بتقديم دراسة بالتعاون مع الاتحاد العالمي لصون الطبيعة IUCN بعنوان «الحاجة لإنشاء سلسلة من المحميات الطبيعية في لبنان. وعند عودتي إلى الوطن سنة ١٩٨٢ فوجئت بوجود وزارة دولة لشؤون البيئة من خلالها تعرفت على أعضاء محمية بنتاعل الوطنية وتم تعييني حينها مشتمشاً وبالتالى عملت على إدخال هذه المحمية في السنة التي تلت عضواً في الاتحاد العالمي لصون الطبيعة.

فكانت بداية الطريق وبفضل طموحي ساهمت مع المؤمنين أمثالي بضرورة تحقيق مشروع المحميات في لبنان على الرغم من ظروف الحرب الصعبة التي كان يتخبط بها الوطن. وبالفعل بدأنا رحلة الألف ميل وقمنا بتأسيس جمعية حماية الطبيعة والموارد الطبيعية في لبنان SPNL في العام ١٩٨٣، وكان من أهم اهداف هذه الجمعية ولم يزل حماية الحياة البرية، وأنشاء المحميات الطبيعية ونشر الوعي البيئي.

فطرحنا عدة مشاريع طموحة لانشاء أربع محميات طبيعية: محمية شاطئ صور الرملي، جفتلك رأس العين، ومحمية مشغرة جبل الباروك، (محمية أرز الشوف) في الوقت الراهن، محمية خلة خازن في الريحان، ومستنقع عميق. وكان التوفيق حليفنا إذ تم إعلان محمية مشغرة الباروك ومحمية جفتلك رأس العين بقرار من وزير الزراعة الرجل البيئي المرحوم الرئيس عادل عسيران، كما تمت الموافقة على إعلان خلة خازن محمية خاصة من قبل المرحوم الشيخ نجيب علم الدين ونجله الشيخ كريم علم الدين، وقمت في حينها بإدخال خلة خازن كأول محمية



كوروك، آدات، أو أي أنظمة مشابهة يديرها المجتمع المحلي في غرب آسيا وشمال أفريقيا، بحيث يتم اعتبارها نهجاً شاملاً يقوي المعرفة المحلية والثقافية والتراث مع المحافظة على الموارد الطبيعية وتعزيز سبل العيش.

إحياء "نظام الحمى". وكان هذا القرار خطوة تاريخية تعزز الحفاظ على التنوع البيولوجي وعلى الطبيعة ومواردها، من خلال تكريس نهج تراثي اعتمدته الشعوب العربية وممارسته القرى والبلدات اللبنانية كتقليد موروث لاستخدام الأراضي. فهو يضمن الاستفادة القابلة للاستمرار من الموارد الطبيعية ويحفظ قدرة البيئة على تجديد مواردها.

[www.spnl.org/hima](http://www.spnl.org/hima)

اليوم بات في لبنان ٣٠ حمى منتشرة في مختلف المناطق، لم يحتج الأمر الى قانون يصدره المجلس النيابي، رغم أهمية صدور هذا القانون الذي يشمل الحمى باعتباره فئة من أربع فئات من المناطق الحمية. احتاج الأمر الى مثابرة وإرادة صلبة لا تعرف اليأس، والى حوار وشراكة طويلة الأمد مع المجالس البلدية التي تعد الحلقة الأقوى والأكثر استدامة في الحفاظ على الطبيعة اذا ما وصل إلى موقع القرار فيها مجموعة متجانسة ومقتنعة بأهمية تني نظام الحمى وتطويره.

من إبل السقي والقليلة والمنصوري في الجنوب الى كفرزبد وعنجر وعيتنيت في البقاع الى أنفه وعندقت في الشمال وصولاً إلى العاقورة وكيفون وشملان وكفرمتي ورأس المتن في جبل لبنان، تنتشر الحمى في مختلف المناطق اللبنانية وتتنوع استخداماتها بين الرعي والصيد المستدامين وإدارة المياه والزراعة العضوية والمسؤولية وحماية التنوع البيولوجي والغابات. وتلاقى تجربة نظام الحمى دعماً من المجلس العالمي لحماية الطيور الذي اعتمد مفهوم الحمى في استراتيجيته عبر ربطه بالمناطق المهمة عالمياً للطيور. وأعلنت منظمة BirdLife International

[www.birdlife.org](http://www.birdlife.org)

عام ٢٠١٣ ان نظام الحمى العربي قد صنف من بين أهم ٢٠ إنجازاً عالمياً في تاريخ الحفاظ على الطيور والموائل الطبيعية في العالم. وتكرس الاعتراف الدولي من خلال قرار اتخذه الصندوق الدولي لصون الطبيعة (IUCN) [www.iucn.org](http://www.iucn.org) باعتبار الحمى واحداً من الإنجازات التاريخية في حماية الطبيعة، بما يعنيه من الاستثمار الرشيد للموارد والمحافظة على قدرة البيئة على تجديد مواردها. ويتضمن القرار أسماء مختلفة من مساهمة المجتمع المحلي في الحفاظ على الموارد الطبيعية، ومنها الحمى، المهجر، أكدا،



المجلس العالمي للطيور يضم ممثلين عن 110 جمعية غير حكومية في العالم. جمعية حماية الطبيعة في لبنان هي الشريك الوطني منذ أوائل التسعينات

BirdLife International is the global partnership of Non-Governmental Organisations working for nature in over 110 countries. SPNL is BirdLife in Lebanon  
[www.birdlife.org](http://www.birdlife.org) | [www.spnl.org](http://www.spnl.org)





**WINGS OF SUCCESS:  
FROM 2000  
ENDANGERED TO OVER  
10,000 SOARING HIGH**

Thanks to the Anjar/KfarZabad communities, guardians of the 'Birdlife Rare Bird Club' species, for their remarkable conservation efforts!





Hyrax family

# MULTI-YEAR GRANT INTERIM REPORT

By Maya Badran & Bassima Khatib

## *Background*

SPNL's primary mission is to safeguard, conserve, and enhance Lebanon's biodiversity while spearheading the expansion of community-based protected areas known as Hima. Throughout the past year, SPNL has achieved numerous success stories across three core pillars: Organizational Development, Conservation, and Financial Sustainability.

To further bolster its efforts, SPNL has received a new grant from the Sigrid Rousing Trust (SRT). This funding is instrumental in strengthening SPNL's institutional framework, focusing specifically on

organizational capacity building, conservation initiatives, and financial sustainability. With the support of the Sigrid Rousing Trust and other generous donors, SPNL has identified new opportunities and devised comprehensive plans for implementation over the next two years.

## *Organizational Development*

Back to September 2019, SPNL formulated a new development strategy spanning from 2020 to 2030. Following a thorough review of its strategic objectives, SPNL has been diligently advancing its 2030 strategy since 2023, focusing on various dimensions to maximize impacts and achievements.

In line with our strategic objectives, we have established a cloud-based server database to consolidate all SPNL's information, serving as a comprehensive reference for our data. This initiative was vital for organizing, preserving, and easily accessing our data. Furthermore, to address organizational development gaps, SPNL has made significant progress this year. We have implemented a new Employee Compensation Policy to ensure an objective determination of staff compensation. Additionally, a new recruitment and appointment regulation policy has been developed to streamline



Owl

the process of hiring new staff, outlining clear procedures and establishing a salary scale based on position level, years of experience, and academic qualifications. Moreover, a new procurement policy has been introduced to provide clarity on the procedures for purchasing goods and services.

### Conservation

Over the next two years, SPNL's primary focus is to provide support to local communities in Lebanon by addressing potential conflicts related to the sustainable use of natural resources. We aim to promote the revival of the Hima system, facilitating the development of community-based protected areas. Through our Homat Al Hima program, we aspire to actively engage local communities in these conservation efforts.

Additionally, SPNL is committed to contributing to the development of Lebanon's biodiversity with the implementation of the 'Protected Areas Project.' This initiative involves identifying 15 'Important Bird Areas' across the country. Furthermore, we plan to submit a new request for the establishment of a Hima cluster in a previously unexplored region, spanning from Kfarhela to Majdel Area in Lebanon. These stra-

tegic actions are integral parts of SPNL's comprehensive two-year plan, aimed at fostering environmental conservation and community involvement.

Throughout 2023, SPNL has been actively engaged in hosting several "Blue Green" workshops and training sessions aimed at educating local communities in the Himas about climate change. These initiatives seek to enhance community knowledge and awareness regarding climate change impacts.

Moreover, in collaboration with IUCN, SPNL organized a significant consultative workshop titled "Drub El Hima for Peace." This workshop convened donors, eight mayors representing various municipalities, and members of the local community from Mount Lebanon. The workshop's highlight was the signing of a historic Hima charter by eight villages, signifying their collective dedication to nature conservation and sustainable development.

Furthermore, SPNL held meetings with the mayor of Ras el Matn and engaged local community members to develop an action plan for organizing a successful signature meeting with all municipalities. This meeting aims to reach an agreement for the establishment of Lebanon's first



**Maya Badran**  
Head of  
Organisational  
Development Dept.  
and HR

national park—a groundbreaking initiative on a national scale. Establishing this national park will be a primary focus for SPNL over the next three years.

SPNL recognizes the vital role of education and capacity building in nurturing the knowledge, values, and behaviors of children, youth, and women to support nature conservation efforts. By cultivating pro-environmental attitudes, SPNL aims to empower individuals to take leadership roles in managing their Hima areas and to extend these practices to other regions. SPNL has been actively involved in empowering women through various workshops aimed at raising awareness about environmental issues. Children are also a key focus of SPNL's strategy through our SNOW program, which has conducted numerous engaging sessions and activities with over 500 children on topics such as recycling, water conservation, wildlife, and biodiversity. These sessions utilize highly interactive teaching methods, including outdoor activities and direct engagement with nature, to ensure an enjoyable learning experience. Additionally, SPNL collaborates with a contemporary theater association to organize educational shows that promote environmental awareness, the Hima concept, and SPNL's mission in an engaging and accessible manner.

### *Financial Sustainability*

A significant concern and challenge for SPNL has been the economic and banking crisis in Lebanon. Despite this, it has proactively addressed these challenges by securing future plans through new projects and donor relationships, while also focusing on financial sustainability strategies.

To enhance fundraising effectiveness, SPNL has concentrated on several initiatives to support the organization's financial stability. As part of the Hima for Peace project, two gardens were inaugurated in 2022: the "Quranic Garden" in Kayfoun and the "Biblical Garden" in Shemlan. SPNL has continued to work on these gardens to reinforce the concept of Hima for peace and the harmonious balance between people and nature. Additionally, our communication



Tern with insect

team has dedicated efforts to enhance the fundraising section on our website, resulting in significant funds raised for the Shemlan Biblical Garden and other important causes. SPNL has continued to implement its development plan by bringing the SPNL team closer to Hima communities. A notable success story was the reinforcement of our Hima centers, achieved by relocating operations from the capital Beirut to our Mount Lebanon centers in Keyfoun, Shemlan, and Baysour. This move was strategic, aiming to strengthen our connection with Hima communities and fieldwork, enhance the role of our centers, and support our financial sustainability strategy. By making this move, SPNL anticipates saving approximately \$50,340 USD annually in rent and operational costs.

Additionally, the implementation of the Souk Al Hima Marketing Plan contributes to SPNL's financial sustainability. Through marketing publications on the SPNL website and featuring our Hima Market in the Shopping tab on Google, as well as promoting at various outlets in Beirut, especially hotels, we aim to reach new audiences. Collaborations with hotels like "1866 Court & Suites" and SmallVille Hotel have already begun, providing visibility to SPNL's Hima initiatives and conservation



efforts to a broader audience. Our next step involves targeting outlets at airports to further expand our reach and impact.

**Our notable achievements include:**

- ◇ The "Assad Serhal Wildlife Photography Prize", an initiative by the SPNL team, was held annually to honor former hunters turned conservationists, aiming to encourage and reward responsible hunting practices.
- ◇ The establishment of 30 Himas covering more than 9% of Lebanon.
- ◇ The mapping of 27 Himas Sites.
- ◇ In May 2023, SPNL General Director Assad Serhal was awarded the "Gusi Peace Prize International" in Manila, Philippines, in recognition of his contribution to the environment through Hima, his good governance, unification, service, and internationalism.
- ◇ In support of our Hima revival, the Minister of Tourism has added our Darel Taleh trail in Baysour to the tourist map for nature and the environment. In his welcoming speech, he dwelled on the importance of the Hima approach for nature, culture and tourism. Moreover, he praised SPNL staff for their dedication in conserving 29 Himas across Lebanon.
- ◇ SPNL ensured global adoption of its publications, which included several guides and magazines published parallel to our annual report this year. In the second edition of Al Hima magazine, IUCN adopted and shared numerous publications within it. This magazine serves as an accessible resource for anyone interested in exploring and becoming acquainted with all our Hima work.
- ◇ SPNL has been actively engaged in cooperating with hunting organizations to promote responsible hunting practices. Additionally, we represent civil society organizations (CSOs) on the governing Hunting Higher Council. Our Anti-Poaching Unit has conducted several meetings with decision-makers, including political and spiritual leaders, to address and mitigate the illegal killing of birds in Lebanon.



Assad Serhal Wildlife Photography Prize 3rd edition



ASSAD SERHAL WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHY PRIZE



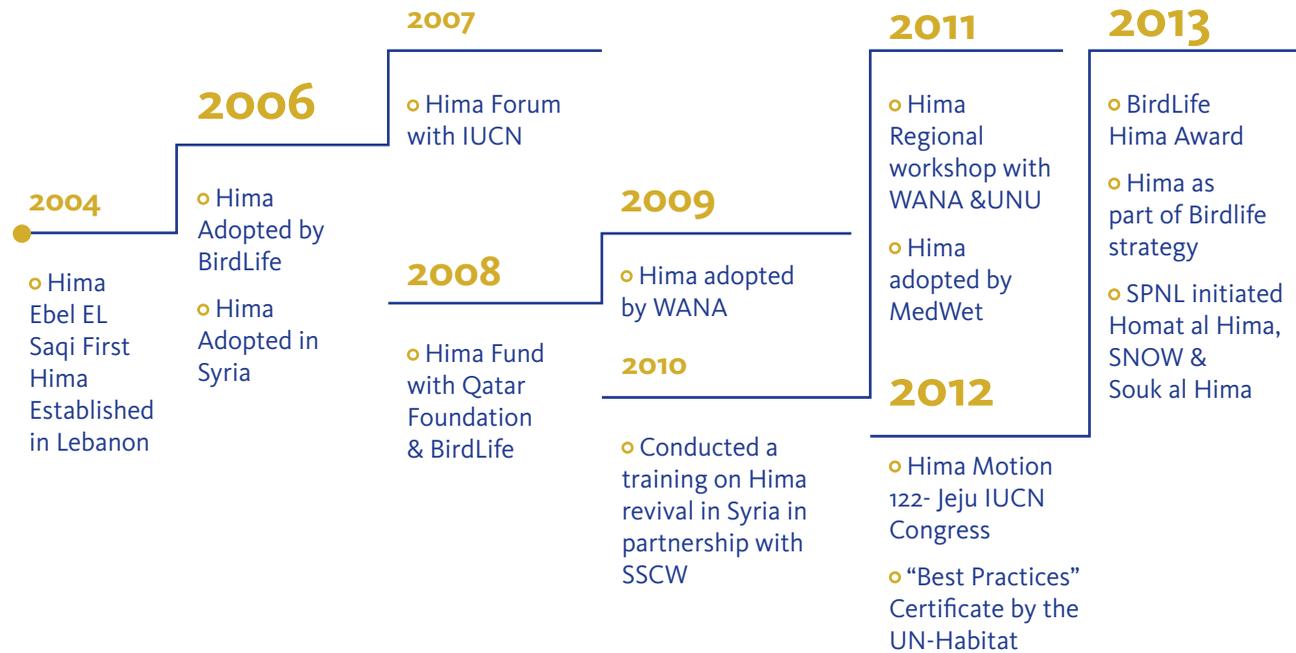


@ Michel Swan



@ Rabih Youssef

# HIMA TIMELINE



## 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 Luc Hoffmann Hima Home (LHHH)

## 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

## 2020/22

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

## 2023/24

- 30 Himas established
- Linking Mount Lebanon (CBR) to Anti-Lebanon (MHR) via the Rift valley
- Initiation of 1st Natural Park
- Hima For Peace: 8 villages in Mount Leb. signed Hima Charter
- Endangered Voices campaign / in partnership with Leo Burnett, HHI & SPNL





# TECHNOLOGY'S SONIC WAVES SAVE ENDANGERED SPECIES & FIGHT CLIMATE CHANGE

By Daryn Kara Ali (insidetelecom.com)

In our present time, technological progress often outpaces our comprehension of its consequences. Still, a new initiative by the SPNL aims to harness the potential of sonic technology. This initiative seeks to bridge the gap between humanity and the natural world by engaging our consciousness to advocate for endangered species.

This approach not only seeks to moderate the harmful impacts of human activity on endangered species but also strives to integrate nature into the corporate identity of prominent global brands.

## *A Symphony for the Survival of Endangered Species*

Sonic technology, a field that has intrigued scientists and technologists for decades, is now taking on a much bigger role in animal and nature conservation endeavors.

Through capturing and reproducing the sounds of endangered birds and mammals, SPNL is creating a distinctive language that transcends human barriers. This therefore enables nature's voice to resonate and re-



verberate in places where it has been muted for too long. Its homeland: Mother Nature.

Indeed, this technology goes beyond mere recording. The adoption of sonic technology converts the cries and melodies of those on the brink of extinction into a powerful message of resilience and optimism.

### *A Hero of Change Through Human Actions*

The harsh reality is that humanity's footprint on the climate has often been one of destructive rather than stewardship.

However, the SPNL's campaign aims to shock and awaken the global community to this reality, using sonic technology as a mirror reflecting our impact on the planet. By blending the natural calls of endangered species, such as the rare Arabian owl, with the brand messages of corporate giants such as BMW, VISA, and Shahid – and potentially, on the long run, Microsoft, Nokia, Google, Huawei, and others – it emphasizes the urgent need for a collective shift in consciousness.



Dear BMW, we have a request



Dear VISA, we have a request



**MIRACLES AT  
MOUNT LEBANON:  
7 OUT OF 70 ENDANGERED  
SPECIES IN EUROPE**

find refuge and recovery at the Luc Hoffman  
Hima Home Rescue Center, Hima Kafoun





BREEDING AVIARY, Prague Zoo

# STATUS OF EV FROM LEBANON 2023

by Antonin Vaidl,

EEP Coordinator and Member of Advisory board  
Vulture Conservation Foundation

In collaboration with the SPNL and the Bulgarian Society for Protection of Birds Bulgaria (BSPB), the Prague Zoo, as a European coordinator of the EV, received five wild-caught injured birds for the European Endangered Species Programme (EEP) coordination.

## 22/02/2022: The arrival

On February 22, 2022, one of the five Egyptian vultures, named Anahita, arrived at the zoo. Anahita had been shot with a shotgun, sustaining 13 bullets throughout her body. Her left leg was in a non-physiological

position, resting on the forefinger, due to implants inserted in Lebanon into the tarsometatarsus, causing osteolysis.

## 22/02/2022 and 31/03/2022: The surgeries

A surgery was conducted on February 22, 2022, followed by another surgery on March 31, 2022, to remove the remaining wire. After these two procedures, all the metal implants irritating her leg were successfully removed, along with necrotic tissue, mainly bone.

## 05/04/2022: The transfer

On April 5, 2022, Anahita was transferred from quarantine to the breeding center and put on enzymes only for better healing, with the isolation period still ongoing.

## 03/01/2023: Back to normal behavior

As of January 3, 2023, Anahita's leg is in a physical position, showing normal behavior. Her left leg, which was previously broken, is beginning to curl its toes slightly without any bruises, with her legs and claws in good condition. Currently, Anahita is placed in a dating aviary to find a partner.



DATING AVIARY, Prague Zoo





Mammals monitoring in Ain Zebde and Kherbet Qanafar - Led by Dr. Mounir Abi Saïd

# ENSURING CONNECTIVITY FOR THE BENEFIT OF NATURE AND PEOPLE

By Bassima Khatib

"Bioconnect" is one of SPNL's flagship projects, focused on improving the management of ecologically significant sites and establishing new Protected Areas and OECMs (Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures) to promote landscape conservation. The project aims to enhance ecosystem health and socio-economic benefits and alleviate key pressures on biodiversity, all while supporting local communities. Funded by the EU, "BioConnect" seeks to strengthen management and governance at ecologically important sites and expand biodiversity protection efforts in southern Lebanon.

**#EUBioConnect4Lebanon**

The West Bekaa region stands out as a critical area for birds and biodiversity within Lebanon. Situated as a narrow corridor between the Mount Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon mountain ranges, it encompasses the final remaining wetlands in the Bekaa Valley. These wetlands serve as a vital link, connecting the Shouf Biosphere Reserve with Qaroun Lake and the Litani River basin. Moreover, the region serves as a crucial migratory route for soaring birds during the spring season, facilitating their journey from southern to northern regions.

The Shouf Biosphere Reserve is Lebanon's first designated nature reserve, encompassing approximately 5% of the country's territory. SPNL collaborates with the Al Shouf Cedar Society (ACS) on a regional initiative known as "BioConnect," funded by the European Union for a duration of 45 months, spanning from 2022 to 2025. This project focuses on the southern region of Lebanon and involves four key partners: Al Shouf Cedar Society (ACS), the Society for the Protection of Nature in Lebanon (SPNL), the Association for the Development of Rural Capacities (ADR), and the Association for Community and Environment (ACE).

**"Bioconnect" is one of SPNL's current biggest projects, with the main goal of enhancing the management of ecologically significant sites and establishing new Protected Areas and OECMs for comprehensive landscape preservation. The primary objectives of this initiative include reinforcing ecosystem health, fostering socio-economic advantages, mitigating major threats to key biodiversity, and providing support to local communities. This innovative project employs a multifaceted approach to protected area management, spanning from established nature reserves like Shouf and Tyre to community-based protected areas known as Himas, along with the introduction of new geoparks in Mount Hermon. Within this initiative, SPNL focuses on 7 Himas: *Kherbet Qanafar* and *Ain Zebdeh* in West Bekaa, *Hammana* and *Ras el Matn* in Mount Lebanon, *Qoleileh @ Mansouri* on the southern coast, and *Ebel el Saqi* near Marjeyoun in the South.**



Checking data collected on camera traps



**Bassima Khatib**  
Head of Nature  
Conservation  
Department

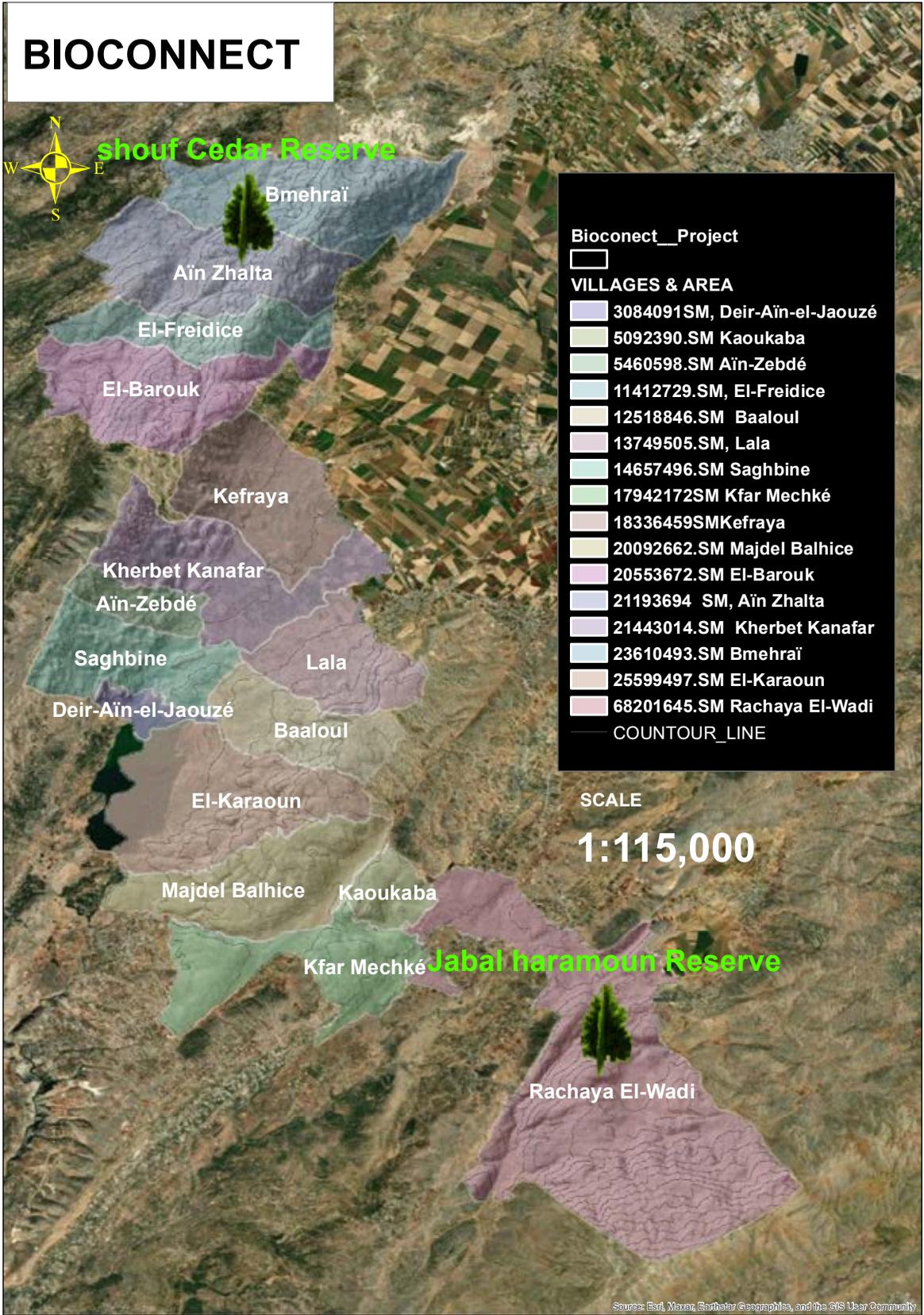
Ever since its establishment in 1986, SPNL advocated the establishment of protected areas and initiated with the Ministry of Environment the protected areas in Lebanon. After twenty years of experience working with nature reserves through government agencies, SPNL is now reviving and advocating the Hima community-based conservation approach that has been prevalent in the Arabic region for more than 1500 years, for the conservation of key biodiversity areas. SPNL has solid experience in rural development and livelihood enhancement through community based approaches. Since 2004, SPNL has been promoting the "Hima" community-based approach for the conservation of key biodiversity sites in collaboration with municipalities-local authorities. This approach concentrates on the involvement of local communities in decision making, promotes sustainable use of natural resources, and supports poverty alleviation through providing alternatives for income generation.

Hima projects concentrates on scientific research (social & ecological), situation analysis, and developing management plan for the Hima sites that takes into consideration poverty alleviation and providing alternative ecologically friendly job oppor-

# BIOCONNECT



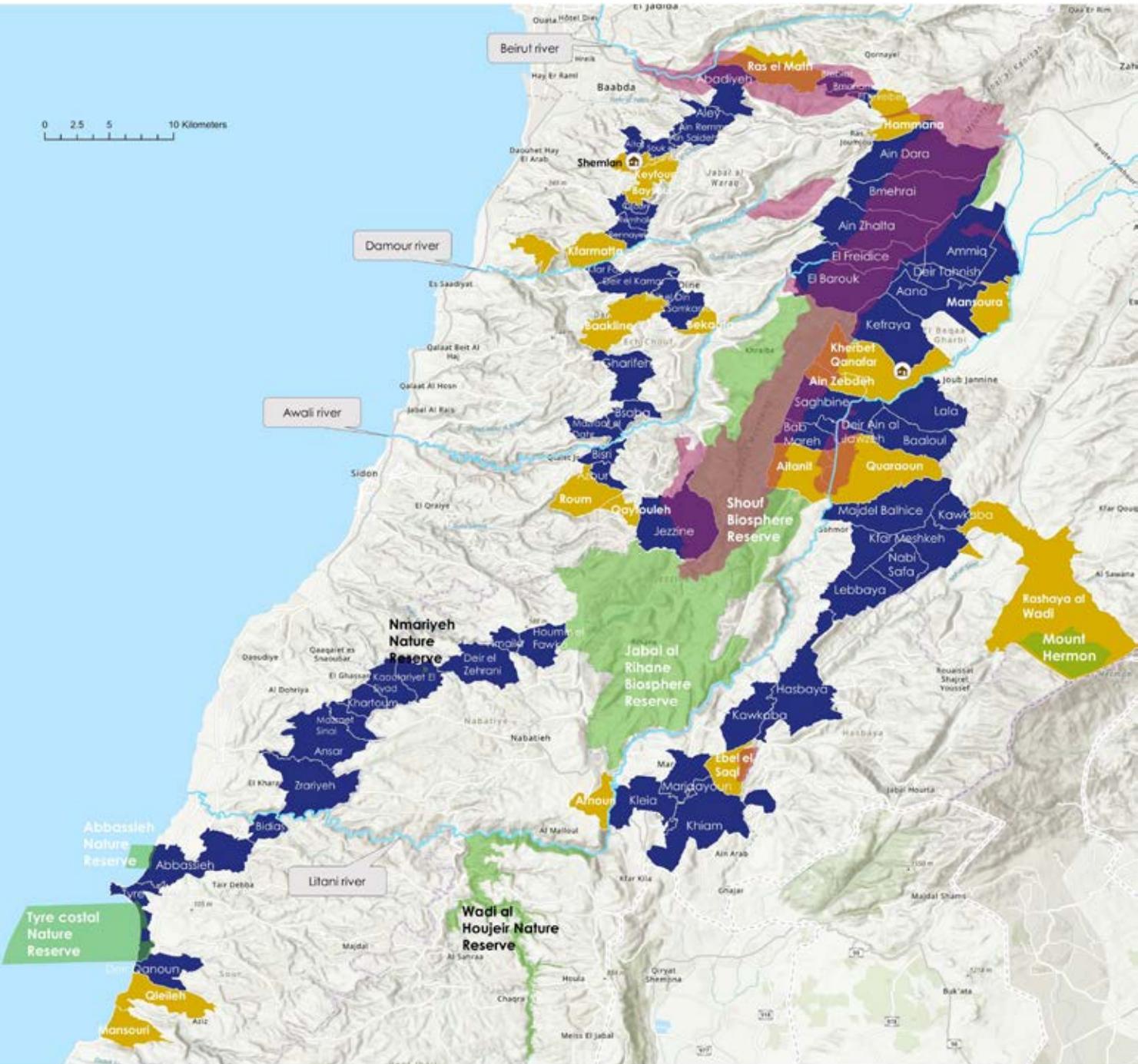
shouf Cedar Reserve



| Bioconnect_Project |                               |
|--------------------|-------------------------------|
| [White Box]        | VILLAGES & AREA               |
| [Light Blue Box]   | 3084091SM, Deir-Aïn-el-Jaouzé |
| [Light Green Box]  | 5092390.SM Kaoukaba           |
| [Light Purple Box] | 5460598.SM Aïn-Zebdé          |
| [Light Teal Box]   | 11412729.SM, El-Freidice      |
| [Light Yellow Box] | 12518846.SM Baaloul           |
| [Light Brown Box]  | 13749505.SM, Lala             |
| [Light Green Box]  | 14657496.SM Saghbine          |
| [Light Green Box]  | 17942172SM Kfar Mechké        |
| [Light Brown Box]  | 18336459SMKefraya             |
| [Light Green Box]  | 20092662.SM Majdel Balhice    |
| [Light Purple Box] | 20553672.SM El-Barouk         |
| [Light Blue Box]   | 21193694 SM, Aïn Zhalta       |
| [Light Purple Box] | 21443014.SM Kherbet Kanafar   |
| [Light Teal Box]   | 23610493.SM Bmehraï           |
| [Light Brown Box]  | 25599497.SM El-Karaoun        |
| [Light Purple Box] | 68201645.SM Rachaya El-Wadi   |
| [Black Line]       | COUNTOUR_LINE                 |

SCALE  
1:115,000

Source: Esri, Maxar, Earthstar Geographics, and the GIS User Community



**Map key:**

- Protected area
- Town with no established Hima
- Town with an established Hima
- Important bird area
- H SPNL center
- River

**Yara Alchammas**  
 © Basemap powered by ESRI – © OCHA Services  
 – © UNEP-WCMC and IUCN (2023). Protected Planet: The World Database on Protected Areas (WDPA) and World Database on Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures (WD-OECM)



tunities for the local communities that raises their livelihood and quality of life (such as ecotourism, Bed & breakfast facilities, visitor centers, guiding in nature, cultural artisana and food,...).

As part of the BioConnect project, SPNL plays a crucial role in several components:

- Strengthening the management practices of ecologically significant sites.
- Establishing a citizen-science protocol for monitoring biodiversity for it to be interlinked with traditional land use practices in selected Himas.
- Conducting training workshops with local community groups on the use of the above protocol at selected Himas.
- Piloting the citizen-science protocol in Hima Hammana, focusing on training for monitoring selected species
- Developing management plans for Himas lacking such plans
- Creating a framework for ecosystem-based climate change mitigation and adaptation in the project's protected areas/sites
- Supporting the maintenance of traditional agricultural practices beneficial to biodiversity in four Himas under the Hima Farm Best Practices program (6 Hima farms, 5000 m2 each).
- Empowering local communities in Hima management through initiatives like Homat Al Hima and Hima school, involving 1200 students and 90 youth
- Conducting an awareness-raising campaign through a traveling exhibition on biodiversity conservation in selected sites
- Supporting local fishermen with equipment and training to prevent illegal fishing in Himas
- Advocating for municipal decisions to combat unsustainable/illegal practices in selected Himas
- Organizing an annual workshop for Hima leaders to share experiences and understand their roles
- Promoting the Hima concept as a landscape connectivity approach among key municipalities and the different PAs/Sites of the project area, through material distribution and one on one meetings.

- Working towards creating new Protected Areas and OECMs for landscape conservation
- Focusing on promoting connectivity between West Bekaa, Shouf Reserve, and Mount Hermon
- Identifying and monitoring key species at involved Himas
- Studying potential sites along the corridor in West Bekaa towards Rashayya and Mount Hermon for declaration as Himas or other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) to ensure biodiversity and people connectivity.



Herpetofauna monitoring led by Dr. Riyad Sadek



Bats monitoring led by Dr Mounir Abi Said



Plant monitoring led by Husein Zorkot - Ras El Maten



Chady Saad during Bird monitoring - Hammana

### 1. Biodiversity Monitoring

In the framework of "Bioconnect," SPNL has been conducting biodiversity monitoring since April 2022 for plants, birds, mammals, and herpetofauna in various Hima sites across Mount Lebanon, West Bekaa, and South Lebanon. Renowned experts and scientists such as Dr. Mounir Abi Said and Dr. Riyad Sadek for mammals and herpetofauna, Chadi Saad for birds, and Husein Zorkot for plants are actively involved in these efforts. Furthermore, SPNL's nature conservation team is actively participating in monitoring activities to enhance their capacity. These collaborative efforts aim to deepen our understanding of the biodiversity in the targeted areas, facilitating more informed decision-making for future conservation actions. Additionally, this monitoring will enable SPNL to advocate for enhancing landscape connectivity among different Himas and other protected areas. Exciting outputs have already emerged from this initiative: approximately, 400 bird observations have been made, and endemic and threatened plant species are being documented in all monitored sites. Notably, interesting mammal species such as the Rock Hyrax and the Wild Cat have been recorded. Moreover, a potential new species (or sub-species) of rodents has been identified in Ebel el Saqi, although further verification is required.

There is immense value in immersing oneself in nature, learning from it, exploring its treasures, and observing its transformations over time. This firsthand experience enables

us to take appropriate action and ensure effective conservation of species and habitats.

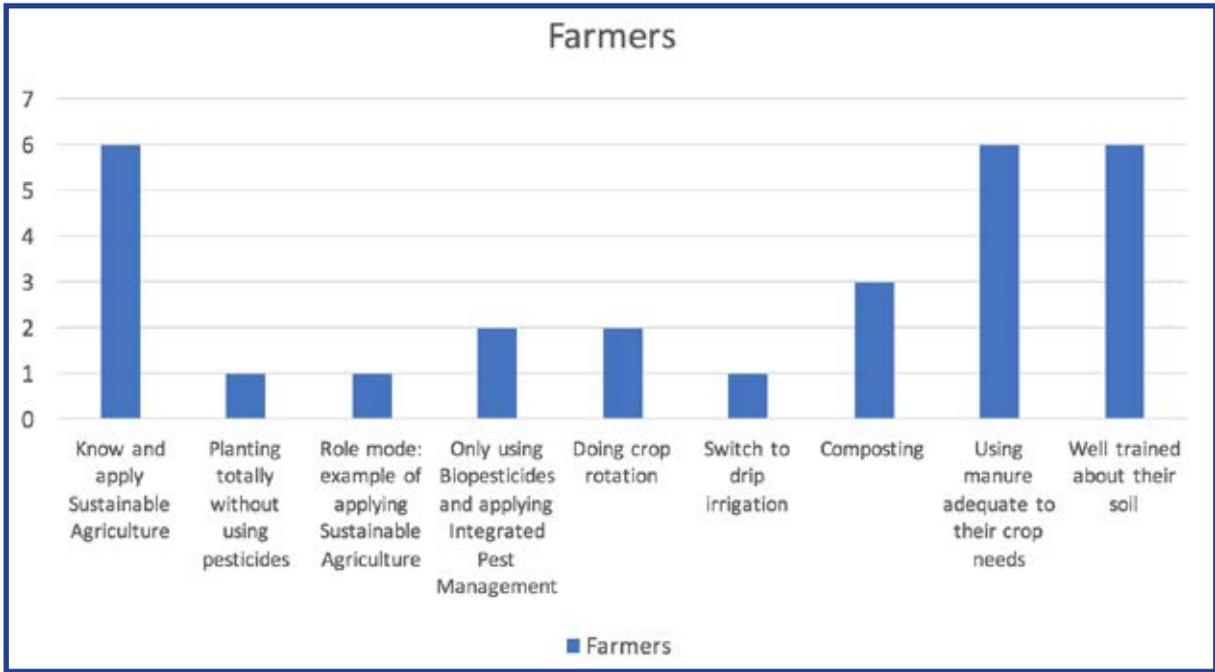
### 2. Hima Farm

In the framework of "Bioconnect," and under the Hima Farm program, SPNL is collaborating closely with local farmers from various Himas to promote sustainable agriculture and nature-friendly practices. SPNL's agricultural engineers are actively engaging with farmers from Ras el Matn, Hammana, Kherbet Qanafar, and Ain Zebde. The objective is to preserve the farmers' traditional land-use methods while incorporating modifications to align with sustainable practices. This collaborative effort aims to make a positive impact on the quality of crops and the surrounding natural ecosystems, fostering harmony between agricultural activities and environmental conservation.

So far, we have been collaborating with six farmers who are involved in various activities such as water management and irrigation, crop management and rotation, pest control, plantation processes, and land-use practices. We conduct weekly and monthly visits to these farmers to enhance their involvement in agricultural activities within the pilot sites. These visits also include monthly evaluations and guidance to assist them in all aspects of their agricultural practices.

Our aim is to promote sustainable agriculture in the pilot sites and encourage farmers to adopt practices that are beneficial for both nature and themselves. By working directly with local farmers, we hope to foster awareness and encourage replication of nature-friendly practices. Seeing tangible results on the ground and witnessing the engagement of local farmers will serve as a powerful demonstration of the benefits of the Hima Farm program.

So far, under our BioConnect project, we have achieved significant milestones through our Hima Farm Program. This program embodies our commitment to organic agriculture, permaculture, and the sustainable use of resources. We strictly prohibit hunting and child labor, while also



Cherry from Hima Farm Hammana



focusing on capacity building for locals and providing employment opportunities for both locals and refugees.

Moreover, our Hima Farm Program plays a crucial role in conserving native plants and herbs, contributing to the overall biodiversity of the region. It is designed to be financially sustainable, ensuring its long-term viability. Additionally, we prioritize the involvement of youth and women, recognizing them as underprivileged groups who can benefit greatly from their participation in agricultural activities.

### 3. Hima School SNOW programme

In the framework of the “BioConnect” project, environmental education sessions for public school students were delivered through the SNOW (School with No Walls) program.

SNOW is an environmental education program tailored for schools and local community groups, targeting children aged between 8 and 12 years old. It aims to prepare them to join the Homat Al Hima program at a later stage. In this scope, Hima School provides environmental packages to all schools in the Hima sites; these packages help build the capacities of children while introducing

them to new methods to explore their Hima heritage, appreciate its values, and instill a dedication to its preservation.

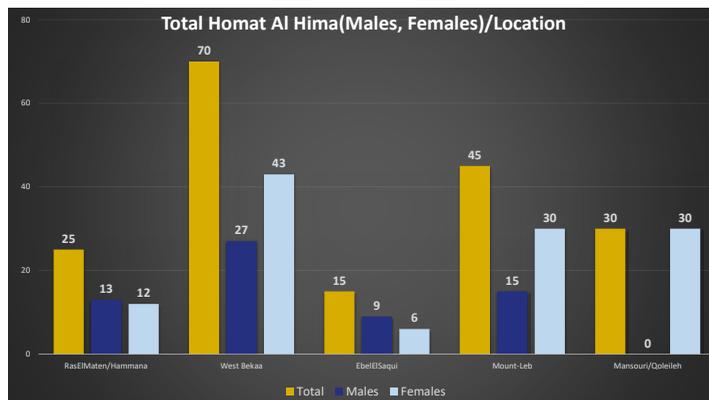
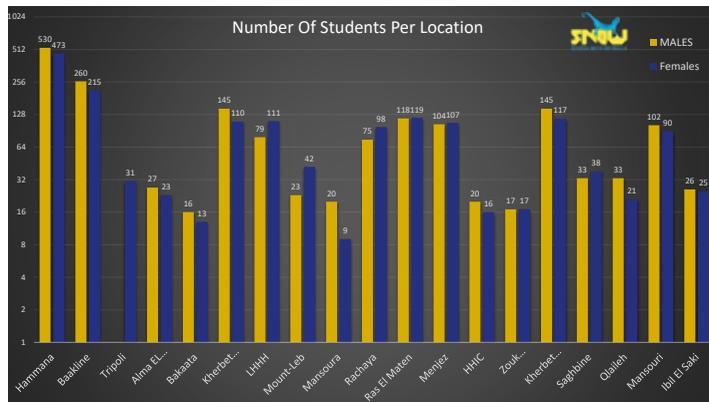
The students from the Qleileh/Mansuri region and Ras el Matn participated in sessions where they learned about the importance of biodiversity and the different types of protected areas in Lebanon.

These sessions were implemented in South Lebanon, in collaboration with UNIFIL, which supported SNOW's implementation by assisting in coordinating and distributing useful gadgets for students to use during their exploration journeys in nature. These educational sessions aim to raise awareness among school students and foster positive behavior change among the younger generation, empowering them to become pioneers of future conservation actions.

Within the BioConnect project, SNOW has exceeded its target by reaching 1214 students, comprising 658 males and 556 females as explained in the graphs.



Homat Al Hima in West Bekaa region



#### 4. "Himas' Heroes" Homat Al Hima

SPNL is deeply committed to its environmental education program, especially under the Homat Al Hima initiative. In this project, we have focused on capacity-building training and educating the local communities about their natural surroundings. We aim to provide training on various topics such as nature, fauna, flora, biodiversity, agriculture, forest management, nature-based tourism, guiding, and more. These topics are directly relevant to their territories, and the goal is to demonstrate the importance of their participation in conservation and protection efforts.

"Homat Al Hima" is an Arabic slogan that acknowledges individuals and groups serving as guardians and heroes. Homat Al Hima individuals are motivated, well-trained, and equipped youth from local HIMA communities. They aspire to lead activities and raise awareness about the HIMAs. Moreover, they are committed to addressing environmental, economic, and social concerns within their communities, while ensuring the conservation of the site's key biodiversity, and the ecological and cultural services it provides.

## 5. Rangers

In the framework of BioConnect, biodiversity monitoring field activities focusing on Birds, Mammals, Plants, and Herpetofauna (reptiles and amphibians) started in mid-April 2022 and continued until March 2023. SPNL seized this opportunity to involve local community members in the monitoring activities, thereby enhancing their capacities. The participation of rangers from our targeted Hima sites is crucial for maintaining the quality of monitoring fieldwork and ensuring the safety and guidance of our experts.

In addition to their support during field visits, our local rangers are thoroughly enjoying the wealth of information they are uncovering during this exhilarating journey through their natural surroundings. This participatory approach will significantly contribute to strengthening the impact of future conservation activities by enhancing the value of biodiversity among locals and increasing their engagement in the management and protection of their Hima sites.

The monitoring activities are progressing well, prioritizing species and habitats while highlighting the ecological importance of the studied sites. This accurate and updated analysis of biodiversity status will be a crucial contribution to the conservation goals of the BioConnect project, ensuring:

1. A more efficient management of the targeted Hima sites.
2. A science-based advocacy tool for the establishment of new Protected Areas under the landscape connectivity concept.



We are pleased to share with you some testimonials from our local rangers:

### Hasan El Achkar – Ebel el Saqi

*“Ever since I got the chance to work with the SPNL team a few months ago, they have allowed me to discover more about nature. It was a dream for me to work with such associations and discuss nature concerns and their valuable role in life. What I learned from the previous months is how to do monitoring for birds, mammals, reptiles, and insects, and it has been a very exciting experience for me. The most important thing is that I am learning to better understand nature and the best ways to protect it and its biodiversity from all threats including hunting and trees cutting.”*



### Tony Hasbani – Kherbet Qanafar/Ain Zebde

*“My name is Tony Hasbani, I am from Ain Zebde, West Beqaa. I am assisting SPNL’s field team in bird monitoring in Hima Ain Zebde and Kherbet Qanafar. On one hand, I am getting to know new bird species in our Hima, and on the other hand, I am enjoying being with the team on the field and learning from their expertise. An amazing experience for me!”*



### Nabil Makarem – Ras el Matn

*“I am an environmental activist since 1997, very active and interested in hiking all over Lebanon’s hiking trails. I met the SPNL organization 3 or 4 years ago. What we had in common was that we both had the same goals, interests, and visions: the love of nature and working for its conservation. SPNL surely gave my passion for nature an added value. On a personal level, for example, I used to fear a couple of animal species a lot, until I learned to understand their role and importance in nature. As a ranger, SPNL introduced me to monitoring, whether it was for birds, plants, or mammals. Now I know an important number of biodiversity species and how to identify them thanks to SPNL for which I will forever be grateful.”*

Overall, our experience with the local rangers has been exceptional. They are extremely dedicated individuals who show great interest in conserving their ecosystem, are willing to learn new sustainable ways of living and offer their assistance whenever needed. SPNL will continue to work hard to reignite the passion in these amazing people, especially for nature and the environment.

In summary, community engagement will always be a key factor for the efficient management and conservation of natural resources. With the development of the new citizen science manual for biodiversity monitoring as one of the outputs of BioConnect, we hope to take the involvement of local community groups to a more advanced level.

## 6. Connectivity

SPNL, through BioConnect, is focusing on 7 Himas in the southern part of Lebanon: Kherbet Qanafar and Ain Zebdeh in West Bekaa, Hammana and Ras el Matn in Mount Lebanon, Qoleileh & Mansouri in the southern coast, and Ebel el Saqi near Marjeyoun in the south.

Under the patronage of the Minister of Environment, Dr. Nasser Yassin, and a representative of the EU Delegation to Lebanon, Deputy Head of Cooperation Ms. Alessia Squarcella, SPNL organized the 1st Annual Forum for Hima Areas on November 24, 2023, at the Homat Al Hima International Center in Kherbet Qanafar, West Bekaa. The meeting brought together Hima leaders from the aforementioned areas, as well as representatives from other Himas in West Bekaa, namely Mansoura, Aitanit, Qaroun, and Union of Qaroun Lake municipalities, project partners, and social and environmental activists.

The meeting aimed to facilitate networking among Hima leaders, allowing them to learn about each other's achievements and needs. The opening session emphasized the importance of local community involvement in conservation and sustainability efforts. Discussions covered an overview

of the BioConnect project, achievements to date, and scientific assessments of biodiversity within the different Himas. One significant achievement highlighted was the declaration of Hima Rashaya, contributing to the connectivity between nature reserves and Himas in West Bekaa and Mount Hermon.

Similar annual meeting events will be held in different Hima locations each year, fostering learning and connectivity for both nature and people.

**BioConnect, funded by the EU, aims to ensure effective management and governance at sites of ecological importance and expand biodiversity protection in southern Lebanon.**

### #EUBioConnect4Lebanon

The European Union supports Lebanon's stability, independence and sovereignty, its prosperity and democratic order. It strives also to help protect its environment and natural resources by supporting sustainable enterprise and development.

Find out more about the EU's work in Lebanon or follow it on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram at @EUinLebanon

Eurasian Hoopoe - Chady Saad





Painted Lady Butterfly © Elie Karam

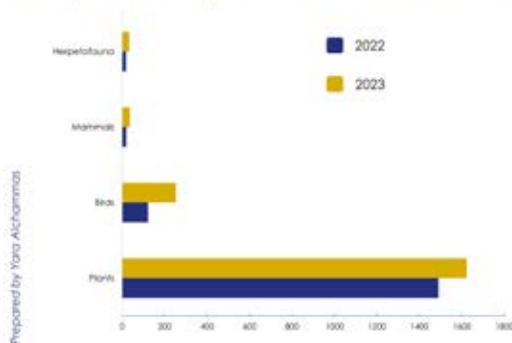
# USING DATA SCIENCE FOR BETTER CONSERVATION

By Yara Alchammas

## *Data collection importance and findings*

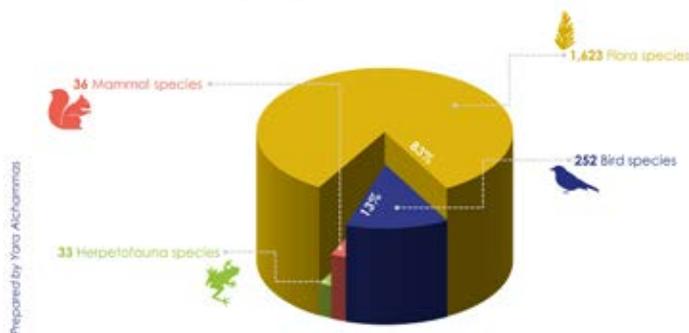
Collecting data about biodiversity is fundamental for understanding the natural world and making informed decisions about conservation and environmental management. By tracking changes in species occurrence and ecosystem composition, we can assess the impact of human activities on our planet's ecosystems. This data is invaluable for policymakers and stakeholders as it provides essential information for developing effective strategies to protect biodiversity and preserve ecosystem services. Over the past two years, within the scope of the BioConnect project funded by the European Union, a comprehensive biodiversity monitoring initiative has been underway. Expert teams have diligently surveyed plant, bird, mammal, and herpetofauna populations across seven distinct Himas located in the Mount Lebanon, West Bekaa, South Lebanon, and Nabatiyeh governorates. The increase in monitoring efforts between 2022 and 2023 have notably expanded the SPNL biodiversity database by approximately 18% (refer to image 01).

## Comparison of species numbers between 2022 and 2023



01. Comparison between the numbers of surveyed species between 2022 and 2023

## Breakdown of surveyed species in 2023



02. Species numbers surveyed in 2023 divided by taxa

In 2023, SPNL's experts have successfully identified various species (as detailed in image 02):

- 33 herpetofauna species (including turtles, tortoises, lizards, skinks, snakes, frogs, toads...);
- 36 mammal species (including rodents, bats, carnivores, herbivores...);
- 252 bird species (including resident, migrating and visiting species) with SPNL supplementing this data from Open Source data sources;
- 1,623 plant species.

The varying numbers of bird species across different Lebanese governorates may not accurately reflect reality due to the origins of the Open Source data integrated into the SPNL database. This inclusion aimed to identify the maximum number of species present in Lebanon (refer to image 03).



**Yara Alchammas**  
Biodiversity  
Research & Data  
Manager

Regarding plant richness, the Mount Lebanon governorate exhibited the highest diversity of species, while the numbers in the Bekaa, Nabatiyeh, and South Lebanon governorates were relatively similar. Notably, no Open Source plant data was discovered or added to the SPNL database (see image 04).

## Biodiversity data under BioConnect

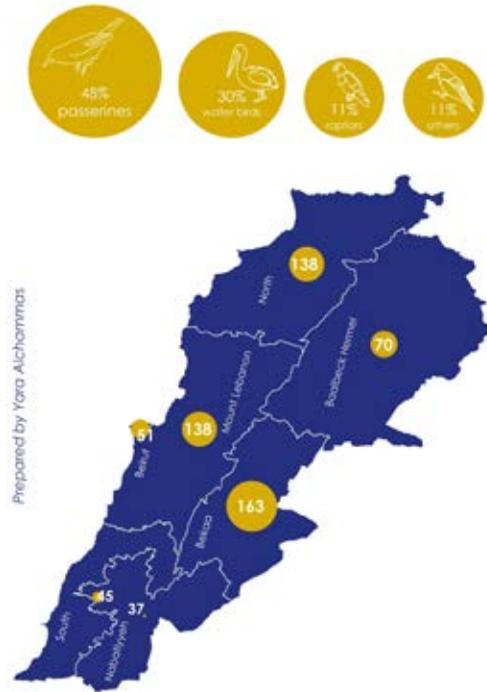
The BioConnect project encompasses seven Himas situated around the Al Shouf Cedar Biosphere Reserve: Hammana and Ras el Matn in the Mount Lebanon governorate, Ain Zebdeh, and Kherbet Qanafar in the Bekaa governorate, Ebel el Saqi in the Nabatiyeh governorate, and Mansouri and Qleileh in the South Lebanon governorate (refer to image 05).

Year-long monitoring efforts in these seven Himas revealed the presence of 6 endangered herpetofauna species, 6 endangered mammal species, and 11 endangered bird species. Endangered animal species often play critical roles as keystone species, influencing the delicate balance of prey-predator dynamics. The risk of extinction faced by these species signifies broader ecosystem deterioration, as the disappearance of one species can contribute to the extinction of others. These findings underscore the urgent need for the development and implementation of future management and species action plans. Such plans are essential to prevent potential cascading negative effects that the loss of these key species could have on ecosystems, ecosystem services, and ultimately human health and survival.

Conservation plans are essential to safeguard Lebanon's abundant medicinal plants, which hold significant cultural, economic, edible, and medicinal value. While their harvest is often necessary, it can also be damaging if not regulated properly. Additionally, the loss of any of these plants represents the irreplaceable loss of genetic material that cannot be recovered. Plant surveys have revealed a remarkably

high rate of plant endemism in Lebanon, further solidifying its status as a global hotspot for plant endemism, as recognized by Conservation International. Several factors contribute to this high endemism rate, including Lebanon's proximity to persistent ocean currents and its mountainous terrain, which creates diverse and rugged environments.

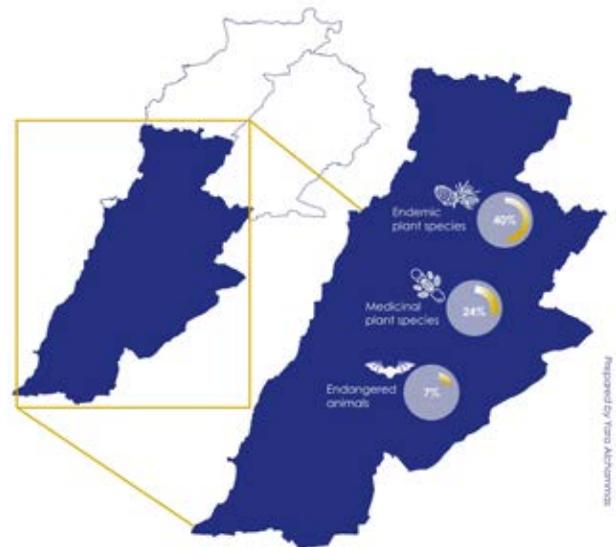
Recent studies suggest that regions with high plant endemism rates have experienced long-term climatic stability. Old and narrowly distributed taxa are often able to survive in historically stable climates that have not undergone glaciation or significant temperature fluctuations. This underscores the importance of Lebanon's participation in climate change mitigation efforts to preserve its rich and unique biodiversity and avoid dramatic changes in its climate.



03. Numbers of bird species in each Lebanese governorate surveyed in 2023



04. Numbers of plant species in each Lebanese governorate surveyed in 2023



05. Important facts about BioConnect species data

## BioConnect Key Biodiversity Features

Following biodiversity assessments, SPNL scientists and experts recommended key biodiversity features for the seven Himas included in the BioConnect project. The formulated recommendations revolved around four internal criteria:

1. Chosen species should be endangered according to the IUCN Red List, or have a local justification for causing habitat destruction;
2. Chosen species should have low populations;
3. Chosen species and habitats should have local and cultural value for the local communities;
4. A holistic approach must be used while prioritizing ecosystem equilibrium.

These recommendations have led to the selection of 16 key biodiversity features divided into four geographic regions as follows (image 06):

### • Hima Hammana and Hima Ras el Matn:

- The Egyptian Vulture (*Neophron percnopterus*) is endangered globally and vulnerable in the Mediterranean and illegally hunted on its main flyway between Europe and Africa;
- The Mediterranean Horseshoe bat (*Rhinolophus euryale*) is vulnerable in the Mediterranean, negatively affected by habitat loss and destruction, and persecuted by locals because of misconceptions and low social acceptance;
- The Syrian Striped Hyaena (*Hyaena hyaena syriaca*) is vulnerable in the Mediterranean, and persecuted by locals because of misconceptions and low social acceptance;
- The Ehrenberg's Marjoram (*Origanum ehrenbergii*) is vulnerable and endemic to Lebanon, accidentally harvested because of its resemblance to the wild marjoram or thyme.

### • Hima Kherbet Qanafar and Hima Ain Zebdeh:

- The Gray Wolf (*Canis lupus*), an apex predator, is persecuted by locals

because of misconceptions and low social acceptance;

- The Chukar Partridge (*Alectoris chukar*) is locally threatened, mainly because of the illegal trade of birds and eggs;
- The Syrian Striped Hyaena (*Hyaena hyaena syriaca*) is vulnerable in the Mediterranean and persecuted by locals because of misconceptions and low social acceptance;
- The Look Oak (*Quercus look*) is endangered and endemic to Lebanon and Syria, logged and losing its habitat because of fires and urbanization.

### • Hima Ebel el Saqi:

- The Greek Tortoise (*Testudo graeca*) is vulnerable, illegally traded, and losing its habitat;
- The Mediterranean Horseshoe Bat (*Rhinolophus euryale*) is vulnerable in the Mediterranean, negatively affected by habitat loss and destruction, and persecuted by locals because of misconceptions and low social acceptance;
- The Wild Cat (*Felis silvestris tristrami*) is endangered locally due to hybridization with domestic cats;
- The Basalt Rocky Slopes Habitat hosts a diversity of plants, rodents, and herpetofauna.

### • Hima Mansouri and Hima Qleileh:

- The Palestine Sunbird (*Cinnyris osea*) is an important pollinator in Lebanon suffering from irresponsible pesticide use;
- The Loggerhead Turtle (*Caretta caretta*) is vulnerable and affected by sand, water, light, and noise pollution;
- The Green Sea Turtle (*Chelonia mydas*) is endangered, affected by sand, water, light, and noise pollution
- The Sandy Shores Habitat is highly correlated with the breeding and survival of sea turtles.

Prepared by Yara Alchammas



06. BioConnect Key Biodiversity Features and their threats





European Serin © Fouad Itani

# A TRIUMPH IN HIMA MAPPING

By Yara Alchammas

Nature's boundless and untamed beauty transcends human-made borders, reminding us of its ownership by none and its existence beyond the confines of administrative or national boundaries.

Despite this inherent vastness, the conservation department at SPNL took on the formidable task this year of collaborating with numerous Hima representatives, a topographer, and a Geographic Information System specialist to map the Lebanese Himas. This extensive cooperation culminated in the creation of a comprehensive database at SPNL containing the borders of 28 out of the 29 designated Himas, along with geographical information detailing soil composition, watersheds, rivers, geological characteristics, elevation lines, and land use

across all of Lebanon's territory.

Mapping protected areas, including Himas, is indeed crucial for various aspects of conservation and environmental management. These maps provide invaluable insights into the distribution of protected ecosystems across the country, aiding research, policy-making, and conservation efforts. By monitoring changes in these areas and assessing the effectiveness of conservation measures, stakeholders can better protect and manage these valuable habitats.

Moreover, these maps serve as powerful tools for raising awareness and educating local communities about the importance of biodiversity and the richness of their lands. Furthermore, the mapping of Himas contributes to fulfilling Lebanon's commitments under global biodiversity frameworks, such as the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, which aims to conserve 30% of terrestrial and marine habitats. With Himas covering approximately 5% of Lebanon's territory, this achievement demonstrates the country's dedication to collaborative conservation efforts involving municipalities and local communities.





Field work in the fog - Qaa Semi-desert

# AL MURUNAH BUILDING CLIMATE RESILIENCE THROUGH ENHANCED WATER SECURITY IN MENA

By Stephanie Ferando

## *Project Overview*

The Government of the United Kingdom has launched the "Al Murunah" Project, a five-year initiative aimed at addressing water challenges and enhancing climate resilience in the MENA region. The project seeks to achieve this by implementing Resilient Nature Based Water Solutions (RNBWS), which combine Nature Based Solutions for Water (NBSW) and Agricultural Water Management (AWM). With a focus on Jordan, Lebanon, the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT), and Egypt, the project is implemented by the International Water Management Institute (IWMI) in collaboration with the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN). Its main objective is to strengthen national capacities for the implementation and upscaling of RNBWS. Through action-oriented field demonstrations and recommendations, the project aims to overcome technical and non-technical barriers to the adoption of RNBWS and ensure its long-term sustainability.

## Background and Purpose

The AI Murunah Project is based on the belief that well-designed, cost-effective RNBWS can bolster water security in agricultural areas across the Middle East, including rangelands. RNBWS encompass a range of activities and interventions that actively involve local communities. These include watershed management, enhancements to irrigation and drainage systems, restoration efforts for wetlands and wadi systems, protection of water sources, and initiatives such as water harvesting using techniques like sand dams.

Furthermore, RNBWS initiatives aim to replenish groundwater through reforestation and afforestation, as well as improve water quality by reducing nutrient and sediment run-off from agricultural land into water bodies. Overall, the goal of RNBWS is twofold: to increase water availability and simultaneously decrease water demand, thereby enhancing water security and bolstering the resilience of communities.

## Engagement and Learning

The AI Murunah Project aims to generate evidence and understanding of the role that RNBWS can play in sustainably improving water security. In collaboration with ministries and local stakeholders in Jordan, Lebanon, the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and Egypt, the project is identifying, designing, and implementing model RNBWS interventions in demonstration sites.

Particular attention is paid to engaging women, youth, and vulnerable populations, whose input and involvement are crucial in co-developing effective solutions across various activities. Through these RNBWS demonstrations, practical examples tailored to each country's context will be created. These examples will then be shared through regional knowledge-sharing and learning activities, to propose further upscaling of similar initiatives in comparable ecosystems.



**Stephanie Ferando**  
Project Manager



Semi-desert of Ras Baalbeck

## "Sustaining Hope and Unleashing AI Murunah Project's Vision for Water Security in MENA"

In response to the pressing water challenges faced globally, the United Kingdom's government has initiated a transformative 5-year endeavor known as the "AI Murunah Project." This ambitious initiative aims to reinforce water security and bolster climate resilience throughout the MENA region through the implementation of Resilient Nature-Based Water Solutions (RNBWS).

Picture this: a monumental effort geared towards enhancing water security and fortifying climate resilience across the MENA region. But this project is no ordinary undertaking. It's about harnessing the inherent power of nature.

So, what's the strategy? We're introducing Resilient Nature-Based Water Solutions, which combine nature-based solutions for water (NBSW) with Agricultural Water Management (AWM). The goal is to transform the arid landscapes of Jordan,

Lebanon, the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and Egypt into water-wise paradises. Spearheaded by the International Water Management Institute (IWMI) in collaboration with the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and with SPNL as the country implementing partner, the project aims to enhance national capacities for RNBWS implementation and scaling up. It entails practical field demonstrations and recommendations by socio-economic and hydrological experts to overcome barriers and ensure long-term sustainability. The central idea is that cost-effective RNBWS interventions can simultaneously enhance water security and reduce water demand.

*“From the people, to the people”*

Most importantly, the project’s objective is based on engaging local communities in decision making. Indeed, a strong sense of ownership within a local community not only fosters resilience and unity, but also empowers individuals to shape their shared future, transforming residents into committed stewards of their community’s well-being. Besides, women, youth, and vulnerable groups in particular must contribute to the development of model RNBWS interventions. These interventions will serve as examples of knowledge-sharing and potential upscaling in similar ecosystems.

To date, we have successfully completed the first fiscal year which mainly revolved around the project’s planning. During this fruitful year, we have organized multiple successful “missions”, aka a series of workshops and community consultations with the local communities of Ras Baalbeck, Qaa, and Fekha regions, in addition to expert assessments.

These workshops and consultations saw participation from all sectors of the community, including farmers, women, youth, municipality mayors, governmental entities, local CSOs, and related ministries such as the Ministry of Energy and Water,

which serves as the main sponsor of the project, the Ministry of Agriculture, and the Ministry of Environment. Through collaborative efforts, these consultations yielded collective insights into identifying the vision, problem areas, and proposed interventions for implementation in the forthcoming period.

Currently, we find ourselves in the second fiscal year. In June, IWMI and IUCN conducted the first mission, visiting the pilot site in the region and holding a meeting with the National Project Steering Committee. Following this, the second mission occurred in September, where key stakeholder groups were invited to participate. This mission proved successful in making critical decisions, including selecting the most suitable scenario with interventions that align closely with the project’s objectives, achieved through a participatory approach involving the local community. Here’s to more success stories in the years to come!





Semi-desert of Ras Baalbeck, Important Birds and Biodiversity Area (IBBA)



**GUARDIANS ON  
THE FRONTLINE:  
OVER 7 KMs OF MIST  
NETS REMOVED**

Our anti-poaching heroes intercept  
illegal bird killing



Bird captured at mist net



APU detecting illegal hunting activities

# SPNL'S ANTI-POACHING NEVER-ENDING EFFORTS

By Adonis Khatib



The fight against poaching in Lebanon is a critical and urgent endeavor, given the rising environmental threats faced by wildlife and endangered bird species, alongside worsening economic and security circumstances. Despite these challenges, the Anti-Poaching Unit (APU), in collaboration with the Society for the Protection of Nature in Lebanon (SPNL) and the Committee Against Bird Slaughter (CABS), remains steadfast in its efforts to curb indiscriminate killing and safeguard Lebanon's wildlife and biodiversity.

In 2023, the APU made significant strides in its efforts to combat illegal hunting in Lebanon. Rather than merely lodging complaints with law enforcement, the focus shifted towards presenting complaints before environmental judges. This approach aimed to escalate legal action against perpetrators of illegal

hunting, particularly in northern regions like Akkar, Dennieh, and Arida, as well as in the western and central Bekaa regions, and areas such as Eghbe, Shahtoul, and Ghoshta. Strengthened cooperation and coordination with the Judicial Police and the Information Branch of the Lebanese Army facilitated the exchange of crucial information and enhanced joint efforts to combat illegal hunting.

Moreover, the release of a comprehensive document supporting the fight against illegal hunting and the involvement of political, religious, and community leaders played a pivotal role in exposing and holding violators accountable. This concerted effort targeted individuals engaged in the extermination of birds using brutal methods such as night hunting, netting, trapping, and shooting migrating bird flocks, including storks, cranes, and raptors—some of which are on the brink of extinction. Additionally, efforts were made to curb the illegal trade of wild birds.

Furthermore, the APU made significant efforts in rescuing injured birds that were shot in remote areas by ignorant hunters. Swift interventions were made to rescue and provide medical care to 18 birds of various species, including Sparrowhawks, Snake Eagles, Honey Buzzards, Harriers, Booted Eagles, Common Kestrels, Griffon Vultures, storks, pelicans, and cranes. Unfortunately, 13 birds succumbed to fatal injuries, while 5 were rescued, rehabilitated, and mostly released back into their natural habitats.

In 2023, the APU witnessed tangible progress through data collection, field-work evaluation, and the transformation of results into brief, informative lectures and training sessions. This enabled volunteers to contribute effectively to the fight against illegal hunting. Awareness campaigns were also conducted at schools, universities, Homat Al Hima, hunters, farmers, and bird lovers. A special emphasis was placed on the role of rural women in community awareness in favor of a good transition to a more responsible society. Alternative activ-



Illegal Hunting senseless losses



**Adonis Khatib**  
Anti-Poaching Unit  
Manager

ities were organized outside the hunting season, such as archery, air rifle shooting, and wildlife photography. Combatting illegal hunting in Lebanon requires continuous support to enable the unit to expand its scope of work, enhance field efforts, and increase its readiness. Establishing centers in various provinces and providing volunteer opportunities are therefore mandatory to ensure the continuity of efforts in combating illegal hunting and protecting wildlife and biodiversity in Lebanon.





## HIMA TO HIMA

By Louis Jr. Saad

Within SPNL, the Hima-to-Hima program serves as a vital connection among all other programs within the organization's pillars. The concept behind Hima-to-Hima is to link different Hima sites across Lebanon, showcasing the unique characteristics of each location and highlighting the diversity within the areas where SPNL operates. This program aims to enhance the experience for nature tourists by providing them with a comprehensive and enriching exploration of various landscapes and cultures within the same country.



Through ongoing projects, SPNL collaborates with local community members in established Himas to improve branding and enhance existing infrastructure to meet international standards while preserving the local identity. The initiative seeks to connect Himas from the Bekaa region to the North and South; it emphasizes the natural, cultural, and social values embedded within these areas, which are managed by the local community as custodians of the land.



DREAM TRAIL - Hima Ras el-Matn to Hima Hammana

The Hima-to-Hima tour offers a range of ecotourism packages that tour operators can customize for individuals and groups, allowing visitors to explore different Himas and experience the unique offerings of each region. For example, visitors can start their journey in the North by visiting the charming salt mills in Anfeh, then head to the Bekaa Himas for hiking adventures amidst agricultural fields and interactions with local farmers. Finally, they can explore the Mansouri area in the South, observe turtles, and relax on sandy beaches surrounded by orange trees.

Each village along the tour route offers a variety of activities, from walking and canoeing to fishing and snowshoeing, providing ample opportunities for recreation and exploration. The biodiversity of these villages allows enthusiasts to discover diverse ecosystems and observe unique wildlife, including birdwatching, agricultural practices, and hiking trails. Additionally, visitors can indulge in enriching culinary experiences, sampling authentic cuisine unique to each region.

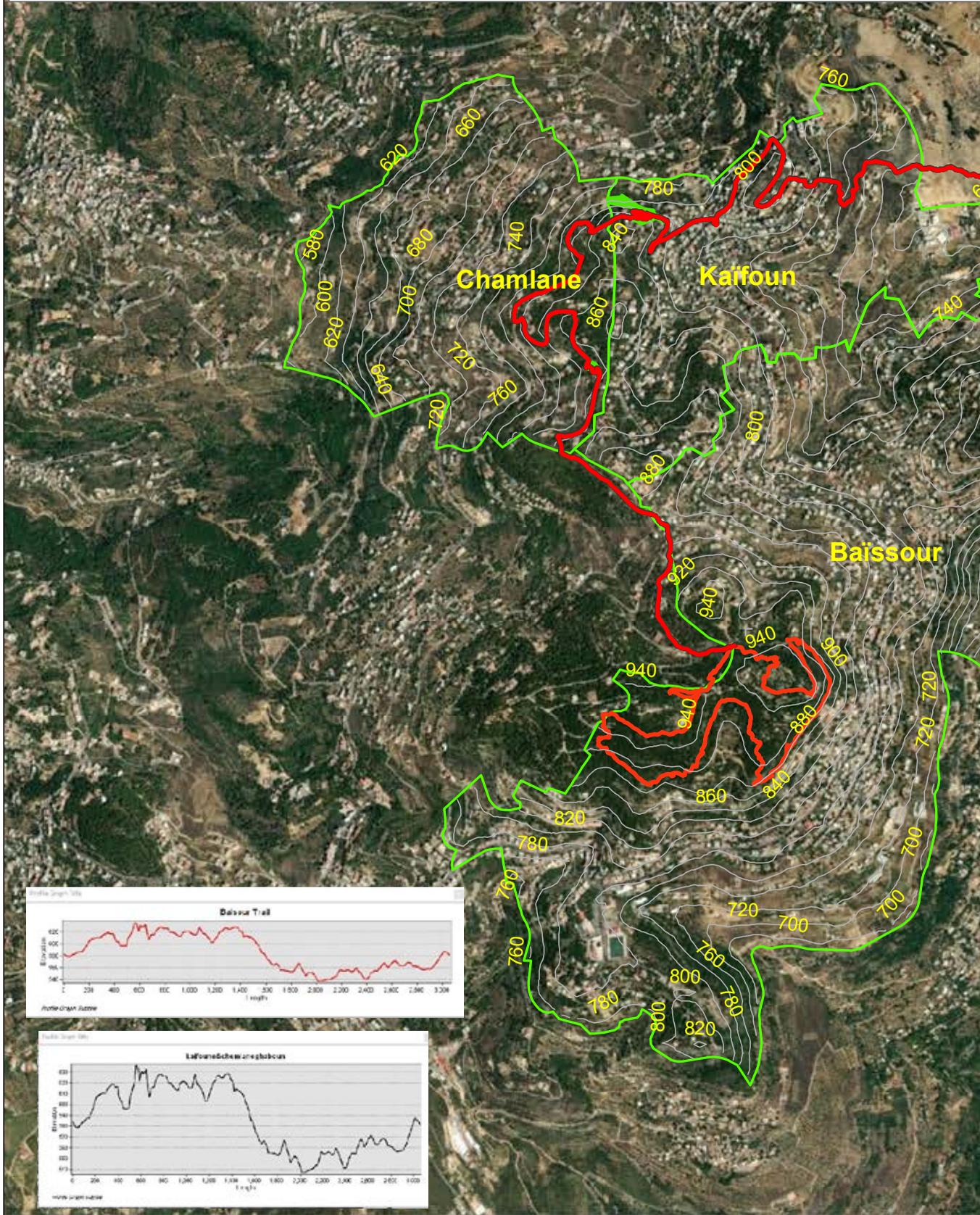


**Louis Jr. Saad**  
IKB Manager

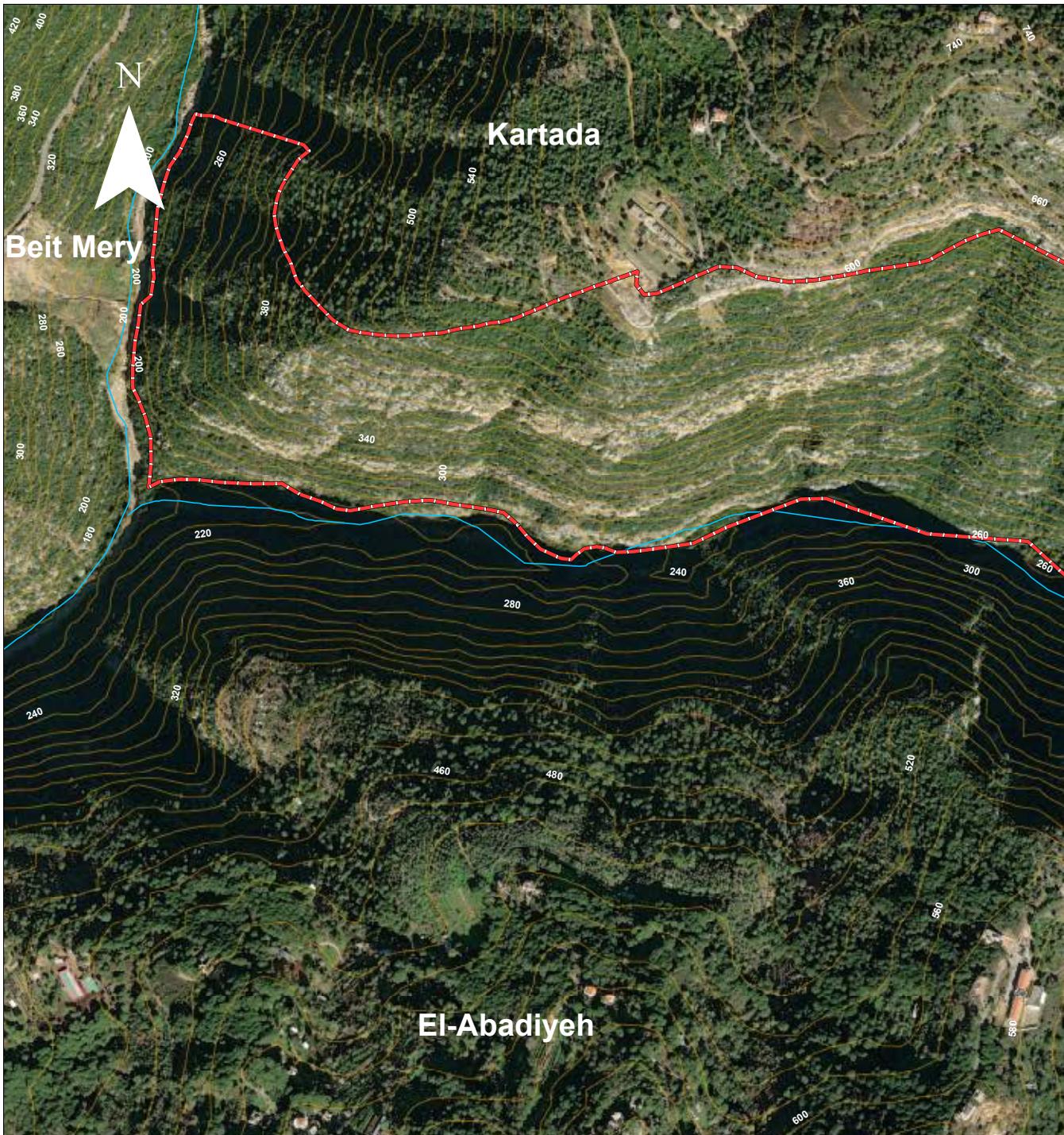
Packages within this program can be customized to suit the preferences and interests of travelers, ranging from one-day outings to week-long adventures. In the Mount Lebanon region, SPNL is currently focused on developing two prominent trails: The Dream Trail and the Peace Trail. The Dream Trail connects Hima Ras el Matn to Hima Hammana, while the Peace Trail links Basyour to Hima Chemlan and Hima Keyfoun. Both trails offer immersive experiences that highlight the unique characteristics of their respective surroundings.

Proper mapping and delineation have been meticulously carried out by the SPNL team. The Peace Trail, stretching between Keyfoun and Chemlan, features passages with historical significance dating back to the Lebanese Civil War era. Meandering through pine forests and offering stunning 180-degree panoramic views, this trail also includes side paths specifically maintained for People with Disabilities, providing them with a safe and accessible opportunity to immerse themselves in nature. Covering a total distance of 7.7 kilometers, the Peace Trail offers a diverse and enriching experience.

Meanwhile, the Dream Trail winds its way through various towns across two mountain ridges, offering sections of varying difficulty levels. Spanning over 12.7 kilometers, this trail passes through historic sites and unveils near-pristine routes, providing hikers with a rewarding journey. The Hima-to-Hima team is actively working on additional trails within Himas to foster connectivity both within and between reserves. Similarly, a connecting trail linking Baysour, Ghaboun, Chemlan and Keyfoun is nearing completion, to create a holistic and broad loop that highlights the natural beauty of the area.

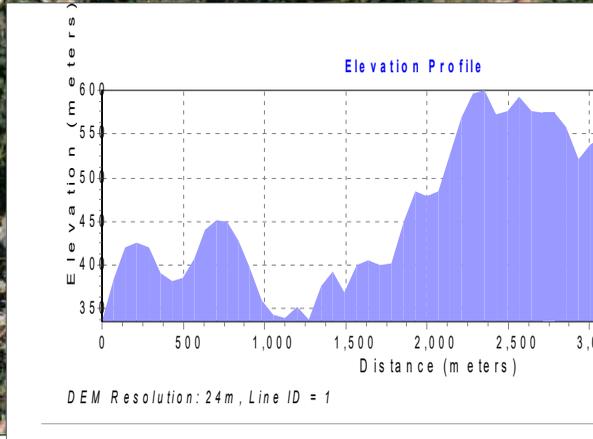






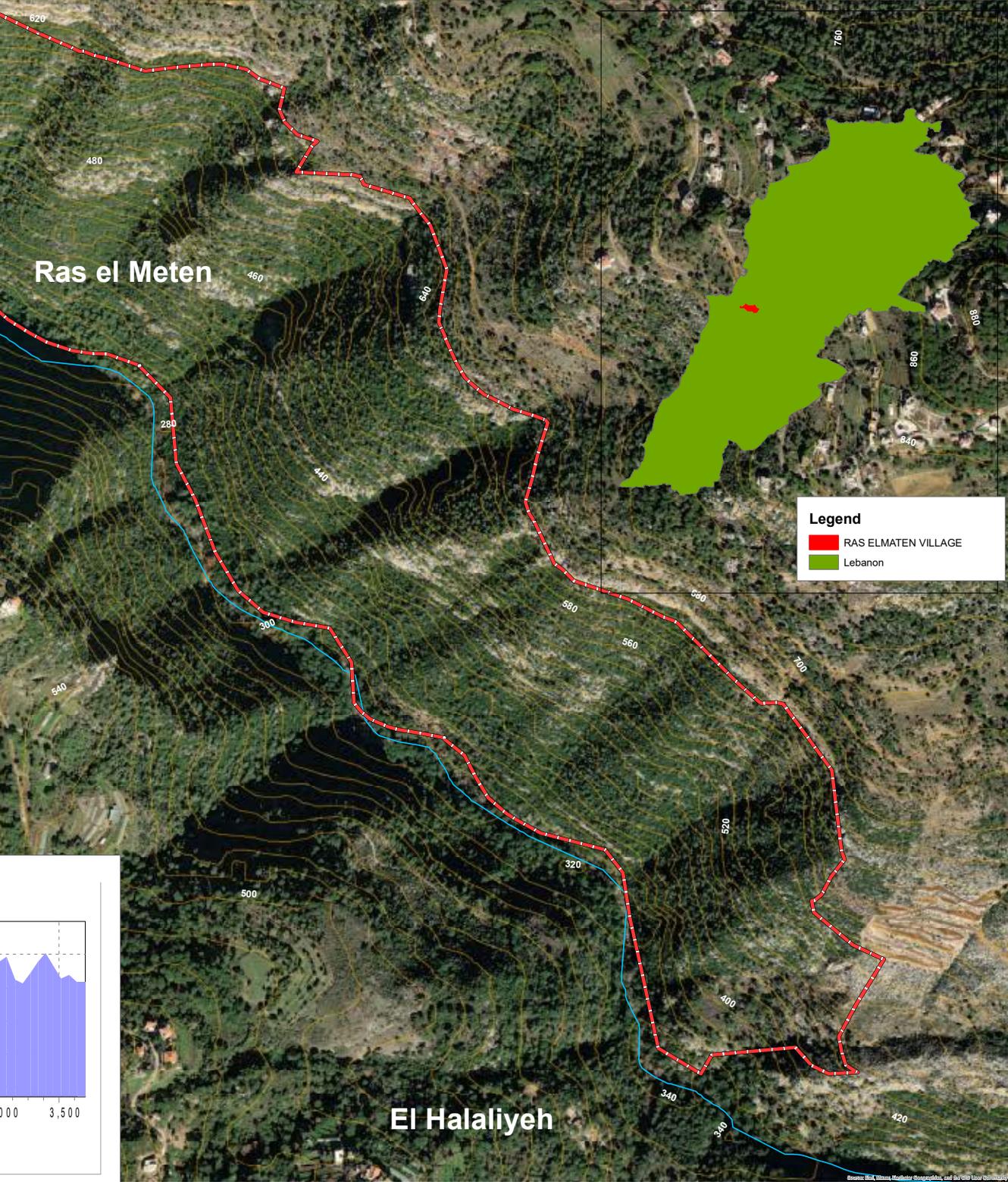
**Legend**

-  HIMA RAS ELMATEN BOUNDARY
-  BEIRUT RIVER
-  CONTOUR\_LINE



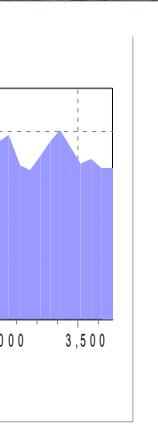


**Hima Ras -Elmaten**  
**Elevation :940m**  
**Area:1,700,000Sqm**  
**Caza:Baabda**  
**Gouvernement:Mount Lebanon**



**Legend**

- RAS ELMATEN VILLAGE
- Lebanon



Source: SPNL, Ministry of Agriculture, and the World Bank





Robert Bosch  
Stiftung



SPNL  
nomat al hima  
حماة الحمى



THE  
SIGRID  
RAUSING  
TRUST



HWF

HRW

## ميثاق عمل

هذا اللقاء للبلديات المشاركة في التوقيع على هذا " الميثاق " الهادف الى احياء وتاهيل "دروب الحمى" التراثية وجعلها مقاصد سياحية مستدامة للجميع ولرواد الرياضة في احضان الطبيعة الام الحاضنة .

البلديات المشاركة

بلدية عين الزمالة ، بلدية عين السيدة -بلدية سوق الغرب -بلدية عيتات- بلدية شمالان -بلدية بيبصور - بلدية كيفون-بلدية كفرمتى .

وقد تم الاتفاق خلال هذا اللقاء ،ان يشمل ميثاقنا هذا اقامة واحياء ما يلي :

-برامج علمية وانشطة متنوعة تستهدف كافة الفئات والمجتمعات لحماية "الحمى ودروبها" وتطوير الخبرات في استثمارها واجتذاب الزوار وارشادهم وخلق فرص عمل تساهم في الاقتصاد المحلي وفي تطوير الحياة المشتركة وجاذبيتها الريفيه للمساهمة عبر السياحة والانتاج التراثي المحلي في ردم الهوة الاقتصادية الناتجة عن ماساة الوطن وفي تخفيف الهجرة الداخلية والخارجية والدعوة الى العودة الدائمة الى ربوعنا .

-بناء الثقة بين المجتمعات وتعزيز التواصل والتكامل لحماية منطقتنا والطبيعة فيها والسلام الاجتماعي والاستقرار .

-تعزيز دور الشباب والمرأة وتنشيط العمل الاجتماعي والثقافي والابداعي الرياضي .

-تأسيس وابتكار مشاريع صديقة للبيئة استثمار الطبيعة وجمالها كعنصر مستدام في الاقتصاد والتنمية البشرية .

-التواصل مع المدارس لتطوير برنامج "مدارس بلا جدران" بالتنسيق مع وزارة التربية الوطنية وبرنامج "دروب الحمى" مع وزارة السياحة وبرامج الطاقة البديلة مع وزارة الطاقة والمياه وتطوير القطاع الزراعي مع وزارة الزراعة والحذ من الصيد الجائر مع وحدة مكافحة الصيد الجائر في وزارة الداخلية وكذلك العمل مع وزارتي الاعلام والثقافة لنشر الوعي وتعزيز الابداع والمحافظة على البيئة و المناطق المحمية مع وزارة البيئة .

املين المساهمة الجادة في استعادة نسيجنا الانساني الى سابق عهده وسلامته واستقراره وخلق فرص عمل منتجة ومزيدا" من الوعي المنشود .

بلدية عيتات



بلدية سوق الغرب



بلدية عين السيدة



بلدية عين الزمالة



بلدية كفرمتى



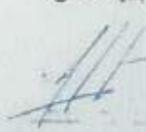
بلدية كيفون



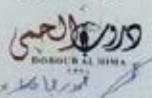
بلدية بيبصور



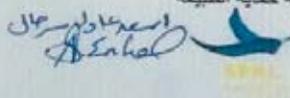
بلدية شمالان



دروب الحمى



جمعية حماية الطبيعة





Signing of the Hima Charter by 8 villages in Mount Lebanon; a testament to our shared dedication towards conservation and community prosperity

# HIMA FOR PEACE BRIDGING COMMUNITIES, SUSTAINING RESOURCES

By Fatima Hayek

In a world where natural resources frequently spark conflicts, the "Hima for Peace" project emerges as a beacon of hope and unity. Rooted in the age-old Hima tradition, this pioneering initiative seeks not only to preserve nature but also to resolve disputes and foster harmony among communities.

## *A Transition Beyond Conservation*

The Hima concept, rooted in ancient Arabian traditions dating back 1500 years and revived by SPNL, originally served as a resource management system with a primary focus on biodiversity protection. Hima, an Arabic term denoting "protected area," pioneered an approach that acknowledged the intrinsic link between nature and communities. For centuries, it successfully preserved fragile ecosystems while ensuring the equitable use of resources among local inhabitants.

In recent times, the Middle East has become a hotbed of conflict, often exacerbated by disputes over natural resources, particularly water. Against this backdrop,

"Hima for Peace" represents a paradigm shift in the application of the Hima tradition. It transcends its historical conservation focus to become a multifaceted tool for resolving conflicts related to natural resources, fostering peace, and promoting sustainability.

### *The Significance of "Hima for Peace"*

In a nation grappling with water scarcity and climate fragility, tensions over natural resources frequently arise. In this landscape, "Hima for Peace" emerges as a transformative force. By tackling resource management issues head-on, it counters the spread of religious extremism and cultivates peace within the region.

At its core, "Hima for Peace" recognizes that conflicts over natural resources are often intertwined with social, cultural, and economic factors. These complex disputes require holistic solutions that engage communities in dialogue, build trust, and encourage sustainable resource management. Thus, it is not just about protecting the environment, but also about nurturing harmonious relationships among people who rely on these resources for their livelihoods.

### *Achieving Unity Through Conservation*

Since its launch in 2022, the "Hima for Peace" project has made significant progress, demonstrating that its approach extends beyond mere theoretical concepts to tangible achievements.

Community engagement lies at its core, actively involving local communities, especially youth and women, through "Homat Al Hima" groups. Empowered with knowledge of sustainable resource management, climate change, and conflict resolution, these groups play a pivotal role in mediating and resolving disputes. The efforts go beyond conflict resolution, with the establishment of Biblical and Quranic Gardens, hiking trails, and ecological events. These peaceful initiatives not only promote biodiversity conservation but also provide



Religious leaders gather in our public gardens, offering blessings and exemplifying unity in diversity



**Fatima Hayek**  
Project Manager

income-generating opportunities for locals. One of the project's most significant achievements has been bridging the gap between neighboring Kayfoun and Shimlan villages. Historically separated by invisible barriers, mutual visits to religious sites, joint events, and collaborative projects have strengthened community bonds. In times when differences can lead to division, "Hima for Peace" showcases how shared values and common goals on natural resources can unite communities. Furthermore, collaborations established with international organizations, especially IUCN and UNDP, have not only provided crucial support but also acknowledged the project's potential for wider replication. "Hima for Peace" is hence no longer just a project; it is now one of SPNL's Hima Programs, poised to be replicated elsewhere.

### *A Promising Future for "Hima for Peace"*

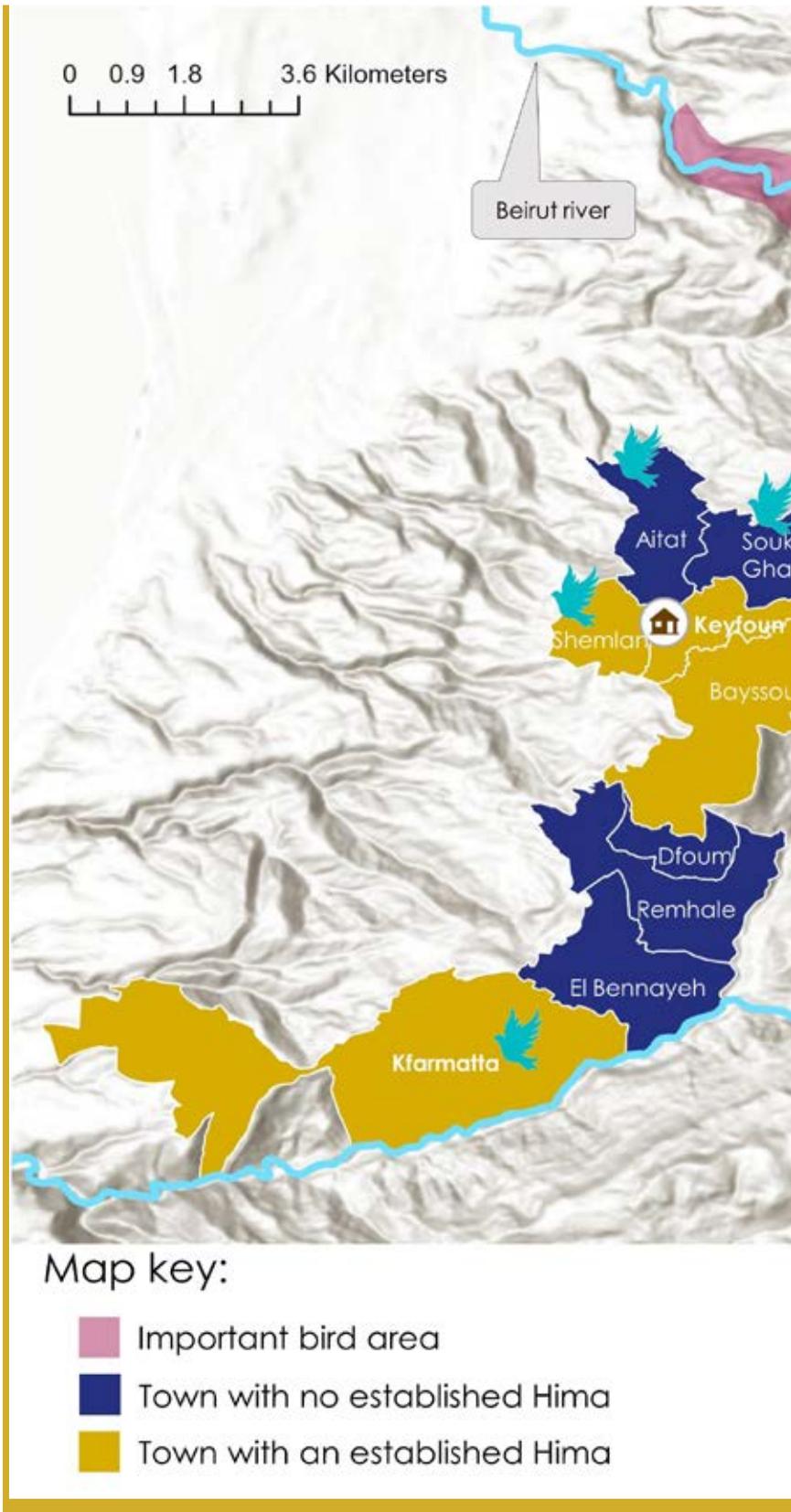
The project has already shown upscaling efforts attracting eight municipalities in Mount Lebanon, surrounding Kayfoun and

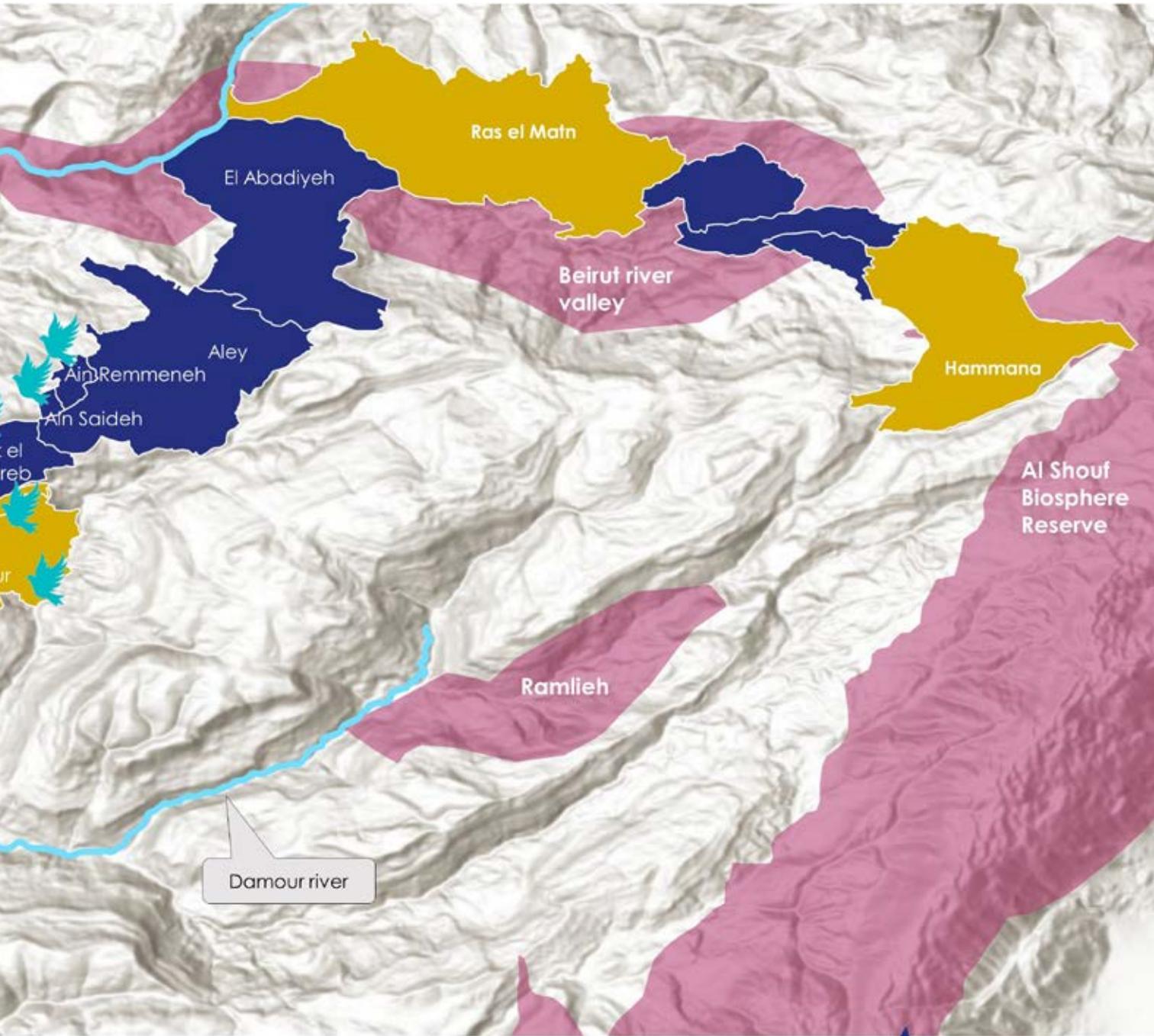
Shimlan, to sign a unity agreement. In the coming months, a significant milestone awaits as "Hima for Peace" collaborates with the IUCN to develop a comprehensive case study. This study will serve as a platform to share the project's remarkable success story with a broader audience at the local and regional levels, underlining its pivotal role in conflict resolution over natural resources and climate change mitigation.

The journey of "Hima for Peace" is far from over. The project envisions several exciting future steps. By continuing to build bridges among communities, it aims to foster lasting peace and cooperation. The successful model of "Hima for Peace" will be replicated in other regions, magnifying its influence across Lebanon and beyond. Initiatives like the Biblical and Quranic Gardens, hiking trails, and ecological events will persist, promoting biodiversity and community welfare.

Besides, the ongoing collaboration with international organizations will help secure resources and recognition to further amplify the project's impact. The transition from a local initiative to a recognized Hima Program underscores its potential to become a global model for resolving conflicts over natural resources while promoting peace and sustainability.

"Hima for Peace" isn't just a conservation project; it's a testament to the power of community, unity, and sustainable resource management in the face of adversity. As it continues to thrive and expand, it brings the promise of peace, not just for Kayfoun and Shimlan but for communities far and wide. Through innovative adaptation and successful implementation, the project has demonstrated that the ancient Hima tradition can serve as a guiding principle in the modern world, fostering unity and nurturing a sustainable future for all.





— River

 Luc Hoffmann Hima Center

 Town part of Hima for Peace



Yara Alchammas

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Group of students hiking in Hima Ras el Matn and having a training on behavior in nature



# FIGHTING CLIMATE CHANGE WITH THE SNOW PROGRAM FOR OUTDOOR EDUCATION

By André Béchara

Humanity faces its greatest challenge in the 21st century: the survival of humans. Deforestation, climate change, melting sea ice, droughts, wildfires, floods, severe earthquakes, and the extinction of numerous plant and animal species are just a few of the pressing issues we confront.

To the observer, the world appears in turmoil, seemingly out of order, and humanity appears to be hurtling towards its demise. Projections suggest that by 2100, global warming could escalate to 6.4 degrees. However, our only hope, before it's too late, lies in awakening, education, and above all, understanding.

**SNOW - School with no Walls** - program is the response SPNL is giving for the fight (yes, it is indeed a battle) against climate change.

SNOW, or education in understanding and love of nature, can contribute to combating climate change in several ways:

**1. Raising awareness about nature:**

When children spend time outdoors, they develop a deeper connection with nature. They learn to appreciate the beauty of the natural world and develop a respect for its biodiversity. This increased awareness can inspire them to become advocates for the protection of our planet.

**2. Understanding ecosystems:** By observing and exploring nature, children develop a deeper understanding of ecosystems and the interactions among different species. This raising awareness enables them to comprehend the impacts of human activity on these ecosystems and grasp the consequences of climate change.

**3. Encouraging sustainability:** Outdoor education can teach children the principles of sustainability, such as reducing waste, and conserving water, energy, and natural resources. They are thus more likely to adopt environmentally friendly behaviors as they grow up.

**4. Hands-on learning:** Outdoor experiences provide hands-on learning opportunities, such as planting trees, cleaning the environment, participating in ecological restoration projects, etc. These practical activities allow children to become aware of their ability to act for the planet.

**5. Promoting soft mobility:** Outdoor education often encourages travel on foot or by bike, rather than by car. This reduces transport-related greenhouse gas emissions and educates children about the benefits of more sustainable modes of travel.

**6. Developing leadership and citizenship skills:** Outdoor activities promote the development of leadership skills, teamwork, and responsible citizenship, which are essential for combating climate change in the future.

**7. Inspiring the next generation of environmentalists:** Exposure to nature at a young age can inspire some children to pursue careers in environmentally related



fields and become active advocates for the fight against climate change.

For more than 15 years, the SNOW program has offered, throughout its varied themes, numerous opportunities to teach children the importance of protecting the environment and the fight against climate change. It thus provides adequate training for future responsible citizens who are aware of environmental issues, a pillar of a more sustainable future.

Our primary objective is to extend our reach to all Lebanese schools and establish green schools in collaboration with the SNOW program. By integrating the SNOW program into the curriculum and incorporating it into extracurricular activities, we aim to significantly enhance environmental awareness and promote sustainable practices among students. To achieve this, we provide comprehensive training to teachers, equipping them with essential knowledge about the SNOW program. We also encourage the integration of environmental concepts across various subjects, ensuring a comprehensive approach to environmental education.

In collaboration with schools, we actively engage parents and the local community in initiatives related to environmental education. We conduct thorough evaluations of the program's impact on students, teachers, and the community to continuously refine and enhance its effectiveness. Through our partnership with the Ministry of Education and other government agencies, we aim to integrate the SNOW program nationally, extending its reach to public schools and universities. Through various channels such as social media and conferences, we inspire schools to adopt the SNOW curriculum. Ultimately, SNOW has the potential to create a lasting impact by transforming Lebanese schools into true green schools and nurturing a culture of environmental responsibility among students, teachers, and the wider community.



**André Béchara**  
Head of Hima  
Centers / SNOW  
Education Manager





A group of students learning about animal tracks and track molding using plaster



Training at West Bekaa for Homat Al Hima on advance guiding

# STEP BY STEP HOMAT AL HIMA PROGRAM

By Rania Khalil

Each year, through the Homat Al Hima program, we renew our commitment to shift our focus from the problems facing our society and country towards building a future filled with hope. This year, as in previous years, we continue our efforts to engage with youth and empower them to deepen their understanding of the environment. However, our approach this year places greater emphasis on addressing their specific needs and preferences for learning. Our objectives under the Homat Al Hima program include:

- To hold more interactive sessions;
- To create and elaborate on more nature-related themes;
- To gather more active locals;
- To organize exchange visits in different Himas;
- To establish active groups in different Himas;
- To empower local community members;
- To connect locals for a better community;
- To increase locals' capacities and knowledge.

We are tailoring the program to each Hima, starting with West Bekaa and Mount Lebanon:



In **West Bekaa**, we are nurturing a youth group's understanding of sustainable agriculture, responsible grazing and harvesting, forest management, guiding, nature-based tourism, and education on birds, animals, and plants. By allowing them to explore various topics, they can identify their interests and preferences. Our aim is for these locals to become active conservationists alongside SPNL in different units such as Fish and Wildlife, Responsible Hunting, and Education and Nature-Based Tourism. They will contribute on the ground, applying their newfound knowledge to conserve biodiversity effectively.

In **Mount Lebanon** and **West Bekaa**, we are empowering local women through communication and women's empowerment sessions. These sessions bring together women from the Himas to encourage them to dream, communicate effectively, raise their voices, and play active roles in their communities. Besides, we are helping them develop their skills in activities such as embroidery, soap making, and candle making while providing knowledge on topics like nutrition, communication, marketing, etc.

In **Ras el Matn**, we are focusing on empowering the local community in guiding, nature-based tourism, water management, sustainable practices, fauna and flora conservation, and the development of a management plan. Recognizing Hima Ras el Matn's reputation for its stunning landscape and extensive trails, our goal is to equip residents with the skills and knowledge needed to become guides in their village.

This year, we took significant strides forward and expanded the program on multiple fronts. First, we focused on enhancing the technical aspects, including refining the mission, vision, values, themes, session development, delivery, and training of new facilitators. Second, we tailored the program to leverage the unique capacities, skills, landscapes, and needs of each village within the Hima. Third, we structured the program and its activities around the distinctive features of each Hima. Looking ahead, our goal for the coming



Interactive Training: the participants drawing their ideal Hima

years is to establish active local groups in each Hima. These groups will play pivotal roles in monitoring, training, and guiding tours, thereby becoming integral entities in their communities. By equipping them with knowledge about nature, biodiversity, and its significance, we empower them to advocate for conservation and transmit their learnings to others.



**Rania Khalil**  
Homat Al Hima  
Program Manager

### How can you support us to achieve our program goals, and what are the pillars of our progress?

- Provide a common uniform for all the Homat Al Hima members;
- Increase the number of Homat Al Hima team members;
- Establish more partnerships with the main stakeholders, universities, and youth organizations;
- Spread the word and emphasize the importance of awareness, capacity-building, empowerment, and training sessions;
- Enable locals to attend advanced training sessions, courses, and diplomas, increasing therefore the number of both sessions and participants;
- Support job-generating initiatives for local youth;
- Engage the local youth in action plans, decisions, and activities, and enhance their participation in municipalities and local organizations work.



Bird Nest workshop with future Homat al Hima!

# EMPOWERING WOMEN AND PROTECTING NATURE HHIC'S REMARKABLE INITIATIVES

By Wassim El Khatib

A dynamic tapestry of activities is taking place at the Homat Al Hima International Center (HHIC), each created with a shared dedication to empowering women and preserving the area's natural heritage. As we move through the year 2023, HHIC is pleased to showcase its many initiatives that support environmental awareness and women's empowerment among its communities.

## *Women Empowerment Training (12 Training Sessions)*

HHIC acknowledges the crucial role women play in forming societies and protecting the environment. In this context, the center organized a run of 12 training sessions throughout 2023 that were specifically designed for women. These meetings turned into a ray of hope, dispersing priceless abilities, information, and tools to help women advance not only economically but also socially.

The path to empowerment covered a wide range of topics, including developing women's leadership abilities and finan-

cial literacy. A particular emphasis was placed on health and well-being, enlightening women about their specific health-care needs. Recognizing the importance of digital literacy in today's world, HHIC played a pivotal role in bridging the gender gap in accessing opportunities and information, thereby expanding horizons. Advocacy campaigns and awareness initiatives further empowered women to stand up for their rights and drive positive cultural change.

### *Homat Al Hima Training (8 Training Sessions)*

Under 'Homat Al Hima', local conservation volunteers committed to preserving the area's natural marvels, HHIC organized eight training sessions for these committed people throughout the year. These sessions were meticulously designed to equip the volunteers with the necessary information and skills required for efficient conservation efforts.

The educational content covered various topics, including sustainable resource management techniques, community engagement tactics, habitat restoration techniques, and initiatives to protect endangered species and ecosystems. These Homat Al Hima members embraced the conservation cause and actively worked to mitigate the environmental impact of human activities.

### *Regular Meetings with Hima Mayors and the Introduction of Hima Concept to Other Municipalities*

The phrase "collaboration is the key to success" resonates strongly with HHIC, embodying its core values. Every three months, an engaging gathering convened where mayors from various Hima regions got together to exchange ideas, discuss challenges, and commemorate achievements. These meetings served as more than just social gatherings; they were pivotal for effective conservation management. The discussions revolved around best prac-



Training Homat al Hima on bird watching

tices, addressing problems, getting updates on conservation projects, and coordinating efforts among Hima regions. The mayors' collaborative attitude demonstrated the efficacy of collective endeavors in safeguarding the invaluable treasures of nature.

### *Awareness Meeting for the Fish and Wildlife Unit (FWU)*

The Fish and Wildlife Unit within HHIC is dedicated to enforcing conservation regulations and protecting the marine and terrestrial ecosystems of the region. To honor their essential contribution, HHIC organized a special awareness conference for the unit members. This gathering emphasized their pivotal role in bolstering conservation efforts and aimed to enhance their understanding of the ecosystems under their care.

The informational session comprehensively addressed various topics, ranging from the importance of biodiversity and ecosystem protection to the criticality of enforcing conservation regulations and fostering



**Wassim El Khatib**  
Fish and Wild Life  
Unit Manager /  
Director of HHIC

stakeholder involvement. Through this initiative, HHIC aimed to enhance the unit members' understanding and equip them with the necessary skills to safeguard the region's ecosystems effectively.

By imparting knowledge and skills to the unit members, HHIC sought to strengthen its capacity to combat illicit activities and promote a healthier ecosystem for the benefit of future generations.

#### *Steps towards 2024*

As we reflect on the dynamic activities throughout 2023, it is more than clear that HHIC's commitment to fostering positive change is making a tangible impact. Indeed, HHIC's dedication to narrowing the gender gap, reinforcing leadership abilities, and promoting digital literacy has not only empowered women but has also contributed to a more inclusive and informed society. Simultaneously, the 'Homat Al Hima' training sessions on local conservation volunteers underscore HHIC's dedication to preserving the natural heritage. By providing sustainable resource management techniques and habitat restoration skills, HHIC is cultivating a community of environmentally conscious individuals actively working towards reducing human activities' impact on the ecosystem.

Looking ahead, the next steps for HHIC entail building upon these initiatives. Enhancing Women Empowerment and 'Homat Al Hima' programs, broadening collaborations with municipalities, and deepening awareness among FWU and other conservation units will be essential. HHIC's ongoing endeavors serve as evidence of the impactful change that can result from collective action toward a shared objective.



# AL HIMA MAGAZINE LAUNCHED ON SPNL'S 40TH ANNIVERSARY

The Society for the Protection of Nature in Lebanon (SPNL) launched *Al Hima* magazine in February 2023, on the occasion of its 40th anniversary.

Published biannually by SPNL, *Al-Hima* magazine aims at enhancing organized work to preserve nature and resources, in cooperation with international, regional and local organizations. Addressing decision-makers, NGOs, institutions, municipalities and environmentalists in general, it highlights sound measures and initiatives for nature protection, regionally and internationally, and opens a door for environmental activists to share their experiences. The magazine articles are in Arabic, with English summaries.

Raghida Haddad, *Al Hima*'s Editor-in-Chief, said that the magazine “will convey SPNL's mission to preserve nature and resources by establishing a Hima (i.e. a protected area) in every village and town in every Arab country.”





# HIMA KFARMATTA IN MADRID ROUNDTABLE

By Raghida Haddad



**Raghida Haddad**  
Editor-in-chief of  
Al Hima magazine

A roundtable discussion took place in Madrid focusing on environmental management as a catalyst for reconciliation in Lebanon. Raghida Haddad, Editor-in-Chief of SPNL's Al-Hima magazine and a member of the Municipality of Kfarmatta, was a key participant. She was invited by the Faculty of International Relations at the University of Alfonso X El Sabio and the Toledo International Centre for Peace. During the event, she shared her firsthand experience in environmental activism, particularly highlighting the initiatives undertaken in Hima Kfarmatta and the collaborative efforts with SPNL. Among the attendees were Hala Kayrouz, the Lebanese Ambassador to Spain, former Ambassador Charbel Aoun, the University President, the College Dean, as well as professors and students.

Haddad's presentation highlighted the collaborative efforts of Kfarmatta Municipality with both national and international organizations. This encompassed initiatives such as the installation of an artesian well for accessing deep groundwater, the implementation of a solar energy project to facilitate water pumping to reservoirs, the deployment of solar street lights, the establishment of Hima Kfarmatta in partnership with the Society for the Protection of Nature in Lebanon (SPNL), and the creation of trails and fire breaks in the Hima forest and along the river bank. The emphasis was placed on the significance of these endeavors in fostering community cohesion, strengthening interpersonal relationships, and enhancing the overall quality of life, thereby contributing to regional stability.

In 2019, the municipal council of Kfarmatta approved the establishment of a Hima (protected area) within the village commons, aimed at regulating sustainable land use practices and conserving its natural resources. This initiative is part of various partnerships concluded with the SPNL, resulting in the creation of 30 Hima sites across Lebanon. A team comprising local university students and graduates collaborated with SPNL to formulate the Hima Management Plan.

One notable outcome of this collaboration is the development of the Hima Peace Trail, which traverses through the forest and offers panoramic views of the Shouf region and the Mediterranean Sea from an altitude of 900 meters. This trail is divided into two sections: an educational trail and a full hiking trail. It has become an integral part of SPNL's Hima Trails for Peace (Doroob Al Hima) initiative, which aims to connect Hima sites across Lebanon.



# HIMA THEATRE

By Fatima Hakim



**Fatima Hakim**  
Theatre coordinator

In light of the vital work undertaken by the Society for the Protection of Nature in Lebanon (SPNL) and the urgent global challenge of climate change, largely attributed to a lack of environmental awareness and responsibility, the Theatre Management Department at SPNL's Kaifoun Center has taken the initiative to organize theater workshops. These workshops are designed to raise environmental consciousness and cultivate a deeper appreciation for nature, particularly targeting a young audience of children. Through engaging plays with environmental themes, we aim to underscore the importance of nature conservation. Recognizing the crucial role of collaboration with schools in executing projects that benefit the environment and advance conservation efforts, we have actively partnered with schools in Kaifoun and its surrounding areas. Moreover, our involvement in various initiatives in the region includes our participation in the inaugural Pan-Arab festival. Continuing our efforts to integrate theater into educational curricula, we are closely collaborating with SPNL's School with No Walls (SNOW) program.

**SAFE HIMAS,  
SAFE SKIES:  
OUR HIMAS CREATE  
A SAFE FLYWAY,**  
mirroring the peace and  
collaboration on land fostered by  
our Hima for Peace initiative





Honey Buzzard flying safely over Lebanon



Persian squirrel

# LIAISING WITH INTERNS AND VOLUNTEERS TO ACTIVATE SPNL'S VOLUNTEERING PROGRAM

By Amer Saidi



**Amer Saidi**  
Volunteers  
and Outreach  
Coordinator

In my role as SPNL's Volunteering and Outreach Coordinator, my main task revolves around facilitating communication and coordination among interns, volunteers, and potential volunteers, both locally and internationally. Moreover, I assist with translation tasks when necessary.

It is truly inspiring to witness the enthusiasm of young individuals who are eager to volunteer and contribute to environmental causes, despite the challenges facing Lebanon.

As the situation this year is slightly improving compared to the previous one, there has been a noticeable increase in the number of volunteers expressing interest in participating and lending their support. This is a positive development for our organization, and we are committed to ensuring that these volunteers are properly accommodated and assigned tasks that align with their skills and interests.

Besides, in light of the environmental crises facing our planet, including the climate emergency, being part of SPNL's pioneering efforts for environmental conservation is both fulfilling and impactful.

# MEET THE REST OF SPNL'S TEAM



**Bassam Al Kantar**  
Communication and IT Manager



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



**Rami Kadro**  
Mount-Lebanon Hima Center Manager



**Karim Yassine**  
Procurement & Logistics Officer



**Alexandra Baka**  
Central Administration Officer



**Malake Daher**  
Administration Officer



## BRINGING HIMA TO BEIRUT

### SOUK AL-HIMA PROGRAM

By Karim Yassine

Expanding our Hima initiative to Beirut marks an exciting new chapter for us, and our latest marketing strategy aims to make a splash in the city's bustling hotel scene. Through strategic partnerships with renowned hotels in Beirut, we have secured prime placement for our publications and pins. Collaborating closely with these esteemed establishments, we have ensured that our marketing materials are prominently showcased in their lobbies and high-traffic areas. This strategic approach enables us to effectively extend our reach to a broader and larger audience.

In the scope of our expansion to the hotels sector, we mainly targeted the below list:

- **Intercontinental Phoenicia Beirut**
- **1866 Court & Suites Hotel**
- **Saifi Suites • The Smallville Hotel.**



Pelicans at Hima Qoleileh south Lebanon

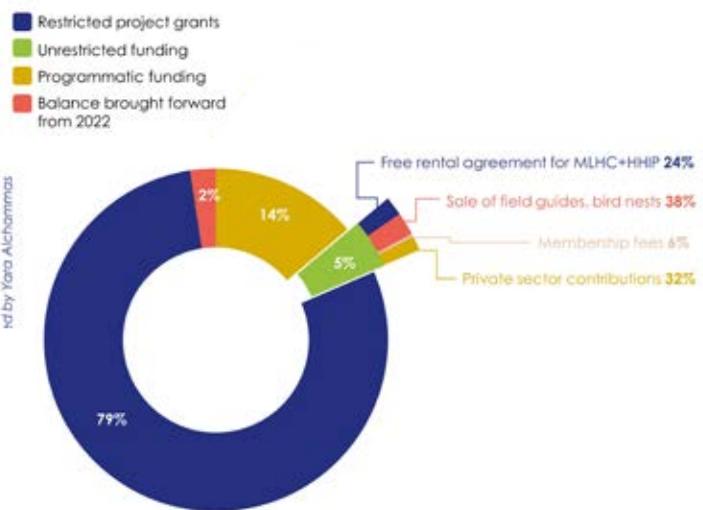
# FINANCIAL SITUATION FOR THE YEAR 2023

By Bassima Khatib & Mazen Yassin

## Income

In 2023, SPNL received continued support from its regular donors, who generously contributed to SPNL's conservation and community efforts in Lebanon, as well as capacity building, awareness, and environmental education. These donors included the European Union, MAVA Foundation, Global Environment Fund (GEF), l'Agence Française de Développement (AFD), le Fonds Français pour l'Environnement Mondial (FFEM), Bosch Foundation, Sigrid Rausing Trust (SRT), Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF), Hans Wilsdorf Foundation, and the Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office (FCDO). In addition to annual membership fees, SPNL also benefited from the sale of field guides and bird nests, as well as free rental agreements and private sector contribu-

Income breakdown of the year 2023



tions. These contributions provided SPNL with vital cash and in-kind unrestricted funding, which supported its conservation work across various initiatives.

As illustrated in the figure below, 79% of SPNL's funding comes from restricted projects, generously provided by our donors. Additionally, 14% of our funding is non-restrictive programmatic funding, provided by SRT and HWF. SRT grants focus on three key pillars: conservation, organizational development, and financial sustainability. As of 2023, SRT allocates a total of 20K annually to SPNL's core funds for Homat Al Hima (HH) and emergency staff needs. On the other hand, HWF grants are specifically directed to support the Hima and HH programs, providing SPNL with flexibility in designing priorities and allocating funds accordingly.

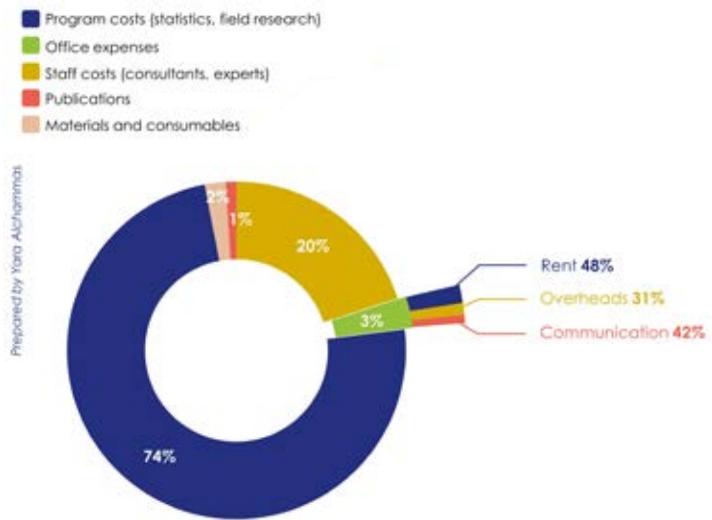
## Expenditure

Human resources, research, conservation, and community livelihood efforts constitute the core of SPNL's work. Therefore, the majority of our expenditure is allocated to community work and research (74%), as well as consultants and expert fees (20%). A smaller percentage of our budget is allocated to administrative running costs. Overall, the bulk of our budget is dedicated to program expenditures aimed at benefiting both nature and people.

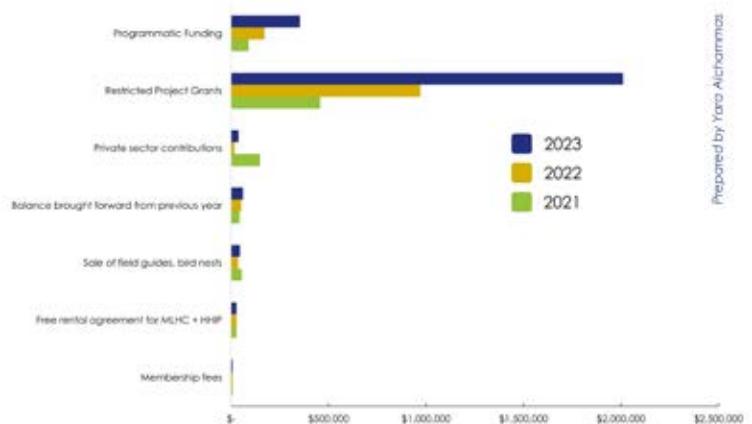
## Trends in Financial Stability

Looking at the trend between 2021 & 2023, there has been a notable increase in grants mobilized by SPNL. The MAVA Foundation emerged as the largest funder for SPNL programs during this period. Despite its closure, SPNL successfully diversified its funding portfolio. This diversification was primarily achieved through kind support from the European Union for two new projects within the Restricted Projects Grants category, as well as programmatic funding from the Sigrid Rausing Trust and Hans Wilsford Foundation.

## Expenditure breakdown of the year 2023



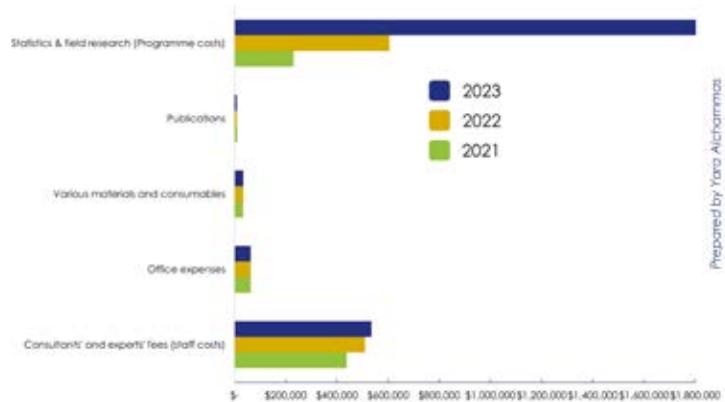
## Income trends between 2021 and 2023



Income from unrestricted funding remained relatively low in 2023 due to the challenging situation in Lebanon, characterized by political and security issues, financial constraints, and the impact of COVID-19. These factors hampered the smooth launch of center operations and the evolution of SPNL programs.

The increase in income has supported the growth of our conservation programs and our plans for financial sustainability. While staff expenditure has seen a slight increase, the main expenditure remains focused on implementing our strategy and programs, aimed at conserving nature and benefiting people.

## Expenditure trends between 2021 and 2023



## Future Plans for Financial Sustainability

- o Mount-Lebanon Hima Center-MLHC, Kayfoun – Aley district, concentrating on Hima program and Hima School (half an hour from Beirut);
- o Homat Al Hima International Park (HHIP) in West Bekaa, including Butterflies Garden, Homat Al Hima Academy, among others (an hour & a half from Beirut).

We extend our sincere gratitude to the MAVA Foundation and Sigrid Rausing Trust for their unwavering support of SPNL's mission and the successful realization of our plans, the construction of the Homat Al Hima International Park (HHIP) and the rehabilitation of the Mount Lebanon Hima Center (MLHC).

In response to the challenges posed by funding constraints, SPNL has taken the following strategic decisions:

- We have intensified our efforts in fundraising and project development, thereby diversifying our donor portfolio and increasing our income streams;
- We have leveraged programmatic funding, which offers greater flexibility and enables

us to plan for long-term financial sustainability;

- We have relocated our main office from Beirut to MLHC in Kayfoun, to reduce our expenditure on running costs..

## Success Stories

Based on the above, SPNL directed its efforts toward the evolution of its internal departments & programs:

SPNL 2030 Strategy has fixated Nature Conservation at the core of its operations, building on its long and successful track record in this work area. The new EU grants have helped SPNL strengthen its conservation department to lead the planned activities of its 2023 operating plan.



**Mazen Yassin**  
Head of  
Finance and  
Administration  
Dept.

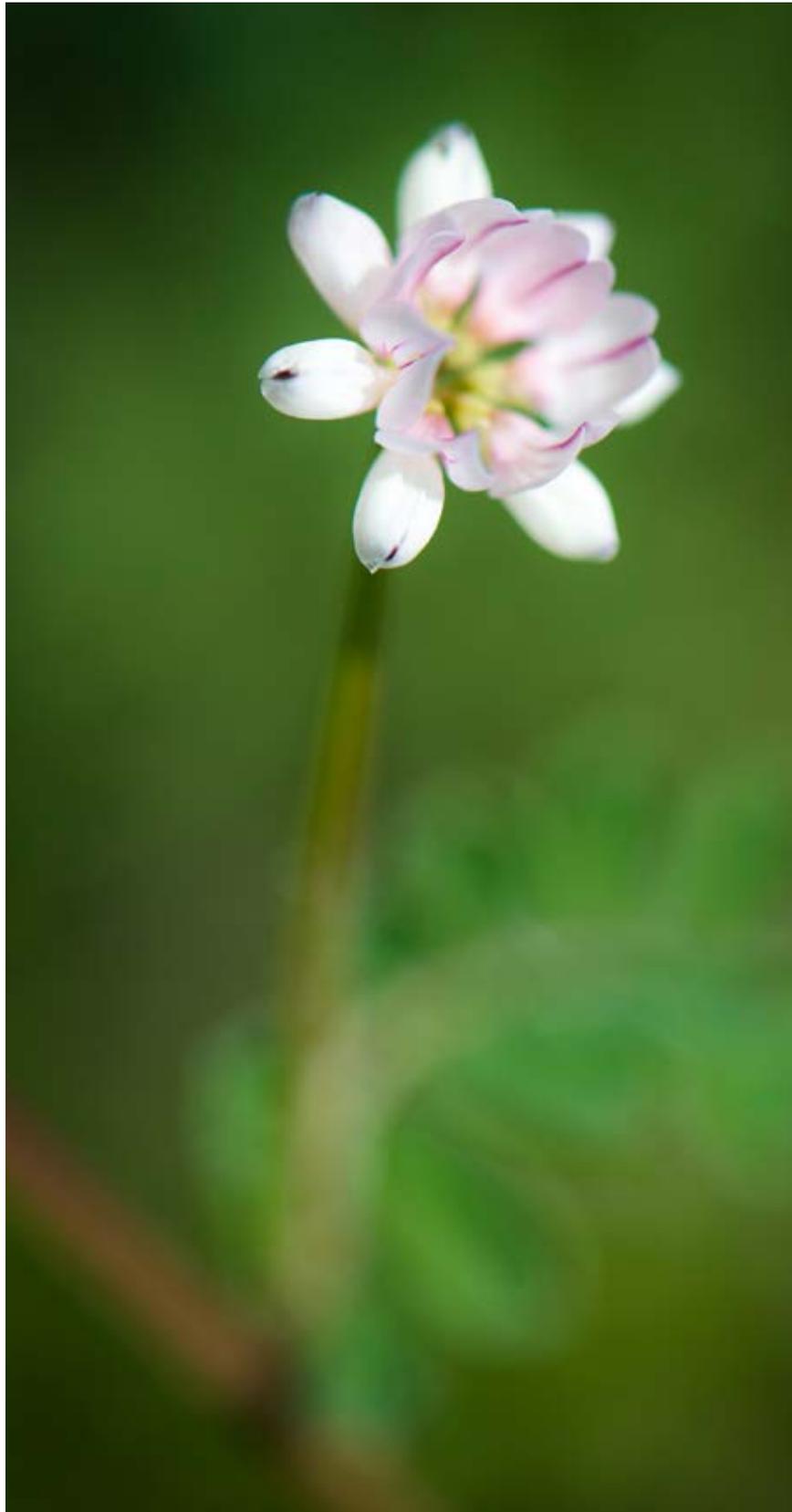
During the 2022-2023 period, SPNL's conservation department remained committed to conducting biodiversity assessments at its designated priority Hima sites. These assessments aimed to research and monitor new species and potential threats to biodiversity. Additionally, the team worked diligently to implement

new management plans aimed at further enriching the SPNL Biodiversity Database. As part of these efforts, the SPNL team identified priority species specific to each Hima site, on which they concentrated their conservation efforts.

Furthermore, SPNL has succeeded in developing GIS maps for all 28 existing Himas, adopted and endorsed by the Ministry of Environment. These Himas will now be uploaded at the World Database for Protected Areas (WDPA), increasing the percentage of protected areas in Lebanon. Moreover, SPNL has developed a mobile app designed to facilitate citizen science biodiversity monitoring, allowing users to report observations and identify potential threats, particularly the Illegal Killing of Birds (IKBs).

The SPNL team has shifted its focus from individual projects to comprehensive programs, such as the School with No Walls (SNOW) program. Through SNOW, SPNL collaborates closely with local community members to enhance their understanding of nature and promote pro-environmental behaviors. Notably, in 2022-2023, the Ministry of Education adopted the SNOW-Hima School program, reaching over 1500 students who had the opportunity to explore and appreciate Lebanon's natural beauty.

These initiatives aim to reduce SPNL's reliance on project-based restricted funding and diversify its sources of income. However, SPNL remains committed to project development and continues to seek funding from donors to achieve its conservation and community objectives.



# PARTNERS & DONORS





# BE PART OF THE SOLUTION

## PICK YOUR HIMA / SPECIES

## ADOPT / DONATE

The symbolic adoption is a strong commitment: through your donation, you contribute in a sustainable way to the projects that the SPNL carries out for the survival of the species and/or Hima site you have chosen, and you support our essential nature conservation work in Lebanon.

[www.spnl.org/donate/](http://www.spnl.org/donate/)



**Adopt a species** by donating to the SPNL to support our conservation work in Lebanon and receive an illustration and/or a designed item produced by the **SPNL/HHI**.

## HIMA SERVICES

Homat Al Hima International proudly operates in many areas and enables individuals to connect with nature and wildlife. We offer a range of services such as consulting, excursions, film shooting, and sale of natural products. You can ask for customized services, and we will be pleased to assist you and meet your specific needs. To that end, kindly find below our contact details:

Website: [www.homatalhima.com](http://www.homatalhima.com)  
Contact us: [www.homatalhima.com/contact/](http://www.homatalhima.com/contact/)

### Credits

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Printing | ...

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[www.spnl.org](http://www.spnl.org)



/ SpnlOrg



# 40 YEARS SERVING SPECIES SITES SOCIETY



## WWW.SPNL.ORG

### 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.



SIGRID  
RAUSING  
TRUST

HWF

