



Educational visits and bird flu:

A number of people have asked us if we are planning to have educational visits to the marsh in view of the issue of "bird flu", that seems to be gripping the world's consciousness.

The answer is YES. To quote from the very helpful position paper on bird flu prepared by SPNL, Lebanon's Birdlife partner:

"There is no evidence that H5N1 infection in humans have been acquired from wild birds as recorded human infections to date have occurred in people who have been closely associated with poultry."

(It is a complicated issue and if any one wants to research it further this position paper is an excellent place to start. Send us an email and I will forward it to you.)

During educational activities at the wetland there is no direct contact with birds. The birds seen are observed through binoculars! Let's remember that birds are an essential part of a healthy eco system and what has gone wrong has more to do with production of chicken protein on an industrial scale, from a very narrow genetic base, than migrating wild birds.

Unfortunately due to the loss of our education officer we are running a reduced program of visits. **If you are a teacher and have not yet had our education mailing contact us and we will send you the dates that are still available with the booking forms.**

"Look at the Lilies of the Field..."

At this time of the year, as you walk or drive around many parts of Lebanon, one of the most striking sights at the side of the road is the beautiful Crown Anemone (*Anemone coronaria*), which carpets roadsides and grassy slopes with its lovely red, pink, blue or purple flowers. The commonest form is the bright scarlet version, which often fools visitors from abroad, who are more used to the similar, but unrelated, Poppy (*Papaver* sp.) which flowers later in the Spring. Another confusion species is the Pheasant's-eye (*Adonis annua*), with its smaller, bright red flowers which is found in similar places.



The famous 19th century naturalist and explorer, Canon Tristram, who traveled widely in this region, considered it highly likely that Jesus might well have been thinking of the Crown Anemone when he talked about the 'lilies of the field'...

"Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin.

And yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these"

Matthew 6:28-29 (New King James Version)

Search for IBAs in Lebanon, 2006

In 2006, A Rocha will be surveying six more sites around Lebanon which have been proposed as potential IBAs (Important Bird Areas)

Perhaps the most exciting of these places is the desert area between Baalbek and Qaa, an area where the annual rainfall is lower than any other region of the country. Several species of birds which live there are specialists of desert habitats, and do not occur elsewhere in Lebanon. There are few trees or bushes, so birds make their nests under rocks, sheltered from the scorching sun.

The Scrub Warbler was only found to occur in Lebanon in 1969, and then not seen again until 2001, so we hope that this unique area will achieve IBA status, enabling some protection to be given to the special birds living there. Other areas we shall survey this year include the course of the Damour river, which winds down from the Chouf mountains to the sea south of Beirut through beautiful gorges and lush, wooded valleys.

The Orontes River around Hermel in the north-east corner of Lebanon is another site on our list, as a significant water course in an otherwise dry landscape it is a magnet for birds and animals and should hopefully provide us with some exciting finds.



Scrub Warbler, found in Lebanon only in the northern desert area

Finally we shall be visiting the mountain nature reserve of Yammouneh, which has its own special birds. In such a small country, we never cease to be in awe of the variety of wildlife and countryside that God has created.

LATEST NEWS ON 2005 IBA SURVEY SITES

As this newsletter goes to press, we are waiting “with bated breath” to hear from Birdlife International Regional Office in Amman, we are very optimistic that five of the potential IBAs we surveyed with our friends from SPNL will achieve the “confirmed” status. We will keep you posted.

KIDS ZONE



Flowers have an amazing range of colors – green, yellow, red, blue but did you know you can change their color?

Try it by following this simple experiment.

- Take some cut flowers, white or pale ones work best
- Add a tea spoon full of food coloring (you choose the color) to a jar of water
- Place the flowers in the water and wait for a couple of days

Why does it work?

Plants draw up water from their roots (or cut ends) and release the water in the air, this is called Transpiration. In this experiment the color gets left behind in the petals.

Try other colours.

Thanks for reading to the end; don't forget our website: www.arocha.org

Best wishes, The A Rocha Lebanon team

Lebanon A Rocha news available in 3 languages!!!



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Together, caring for God's creation

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