



Dear friends,

Merry Christmas from the A Rocha Lebanon team!



Although as I write the weather seems far from "Christmassy," maybe winter will descend soon. Although the snow and rain are in short supply the winter visitors are arriving at Aammiq wetland; flocks of lapwing, larks and starlings are arriving in numbers heralding the new season. The Aammiq team have been hard at work taking advantage of the dry fall (see later in this letter).

As we prepare for the holiday season, with all its festive trimmings, it is worth remembering that the message of Christmas is not in the food, parties or presents but rather God's love for the world. Part of our responsibility as we respond to that love is to live in a way that honors the world God has made. We

are all aware that, as a global community, we are falling short of such a sustainable lifestyle. Just how far off we are is graphically illustrated in the living planet report 2008 recently published by WWF. You can read the whole thing by going to:

www.panda.org/news_facts/publications/living_planet_report/lpr_2008/index.cfm

By calculating how much land each of us need to sustain our lifestyles (including the green areas needed to absorb the carbon we produce) WWF have given stark numbers to our overconsumption. As a world community we are using up the equivalent of 2.7 global hectares per person, as there is only a "biocapacity" of 2.1 per person on the planet each of us is adding to the deficit by 0.6 hectares. This is the world average, if we look at Lebanon's figures they are worse, here we use the equivalent of 3.1 hectares per person adding to the world "biodebt" by a whole hectare for everyone of us. Read to the end of the newsletter to find out some of the ways we are trying to show God's love for this corner of his planet.

Many people think that conserving a wetland just means keeping people (& sheep and goats) out. In fact we need to actively manage the habitats at Aammiq, otherwise, through a process scientists call "succession," the marsh will slowly choke with vegetation and sediments and it will eventually dry out.

The process of succession and sedimentation has been going on for thousands of years, changing the open water of a huge lake, that in, prehistoric times, filled the Bekaa in to the fields and wetland we have today. Darren Jeffers of Oxford University has begun a PhD study to use these sediments, together with their preserved micro fossils and pollen grains, to reconstruct the climate and vegetation cover of the region going back thousands of years. Watch this space to find out what he discovers - but a warning about how science works, analysis of the 7m sediment core he took from the wetland will take up to 3 years! However, today you can go on line and check out the past 12 years worth of scientific reports and references to articles we have written as we have recently added them to our website, go to

www.arochoa.org/lb-en/3831-DSY.html



Conservation at Aammiq 2008

This fall was an important one for the Aammiq Wetland as it underwent some thing of a face lift. Most of the focus was on hydrology and water preservation. The last couple of years were particularly dry ones as we had some very mild winters, with very little snowfall. As a result, the wetland dried out much earlier (late spring) than it normally would. Some preventative measures were taken to help the wetland retain more water throughout the spring and summer.

A long elevated road was created on the eastern boundary, acting as a dam and reducing water loss and unauthorized drainage. In the future, it is planned to have a sluice gate added to this dam, allowing control of the water levels of the wetland. Earthworks were performed at the springs area by the road in order to remove the rich sediment from the bottom of the pool (which is building up annually) and using it to repair the receding banks which were beginning to expose the roots of the trees. Water gauges were set up in one of the pools allowing us to monitor the water depth. A new pool was created on the western side of the wetland (opposite side of the road) creating new pond habitat there. Another larger pool at the northern side is in progress which will also help retain water for the wetland by acting as a reservoir. Last but not least, a new metal fence was installed by the road, helping to deter unwanted access as well as catching some of the garbage that is blown into the wetland.

Good bye Helen and Colin

It's always sad to say goodbye, especially when we had to say it to 2 of our team members, both Colin and Helen left A Rocha Lebanon this month to join A Rocha UK and A Rocha Canada. *Colin, Helen we wish you the best, hope to see again in Lebanon...*



Helen: It has been an exciting year, I cannot believe I am leaving so soon! Lots of highlights including seeing bird migration in action... White Storks flying over the Bekaa in huge numbers in the spring, and then more than 5,000 Honey Buzzards in just one day in the autumn over Jabal Moussa. Interesting times politically in Lebanon too, giving me a greater overall experience here of what life is like. I am going on to work for A Rocha UK starting in January 2009 to manage the Living Waterways project in Southall near London, but I know I will miss this place, the people, the food and of course the birds.



Colin: Highlight of 4 years!!

Finishing the IBA project, 10 new IBA's designated in 3 years.

Becoming "at home" in Lebanon, I loved getting to know the country, her people, her landscape and her wildlife.

Its difficult to pick any one highlight really,, what's next, 3 months at A Rocha UK. Then 2 months bird ringing in Canada, then from next September I should be based at A Rocha Canada for a year, helping with their bird research.

What is Global warming??? What can you tell you children about it???

Hayati Afdal Bil Akhdar is a remarkable Arabic book, published by Turning Point, and addressed for children aging 7 to 12 years old. Written by Katy Khattar and illustrated by Dania El Khatib, this book tackles factual environmental problems facing our daily lives as well as promoting effective solutions for dealing proactively with this matter. Children's knowledge would brightly expand since the author covered several issues such as global warming, air pollution, acid rain, hazardous waste, water pollution, rain forest destruction...etc. Beside all the informative content and solutions it suggests, what makes this book special is the promise the reader has to make to protect our planet earth.

For more information go to: www.tpbooksonline.com



To order the book, please contact Turning Point office:

Tel: +961-1-752 100

Fax: +961-1-748 555

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

Best wishes, The A Rocha Lebanon Team lebanon@arocha.org

A Rocha Lebanon newsletters are available in 2 languages!!!

If you are reading this newsletter in English but would prefer to have it in Arabic, email us and we will send you your preferred version.



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Together, caring for God's creation