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FEATURE STORY

THE ECOPLANTMED CONFERENCE: PRESERVING BIODIVERSITY IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

On **October 14 and 15, 2015** an international conference took place at the Saint Joseph University in Beirut, under the title of "**Ecological Restoration in the Mediterranean Region: Challenges and Opportunities**".

The conference aimed at helping halt the loss of biodiversity and promoting sustainable development models. Scientists and ecologists from **Spain, Italy, Greece, Tunisia and Lebanon** shared their experiences in restoring different regional landscapes: forests, dunes, arid areas, wetlands, etc. The Lecturers focused on the importance of conserving and using native species in restoration projects and the plant production sector, as well as on how to face climate change by increasing diversity and combining local seeds with seeds from areas with a climate close to the predicted one (e.g. from a hotter climate).

I was glad to hear specifically about the following local initiatives:

Restoration project of coastal sand dunes in Ouzai:

Landscape Design students of the **American University of Beirut (AUB)** are planning to restore parts of Beirut's Ouzai coast by relocating a zone of illegal settlements, managing sewage water with bio-swales, and re-vegetating dunes with native plants to attract animals and insects to re-colonize the area. I hope this project will be actually implemented.

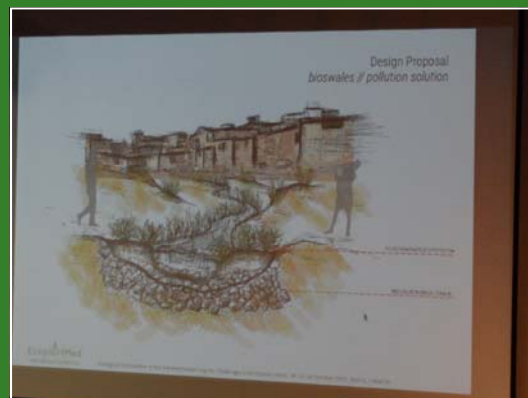
EcoPlantMed pilot site in Lebanon in Kfardebian:

Since September 2014, the Lebanese NGO **Jouzour Loubnan** has been working on restoring the original ecosystem on a 6-hectare publicly owned land at 1,900 m altitude, which has been degraded by the over-cutting of trees and over grazing. They experimented with different planting methods of **cedars** (*cedrus libani*) and **juniper trees** (*juniperus excels*) on different slopes by planting seeds and seedlings, with or without nursing plants, with or without irrigation.

Mediterranean Mosaics Project in the Shouf Biosphere Reserve:

This project aims to increase the resilience of forest ecosystems to climate change (longer summer drought periods, increased risk of forest fires, decreasing rainfall).

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Bioswales design proposal for Ouzai (South Beirut)



Mediterranean Mosaics project by Shouf Biosphere reserve

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PHOTO OF THE MONTH

To send us your photos, email us on contact.soilslebanon@gmail.com



Animal lovers in Lebanon rejoice after Bella, the striped hyena, makes a full recovery. Here, she is shown with Dr. Mounir Abi Said leaving the Animal Encounter refuge to be released back into the wild. Thank you to Dr. Abi Said and the "Green Southerners" for rescuing this beautiful creature after it was wounded in a snare and held captive. Check out the full album and story on the Animal Encounter Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/animalencounter.org/>

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A THOUGHT TO SHARE ...

"A bird doesn't sing because it has an answer, it sings because it has a song."



–Maya Angelou (1928-2014)

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