

L.E.T.S. Lebanon



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FEATURE STORY

STARTING A PERMACULTURE CENTER

GOOD NEWS TO ALL PERMACULTURISTS AND NATURE LOVERS:

You will soon be able to enroll in **certified permaculture workshops** right here in Lebanon!

How? Thanks to the **SOILS Permaculture Association - Lebanon**.

Since May 2013, a number of us in Lebanon have been working around the clock on this initiative with help from friends in Canada. We recently submitted our project to the **Nabad Social Entrepreneurship Competition** (organized by the local NGO Arcenciel and Beyond Reform and Development) - **and we were among the 15 winners!**

The association will benefit from the help of professional mentors during the startup phase of the project. USAID will provide seed funding in that period.

SOILS will organize a series of workshops related to permaculture (see the *LET'S Focus* article in Issue 2). It will also work on developing a learning/demonstration site in Saidoun (Jezzine caza) where the main activities will take place as a first phase. Eventually, we also plan on establishing a center in Niha (Batroun).

SOILS aims to evolve into a community-based research and development platform to promote ecological living and sustainable development.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR:

We will hold the **Permaculture Design Course (PDC)** for the first time in Lebanon in May 2014.

TIME TO GET INVOLVED:

Do you want to find out more about SOILS? Can you propose or conduct a workshop about sustainable practices? Or simply help us spread the news?

Please send an email to: khoinds@yahoo.com



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LET'S FOCUS

THE NEED FOR SUSTAINABLE HUNTING PRACTICES

Hunting in Lebanon is no longer a way of acquiring food. It is now a widely practiced recreational activity. Hunters point to its importance as a mechanism for social cohesion in villages and communities. Hunting is practiced all over the country and by all socioeconomic circles. There are definitely some responsible hunters, but the careless shooters give the practice a terrible reputation and damage the ecosystem.

A LAW ON PAPER ONLY

The environmental situation in Lebanon is very chaotic. In 1994, when the country joined the **International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN)**, the government **banned hunting** for a period of 5 years which was extended to 2004 when a new hunting law was born. The new law makes the **Ministry of Environment** responsible for announcing the opening and closing dates of the hunting season, and determining what species to hunt. The law also requires hunters to pass an exam in certified hunting clubs and acquire a license. However, in practice the law is still unimplemented and the 1995 ban is still officially in force. All this has raised controversy around the ethics of hunting for sport.

SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES

Unregulated hunting doesn't only lead to the extinction of some wild species but also causes serious accidents - especially when it involves children and young people who are not trained on using weapons safely. Statistics by the **Ministry of Interior** showed that between 1995 and 2005 there were reports of 16 deaths and 134 injuries caused by hunting accidents. Recent findings show that the number of **fatalities, injuries and permanent disabilities has risen to 400 cases per year.**

RAISING AWARENESS

While the hunting law continues to await enforcement, municipalities and civil groups has stepped up to try to limit environmental damage. The **Union of Municipalities of Jezzine** has issued warnings and put up "**No Hunting**" signs, promising to take legal action against hunters. Some municipalities in the caza have followed suit and launched their own initiatives and prohibited hunting of specific species - notably **swallows**. Earlier in September, the **Environment for Life** association had organized a workshop in collaboration with the **Chouf Biosphere Reserve**, the **Niha Municipality** and the **Society for the Protection of Nature in Lebanon** to train 53 educators, law enforcement officers, rangers and NGO representatives. The participants were informed about the updated hunting law and its application, including hunting licenses, violations and penalizations, as well as the species of game birds whose hunting is allowed under control.

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Caption: "Imagine the roles were reversed! There's no pleasure in killing"

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TESTIMONIALS

Jose Saucedo - Texas, US

The wildlife is wonderful as I grew up with it all my life. I hunted some in my youth, but I do not like it anymore. A childhood friend always invites me for a hunt at his ranch every time I visit my brothers and sisters in South Texas. I respectfully turn him down, yet hope that he would ask that we simply go for a walk through the brush. The last time he took me was many years ago, he set me up on a hunting blind, gave me a rifle and showed me where to fire and where not to. I sat there at dusk amazed at the numerous deer, rabbits and doves that came so close to the blind. He picked me up hours later and asked if I had seen any deer as that is what we hunted. "No," I said, "none that I wanted to shoot." I have not hunted since.



Rita Khawand - Saidoun, Lebanon

One sunny day in the village of Saidoun last September, I heard a frantic disturbance in the fig tree behind our house. It was a bird that sounded like it was in trouble. I feared it was caught in birdlime and just the thought of this made me furious. When I went to see, I found it was indeed a poor little bird, with one wing glued to a twig and the other one fluttering in vain. It was one of the most horrible things I've ever seen. I removed the twig, and freed the bird's wing after most of its feathers had gotten pulled out. There was some glue on its other wing as well, which prevented him from flying. I could feel his heart beat very fast as I placed him gently on the floor. I went back home and wrote a section of the Hunting Law on a piece of paper I left for the "hunter" in the tree.

Article 9 forbids the use of traps, birdlime, nets, snares, lures, poison, smoke, searchlights, and electric devices.

Meanwhile, the bird had crawled to the nearest bush and hid there so I couldn't see him anymore. For several days I waited for the hunter to come back. I never saw anyone and my sign remained there.



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LET'S FOCUS

THE NEED FOR SUSTAINABLE HUNTING PRACTICES

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REDUCED BIODIVERSITY

Excessive hunting, hunting out of season and shooting of rare or endangered animals have led to palpable changes in the ecosystem. All kinds of resident and migratory birds and wild animals are being killed illegally and randomly on a large scale and using prohibited - often cruel - methods.

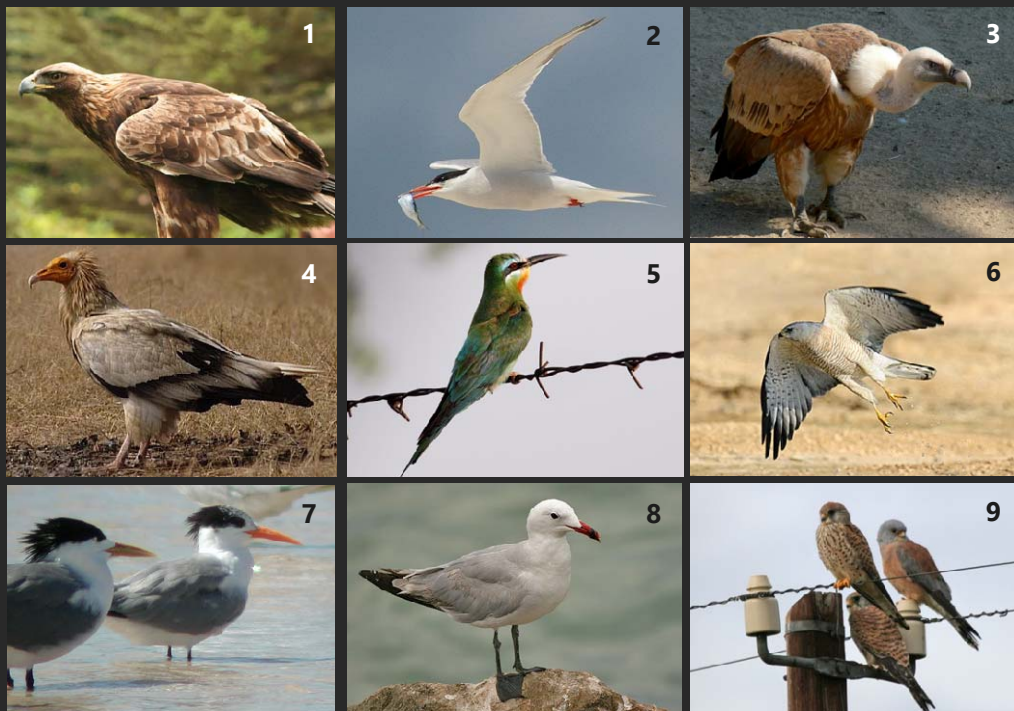
The near extinction of **wolves** and **striped hyenas** has led to a surge in **wild boar** populations that plague crops in several areas.

In August 2013, **Animal Encounter - Aley** (https://www.facebook.com/groups/245792948774755/?ref=br_tf) held the **International Bat Day**. The aim was to show how inherited misconceptions and superstitions about bats (such as the belief that they carry diseases or suck blood) have reduced their numbers drastically. Bat caves continue to be destroyed or burned, and bats themselves are hunted or trapped as pests. When you consider that one bat eats 3,000-4,000 mosquitoes a day on average, it's clear that the hapless hunters are fighting the solution, not the problem. The shelter released two dozen bats that activists had rescued from a cave. Animal Encounter also tends to hurt birds, grazers and predatory animals.

The situation for many birds is getting worse. This is not only due to excessive hunting but also because of other irresponsible behavior. The continued use of poisonous chemicals in agriculture directly and indirectly kills birds. Forest fires, and intensive grazing and increasing random construction activity destroy birds' remaining habitats. Some superstitious beliefs (such as considering owls as bringers of bad luck) also persist. If things continue this way, many birds will cease to breed or will no longer occur in Lebanon. There is an urgent need for legislation to protect birds, face threats, identify important sites and get them protected. At the same time, public awareness and education campaigns are needed along with immediate action.

GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN

Among the **134 bird species** that breed in Lebanon, 2 have ceased to appear (Lesser Crested Tern and Blue-cheeked Bee-eater) and 7 no longer breed on the Lebanese territory.



Top row: 1. Golden Eagle, 2. Common Tern, 3. Griffon Vulture
Middle row: 4. Egyptian Vulture, 5. Blue-cheeked Bee-eater, 6. Levant Sparrowhawk
Bottom row: 7. Lesser Crested Tern, 8. Audouin's Seagull, 9. Lesser Kestrel

GREEN RESOURCES

SPNL WEBSITE



The website contains information about natural reserves, wildlife conservation projects and resources.

<http://www.spnl.org/>
<https://www.facebook.com/toyourna>

LEBANON INTERACTIVE FOREST MAP



An interactive map of Lebanon's vegetation, showing tree nurseries, wildfire management areas and reforestation areas with updates on the health of new trees,

<http://lri-lb.org/mapping.php#home>

BEIRUT GREEN GUIDE



A map of Beirut's parks and green spaces. Available online and soon in a printed version that will be distributed for free.

<http://www.beirutgreenguide.com/#>

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LET'S SHARE OUR NEWS

A VISIT TO SUMSUM FARM

On October 5, 2013, the growing permaculture community in Lebanon took a long drive north to visit friends in **Akkar, North Lebanon**. Our first stop was at the lovely Saghie family house in **Beino-Kboula**.

There, we finally met *Maher, Ekaterina* and their lovely children, *Oussama, Petra* and *Nizar* face to face. The family live in one of the more scenic villages of the region - but sadly almost a deserted one. When they first moved there, their goal was to start a new life and a new way of living. Maher and Ekaterina do a great job of planting naturally in their garden and the neglected or abandoned lands around them. And so the **Sumsum (sesame) Farm** was born. Now they send "green baskets" of healthy fruits, vegetables and free range eggs from their farm to grateful customers in Beirut and Tripoli.

Beino is known for its pomegranate and jasmine trees. We picked and tasted 3 varieties of persimmons (kaki): in addition to the regular non-astringent (mushy) type, we tasted the astringent "chocolate persimmon" and discovered the tiny grape-size "American" persimmons.

Two years ago, Ekaterina and Maher started a center for creative learning through art and nature. After one year, it became an organization: the **Pearls of Pomegranate**. It set up a library with the help of the Assabil organization supporting public libraries. The center works with children around the year to create seasonal festivals featuring theater and dance performances that combine art with nature appreciation. It also teaches music and painting. Recently, the center started a garbage collection, sorting and recycling program.

The Sumsum Farm welcomes visitors for a day or longer stays. They offer healthy home-cooked meals prepared by the women in the village.

You can reach Maher and Ekaterina on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/SumsumFarm> or by phone: 06-361129



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DISCOVERING THE AL-AYOUN ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER

After visiting the Sumsum Farm, our permaculture group pushed forward and upward to the highlands above the village of **Michmich - Akkar**, where our friend *Greg Shaheen* started the **Al-Ayoun Environmental Center** in July 2013.

The Al-Ayoun Environmental Center stands at 1,600 meters above sea level in a stunning setting. This community project saw the light with help and support of *Nazih Qamareddine*, leader of the environmental NGO **Baldaty Biaaty** (www.baldati-biaati.com). The center aims at helping Lebanese people reconsider their relationship with the natural and cultural wonder that are the Lebanese mountains, and rediscover the land's life-supporting value. The project focuses on encouraging the application of ecological principles understood from the surrounding ecosystems to small-scale farming. Funding for the first stage was provided through a grant from the Kathryn W. Davis foundation: <http://www.davisprojectsforpeace.org/projects/2013/node/2727>

The center promotes environmental awareness and action, as well as sustainable rural development and hiking with trained mountain guides. It hopes to continue developing in order to offer further activities with all kinds of visitors, including foreign and Lebanese outdoor enthusiasts, solitude-seekers, researchers and students. It offers accommodation in genuine Bedouin-made tents, and the possibility to purchase local products. Students from a local school helped clear a 12-kilometer hiking trail. As a migration corridor between Europe and Africa, the area is a prime location for bird-watchers and nature-lovers.

To learn more about the **Al-Ayoun Environmental Center**, check: <https://www.facebook.com/AyounCenter>



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LET'S SHARE OUR NEWS

VOLUNTEERING AND GARDENING IN GERMANY

This summer I had the chance to volunteer at the **Scholls Bröllin International Art Research Location** in **Fahrenwalde - Germany** (<http://www.broellin.de/gb/>). Instead of just putting on my tourist hat, I helped out around the grounds and gardens of the center from September 30 to October 20. I was excited to learn about other cultures' intangible heritage and share their day-to-day life.

I spent a lot of time gardening with the other volunteers. The center has several apple, pear, plum and blue plum trees. We helped pick the fruits to make jam and jelly. The trees provide wood for heating as well.

Gardening was a collective activity so there was no focus on any specific medium of application. There are a lot of organic farms around the region. Of course, we put a lot of the principles of permaculture into practice. We never used pesticides or chemical fertilizers. We made compost with the organic waste from the gardens and kitchen, and added ashes from our campfires. The center is planning to start its own vegetable garden soon.

During their stay, the volunteers had to cook a dish from their home country. It was quite a lovely experience because there were so many nationalities present.

It was inspiring for me to meet different people from Hong Kong, England, Holland, Malaysia, Poland and other countries who were there for the same purpose as me. As a matter of principle, I encourage any sort of volunteering because it is a great way to appreciate different ways of life with a limited budget. In my case, it was the opportunity to contribute to a worthy project with new friends from around the world, and have an immediate impact on our hosting community.

Now that I'm back in Lebanon, I am looking forward to our next permaculture encounters and activities so we can continue to share our experiences and learn together.

See you soon.

Shared by Maha Kobeissy



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DEGHRI MESSENGERS RAPID DELIVERIES BY BIKE WITHIN BEIRUT

Deghri Messengers is a new bike messenger service in Beirut. Messengers deliver packages anywhere in the capital in 1 to 2 hours. This fast (Deghri is Arabic for "quickly") and environment-friendly service is changing attitudes about urban transportation, one person at a time.

Bike messengers were the ideal solution to avoid the stress and delays due to the catastrophic state of traffic in Beirut. They can travel faster than anybody by car, and not worry about finding a parking space.

Deghri Messengers was born out of my bike messenger experience in Switzerland and the business sense and passion of **Karim Sokhn**, director of **CyclingCircle** (organizers of biking events in Lebanon).

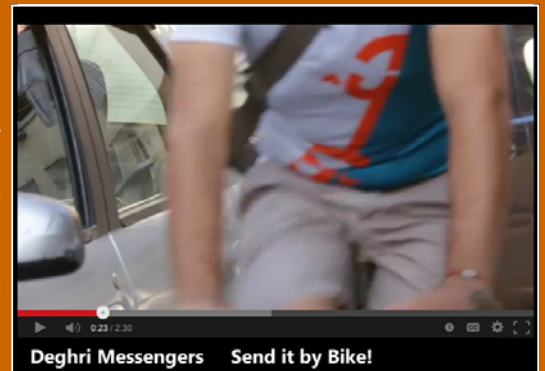
Our purpose is to prove that bicycles are a sustainable and efficient solution to transport goods and move around in the city as well.

So far, we have had a smooth ride. Driving in heavy traffic wasn't as dangerous as we were told. Our bright bags and uniforms make us stand out and people give us priority on the road. Our customers' feedback has been widely positive. Once they start employing us, they are convinced of our service's benefits. Our fees are justified by the rapidity of our deliveries and our carbon-free operation. And our messengers are grateful for the sense of fulfillment they get from doing something they enjoy. It is also a way for them to stay fit and explore parts of the city they never would have visited otherwise.

The project is still in its infancy, but it has already inspired some people to ride their bicycle more and try commuting or running errands within the city.

One of the challenges we face is finding cyclists with urban cycling experience and – more importantly – time to work as part of the project. Cycling is new to Lebanon, and many of the best cyclists have full time careers.

Shared by Matt Saunders



Click on the picture above to watch the Deghri Messengers promotional video, or go to:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uE-64vib6ul>

To find out more about Deghri Messengers or start using the service in Beirut, visit their website:

<http://www.deghri.com/>

or the Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/Deghri>



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LET'S SHARE OUR NEWS

PESTICIDE-FREE OLIVE TREES IN SAIDOUN

AN ECOLOGICAL SOLUTION TO OLIVE FLIES

On September 4, 2013 the **Saidoun Agriculture Cooperative** hosted a team from the Agriculture Office in the Jezzine Caza (South Lebanon) to tackle the problem of the olive fly (*Bactrocera oleae*). A dozen olive farmers from the small village of Saidoun attended a session to find out more about the fly and learn the natural way to deal with it.

The olive fruit fly lays its eggs inside the olive fruits as soon as the temperature starts to drop towards September. After the eggs hatch, the larvae start slowly feeding on the inside of the fruits and remain there until they reach their next maturity stage. When the olives are harvested and pressed, the larvae inside them compromise the quality and taste of the oil. Last year, we had quite a few, unfortunately.

Until now, the conventional way to deal with this problem meant only spraying, spraying, and more spraying - which only replaces the problem with another, more serious one.

Instead, this year the Agriculture Office distributed a protein mixture of amino acids (protein hydrolysate formula) to locals. This solution is known to attract flies and doesn't contain any type of toxic material. It is diluted in water and placed inside clear plastic containers. The containers are then hung on the olive trees to attract the flies. Small holes in the container allow the flies to get inside, then get trapped and drown in the liquid.

Strangely, the farmers did actually use this method in the past - except for most of them it was a way to find out when the flies started to come, i.e. when to spray! Older generations used homemade protein traps (meat leftovers) but the practice was lost or forgotten.

The protein solution is a very safe and efficient way to protect olives and limit the propagation of olive flies. It can be made from meat or fish leftovers as a cheap alternative.

I was doubly happy to be part of this initiative. Not only did I place protein traps on my family's olive trees, but I also got the chance to put the empty plastic bottles I had been collecting to good use and share them with other farmers for their traps.

2 months later, I went picking olives with friends and the results were incredible. We picked 70 kilograms of ripe black olives and didn't find a single fly larva - and the oil looks great! We will definitely use this method again next year. We will also try planting alfalfa as ground cover and cut it after flowering. The plants' roots fix nitrogen and enrich the soil. We'll keep you posted.

Shared by Rita Khawand



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UPCOMING EVENTS

"WIXARITARI" - THE GUARDIANS OF THE EARTH EXHIBITION



November 1-15

Monday + Saturday: 12:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

Tuesday → Friday: 11:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.

R392RmeilR393

Gouraud Street, Gemmayze

Next to the René Moawad Garden (Sanayeh)

<https://www.facebook.com/events/566907553375779/>

SOUK EL TAYEB - ORGANIC AND NATURAL MARKET



Every Saturday from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Beirut Souks

Downtown Beirut

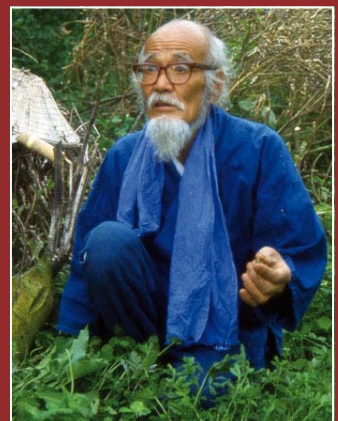
Tel: +961.1.442.664

<http://www.soukeltayeb.com/>

<https://www.facebook.com/souk.eltayeb.7/about>

A THOUGHT TO SHARE ...

"The ultimate goal of farming is not the growing of crops, but the cultivation and perfection of human beings."



—Masanobu Fukuoka (1913-2008)
The One-Straw Revolution

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