



• Creativity • Collaboration • Continuity • Community

IN THIS ISSUE:

FEATURE STORY

AFIR SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETES ITS SECOND YEAR [Pages 1-2](#)

LET'S FOCUS

► MEDITERRANEAN NETWORK FOR COMMUNITY SUPPORTED AGRICULTURE MEETINGS IN 2017 [Pages 3-4](#)

LET'S SHARE OUR NEWS

► FORSA PROJECT WITH SOILS: FIRST JOBS IN AGRICULTURE CREATED [Page 5](#)

► SOILS TAKES PART IN THE INTERNATIONAL PERMACULTURE CONVERGENCE #IPCINDIA [Pages 6-7](#)

► DON'T SHOOT: CURLEWS [Page 8](#)

FEATURE STORY

AFIR SUCCESSFULLY CONCLUDES ITS SECOND YEAR!

2017 was a great year for our budding project **AFIR Beekeeping and Nature Discovery Center!**

First, thanks to the support of the **Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur (PACA)** region, French beekeeper **Paul Bonaffé** of the **APIFLORDEV** association visited us for the 4th time in **mid-October** to lend his expertise to local **beekeepers** and **trainees** within AFIR.

This time we wanted to take advantage of Paul's experience in pollination and introduce the local public to this topic. In addition to keeping honey bees to produce honey, Paul rents out his hives to orchard owners and vegetable gardeners in France who are after the benefits of **pollination** to enhance the quality and quantity of their crops. He also has experience in keeping **bumblebees** for the same reasons, and has recently started experimenting with mason bees (a type of wild solitary bee in the *Osmia* genus that don't produce honey but are excellent pollinators).

On **Friday, October 13, 2017**, we organized a conference titled "**Pollination and Agriculture**" at the **Université Saint Joseph** in Beirut with more than **50 attendees** including agroecology experts, students, and teachers. Paul explained the effects of good pollination on agriculture, for example good pollination improves the shape of apples and increases the size of strawberries. He also showed us how he raises mason bees using specially designed wooden nests.

Our friend **Wael Yammine**, a promising young entomologist and Master's student at the **Lebanese University Faculty of Agriculture**, was also a speaker at the conference. Wael talked specifically about bumblebees and how he raises them in his village of Beit Chabab in wooden hives. He explained how to encourage them by preserving their habitats and keeping the wild flowers.

After the conference we drove Paul and his partner **Hélène** straight to **Saidoun** where they stayed for a few days. On Saturday Paul conducted a whole training day for the participants in our Beekeeping Apprenticeship program. He focused on the preparation of hives for the winter, in particular insulating them using styrofoam boards and bubble wrap sheets lined with reflective foil-like nylon. This helps the bees consume less energy to heat their hives.

On Sunday we took some time off to visit the **Shouf Cedar Reserve** with Paul and Hélène then headed back to **Jezzine** for lunch. On Monday, Paul visited beekeepers in the Jezzine region. And on Tuesday he went to **Beirut** to check on urban beehives installed on building rooftops and managed by **Atelier du Miel**.

Continued on Page 2



[► back to contents](#)



Continued from Page 1

This trip concluded our 2-year collaboration with APIFLORDEV funded by the PACA region. However, we discussed the possibility of future collaborations to continue developing our beekeeping school, grow AFIR's apiary as a demonstration site, and maybe further our research on wild pollinators.

In the meantime, **20 of the wild bee specimens** we collected in 2017 in Saidoun left for **Belgium** with our friend *Mira Boustany*, one of our apprentice beekeepers who traveled to pursue her PhD studies. From there, the bees flew to **Switzerland** to be identified by a specialist. We are eagerly looking forward to the results!

As for our other beekeeping apprentices, remember back in February we had started with 2 groups of 16 participants in total. Over the months we merged the groups as some participants were forced to drop out. The 10 remaining apprentices who made it to the last session graduated on December 10, 2017 after having completed 10 full training days. 2 of them already have hives, 4 others plan to start keeping bees next Spring, and the rest are just waiting to have access to suitable land. During this first round, we were able to test the program - the first of its kind in Lebanon - and develop handouts and educational material. Most importantly, we made very good friends - and so did bees, both domestic and wild.

AFIR's team will hold an internal evaluation meeting after the holidays before deciding on the duration and program of the second round of the Beekeeping Apprenticeship - 2018. If you're interested in the next round, stay tuned to AFIR's Facebook page for announcements:

AFIR Beekeeping and Nature Discovery Center

On the level of infrastructure, we received a **second grant** from **LUSH cosmetics** for 2018 in order to continue the renovation of the old house (AFIR's future center), develop the aromatic garden into an educational garden, and design and plant trees in a new land! More details on this in the new year.

Shared by the Editorial Team



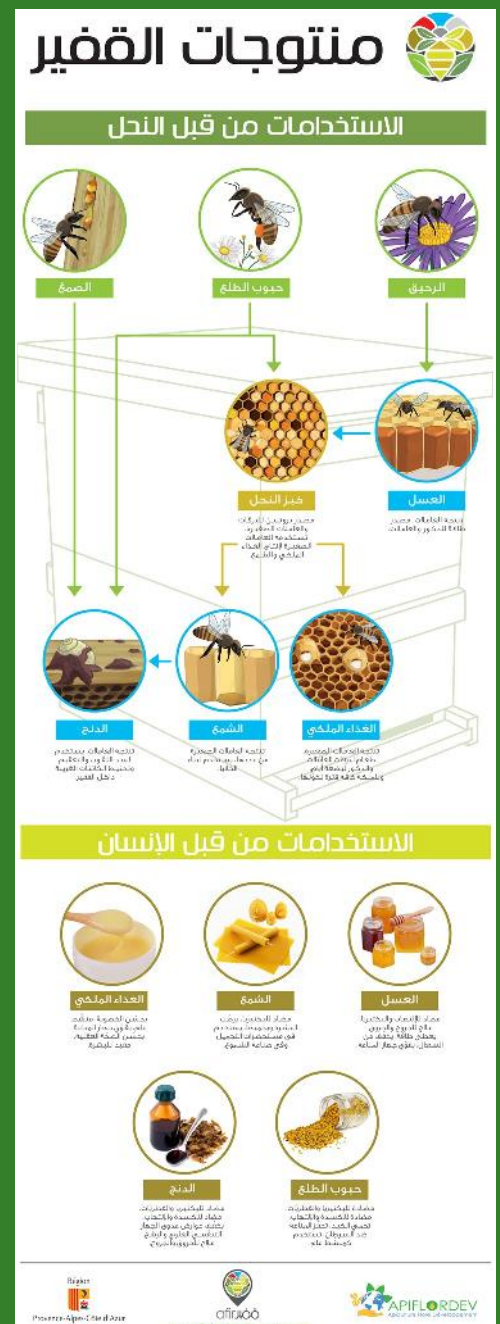
With the help of the talented *Racelle Ishak*, we also completed our second educational poster for AFIR: Products of the Beehive.

The poster, in Arabic, illustrates the relationship between natural resources and the products that bees produce from them: honey, royal jelly, beeswax, and propolis.

Check it out on our website along with our other publications:

<http://www.afir-beekeeping-center.com/publications.html>

To order a high-resolution printed version of our posters, email us at: contact.soilslebanon@gmail.com



LET'S FOCUS

MAPPING COMMUNITY SUPPORTED AGRICULTURE IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

In **October 2017**, **SOILS Permaculture Association Lebanon** participated in the **Learning Journey of the Mediterranean Network of LSPA (Local and Solidarity-based Partnerships for Agro-ecology)** to **Turkey**, then organized the network's second Learning Journey in **Lebanon** the following month.

Back in February 2016, SOILS was invited to **Marseilles** (France) to take part in a gathering of different activists from the Mediterranean region working on short food circuits, food sovereignty, and agro-ecology, to found the Mediterranean network for **Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)**. The network was initiated by **URGENCI** in partnership with **Terre et Humanisme** and their partners. The aim of the network is to exchange experiences and build capacities collectively on issues related to short food circuits (the direct relationships between farmers and consumers), and agro-ecology. Since CSA systems differ from one country to another, and in order to put more emphasis on the agro-ecological dimension, we later agreed to rename ourselves "The Mediterranean Network of LSPA." For more details about that historic meeting, check out [LETS Issue 32](#).

During that first meeting, we developed common tools to empower the network, including experience-sharing trips or "Learning Journeys" to reinforce partnerships. These journeys are also supposed to help draft common training material on community supported agriculture. Following the signature of a Memorandum of Understanding in 2017 between URGENCI and the **Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)**, the network was able to implement the two learning journeys in Turkey and Lebanon, with the support of the FAO, through the modality of South-South Cooperation among Non-State Actors.

TURKEY LEARNING JOURNEY | OCTOBER 4-8, 2017 - - - - -

The Learning Journey took place in **Ankara** and surrounding areas, with **11 representatives from 7 countries (Algeria, France, Greece, Italy, Lebanon, Morocco, Turkey)**. The event was locally hosted by the **Natural Food, Conscious Nutrition Group (DBB)** and the **Tahtacıörencik Village Natural Living Collective (TADYA)**.

It was my first trip to Turkey. The Learning Journey was very rich, it included visits to different settings (municipal and university gardens, eco-village, small-scale rural farms), as well as testing out exercises from URGENCI's **Be Part of CSA - Trainer's Guide** (downloadable for free from the [URGENCI website](#)) and discussing the relevance of the guide to our Mediterranean countries.

Some of the highlights of the trip:

- **Çankaya municipality garden:** in 2015 the municipality of the Çankaya district in Ankara divided one of their urban plots into 30 small garden parcels which they lend to locals so they can grow some of their food. The municipality provides basic training (gardening, companion planting, composting, food processing, etc.) for participants, as well as to other members of the community and school children. It also provides local seeds. It's true that the space could have been used more efficiently if it had been better designed but the key thing is the municipal board's clear interest in taking urban gardening further and learning as they go. This initiative has raised a lot of interest and there are around 50 people on the waiting list for parcels.

- **Visit to Tahtacıörencik Village:** This small rural village at about 1,000 m altitude and with only 300 permanent inhabitants is the "home" of the **TADYA collective**. **Ceyhan Temürcü**, the Learning Journey's local organizer and member of TADYA explained that the collective saw the potential to develop agro-ecology there as the village's soil is uncontaminated, the average size of agriculture parcels is 3,000 m², and the steep mountainous terrain is unfit for industrial agriculture. The collective moved to Tahtacıörencik 9 years ago, they took a small land where they installed a food forest garden, and they recently started building an ecological house with mud bricks and straw bales (which we unfortunately didn't see). They also helped the locals get an organic certification and connect to **Participatory Guarantee System (PGS)** groups in Ankara to sell their products. At a small market held specially for us, we met a young couple who had recently moved to the village, the husband had taken up beekeeping to produce Spring flower honey, and his wife makes nice handcrafts. We also visited a new greenhouse and a free-range chicken farm. Lunch and dinner were served at the village's hall by a local family using local produce. While we walked along the village's riverbed, Ceyhan explained their lobbying plans against the building of a dam that would change the course of the river and affect the whole village! I was very moved by this day, Tahtacıörencik reminded me of my village in **Saidoun** and made me better understand and appreciate TADYA's work and choices.

- **Networking with locals:** Several members of CSA groups, farmers, permaculture designers, activists, joined our activities. I was particularly happy to have met **Timuçin**, one of the organizers of the Learning Journey, and founder of a permaculture design team in and around Ankara. Timuçin is planning on doing some projects with the local authorities. I also met 2 farmers practicing agro-ecology. **İdris** grows cereals and old varieties of wheat and barley, and produces different types of cold-pressed vegetable oils (walnut, rapeseed, linseed, mustard, sesame, almond, etc.). He generously presented each one of us with a bottle of rapeseed oil. **Tanal** started experimenting with agro-ecology years ago, keeping detailed records of his observations and experiments, he hosts volunteers and guests on his farm as part of his [agro-eco tourism project TaTuTa](#).

Continued on Page 4



[▶ back to contents](#)



LET'S FOCUS

Continued from Page 3

We took part in a public national event, which gathered different actors working in short food circuits and CSA in Turkey. It was an opportunity to get a clearer idea of how active this community is which involves hundreds of producers and consumers.

Ceyhan and his team's fantastic organization set the bar very high for the next journey.

LEBANON LEARNING JOURNEY | NOVEMBER 22-25, 2017 - - - - -

SOILS organized the second journey in Lebanon, gathering **14 participants from 11 countries (Algeria, Egypt, France, Greece, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey)**. We were particularly very happy to be able to host our friend *Saad Dagher* from Palestine here for the first time without any problems at the airport.

For the first part of the journey in Saidoun, participants were hosted in the motel rooms of the reconverted public school and guest houses. FAO representatives joined us on the first day where we held internal work sessions and visited the site of the future **AFIR headquarters** and our young **aromatic garden**. *Hoda Khawand (Em Rabi)* who provided the meals during our stay gave Ceyhan and Saad some flat wide beans from her garden to plant back home. I was amazed to learn this variety of beans wasn't grown in Palestine and Turkey.

On the second day we headed to the Bekaa, where we stopped by **Arcenciel** in **Taanayel** to see the garden and heirloom seed bank that were installed by **Graines et Cinema** (a group of French agronomists and activists) 2 years ago. Funnily enough, we saw seeds of a special type of courgette that Graines et Cinema had acquired from Palestine via Saad and reproduced locally. We then visited the new land managed by Graines et Cinema in **Saadnayel**, where in addition to propagating heirloom seeds they grow vegetables which they sell in weekly baskets in Beirut. *Walid*, one of the workers at the garden, talked about their gardening methods and the trainings they organize on organic gardening. He highlighted the importance of spreading knowledge of heirloom seeds and agro-ecology among Syrian refugees, especially in preparation for the post-war period. *Angela Hayek* from SOILS hosted us for lunch at her house in Zahle before we headed to Beirut.

On the third day myself, some of us, along with FAO representatives, met with officials at the Ministry of Agriculture to introduce the work of the network. We then headed to the **Racines du Ciel** farm in **Lassa**. *Miguel*, a volunteer who's been on the farm since March 2017, gave us a tour of the grounds. We visited terraces of apples, which our friends *Raed Chami* and *Joanna Parker* converted to organic agriculture some 3 years ago, and are now interplanted with vegetables. We saw the structure of a new chicken coop being built out of branches and mud under the guidance of Joanna who is an architect specialized in natural construction. We had lunch on site prepared with fresh vegetables from the garden. Then we had a brief discussion with Joanna and Raed about the difficulty of convincing growers around them to change their practices and their challenges with implementing a "basket system," namely that clients couldn't get around the idea of not being able to choose the contents of their baskets.

We then transited to the **Samen Eco Gardens** in **Fanar**. We just had enough daylight left for a quick tour of most of the 4 dunum garden with *Andrea Samen*. We didn't get to meet her brother *Nadim* who tends the garden, as he was abroad for business. Andrea recounted the history of the garden, as well as their processing and marketing methods for their produce. The participants were amazed by the complex harmony of this peri-urban food forest and the daunting environmental mission of Andrea and Nadim to maintain this rare green urban space and inspire others. As we left, Andrea generously offered each of us a pot of homemade jam.

On the fourth and last day, we took a tour of the **Souk El Tayeb** farmer's market in **Beirut**. We met with the market's founder, *Kamal Mouzawak*, who explained how the logistics behind this market evolved since 2004 to help small producers earn a better living. Kamal's advocacy efforts also focus on gathering people from different communities and religions over healthy food. We lunched at the famous **Tawlet Souk El Tayeb** restaurant, also founded by Kamal, and which hosts chefs from different regions to offer their regional specialties.

In the afternoon we held a final work session at the **Haven for Artists** space in **Mar Mikhael**. We compiled a list of needs and possible contributions of each participating country to help us map concrete actions for 2018-2019. The need for agro-ecology trainings kept coming up in each country. We hope we will be able to host such a training in Lebanon in collaboration with Terre et Humanisme and Saad.

Although organizing this journey demanded a lot of effort in a short time, it was a very rewarding experience, and it helped other network representatives better understand the reality of the situation in Lebanon so we can plan more effective collaborations. Finally, we are grateful for our friends *Wael Yammine* and *Eyad Houssami* who volunteered to support the implementation.

Although our work at SOILS revolves more around training and education than actual production, we were very inspired by all what we experienced with the network so far, and we're looking forward to experimenting with a small local CSA network in Saidoun in 2018. Over the past few years, we'd been looking for a local farm to source our food from. Right after the Learning Journey, we chanced upon a woman from the nearby village of **Snaia** who said she was having a hard time selling her produce. This must be a sign! Stay tuned for updates!

Shared by Rita Khawand



Photo by Jean Hatem



Photo by Jean Hatem



Photo by Wael Yammine



Photo by Jean Hatem



LET'S SHARE OUR NEWS

SOILS CREATES ITS FIRST JOBS WITH THE FORSA AGRICULTURAL TRAINING

Last autumn we were very busy implementing **agricultural training sessions** in Jezzine within the new project **FORSA**, led by **Mercy Corps** with funding from the **Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands**.

With the help of our network in Jezzine and South Lebanon, *Amani Dagher* and *Rita Khawand* of SOILS Permaculture Association organized **2 free-of-charge training programs** aimed at helping locals find part-time or seasonal jobs in agriculture: **Table Olive Processing**, and **Apple and Olive Orchard Management**.

Even though the trainings were free of charge, we had a very hard time recruiting participants. Even unemployed people didn't want to commit to more than 2-3 training days. So we had to change the training dates many times, and widen our outreach activities until we reached the required minimum number of trainees.

TABLE OLIVE PROCESSING-----

The Table Olive Processing training ran for 14 sessions between **September 28 and December 14, 2017**, led by the expert trainer *Hussein Hoteit*, an authority on olive trees with many years of experience under his belt. The theoretical sessions took place in the village of **Azour** at the offices of the **B-Baladi Cooperative Homsiyte**, and the practical ones at the olive processing center in the same village. The program covered the different processing methods of green and black olives (pickles, olive paste, etc.) in addition to hygiene and food safety standards. The trainees also had the chance to participate in the first olive-tasting session to be organized in Lebanon.

12 women completed the training and received their attestations. The biggest challenge we faced was that the olive processing center was not fully functional yet, and so we had to regularly deal with unexpected issues.

APPLE AND OLIVE ORCHARD MANAGEMENT-----

As for the Apple and Olive Orchard Management training, it ran between **October 10 and November 21, 2017**. Due to the difficulty of finding people to commit to 16 training days, we split the training in two parts. The Apple Orchard Management training ran for 8 days at the **Jezzine Hub** office and neighboring orchards, and was conducted by agricultural engineer *Jad Fahed*. Trainees learned about major pests that affect apple orchards, good practices for harvest and post-harvest, and the pruning of young and established trees. The training had very valuable information for apple growers and we hope the trainees will be able to communicate the practices they learned to the region's orchards. This could be an important first step in setting up a holistic plan to improve apple production in Jezzine which currently faces many challenges such as over spraying, bad harvest and post-harvest practices, bad pruning, lack of marketing skills, etc.

As our most knowledgeable olive expert, Hussein also conducted the Olive Orchard Management training spread over a period of 9 days. We were generously hosted by the **Deir El Moukhalles** convent in **Joun**, since most of the trainees were Syrian workers looking after the grounds there and handling the harvest and processing tasks. The training covered the major olive pests and integrated pest management approaches, an overview on the land care practices (fertilization, minimizing tillage, cover crops, etc.), and pruning trees of different ages. The trainees practiced in the fields of the convent as well as in an ancient olive grove in **Bassatin Baanoub's** land with trees aged hundreds (if not thousands) of years old. There, the trainees were able to practice rejuvenating pruning on some of the venerable trees.

Both groups had the chance to follow a session on grafting fruit trees led by agricultural engineer *Peter Moubarak* and our friend and SOILS member *Salim Kattar*, a professor of agriculture at the Lebanese University.

A total of **13 Lebanese and Syrian men and 1 woman** completed the orchard management trainings and received pruning tools as part of a graduation toolkit that would enable them to start working straight away. And we were glad to recently learn that many of the trainees have already begun taking on pruning jobs in the region's orchards.

Doing the outreach to recruit participants by ourselves was difficult but ultimately enriching. The main challenge with these agricultural training programs remains that the training days are distributed over an extended period of time (2-3 months) in order to stick to the agriculture calendar, which makes the commitment of the trainees and management of logistics more difficult. By stepping out of our comfort zone, we were able to widen our network in Jezzine and meet new collaborators. It also gave us invaluable insights into the agricultural landscape of the region to plan future interventions.

We were supposed to conduct a third training for animators of **Micro and School Gardens**, but we had to postpone it due to unexpected issues with the trainer's visa who was supposed to come from Palestine. We still don't have a new date for it but we are hopeful we will be able to organize it in Spring or Autumn 2018.

Shared by *Rita Khawand*



LET'S SHARE OUR NEWS

SOILS AT THE INTERNATIONAL PERMACULTURE CONVERGENCE INDIA #IPCINDIA



Group photo from IPCIndia Facebook account

For the second time in a row, **SOILS Permaculture Association Lebanon** attended the bi-annual **International Permaculture Conference and Convergence (IPC)** held this year in **Hyderabad, India** from **November 25 to December 2, 2017**. This time, SOILS was represented by ourselves, *Amani Dagher* and *Karim Hakim*, and we were invited to present SOILS' experience with micro gardening in **Syrian refugee camps** in the **Bekaa**. It was a great opportunity to do some networking, share common challenges, and get acquainted with permaculture initiatives from Latin America to East Timor passing by Palestine.

The IPC is a meeting organized every two years for permacultivators of the world to meet and exchange experiences. It first started in Australia in 1984 presided by the founder of permaculture, Bill Molison. The IPC was organized by **Aranya Agricultural Alternatives** and presided by **Padma & Narsanna Koppula**. The first two days were dedicated to the conference that was hosted by the **Professor Jayashankar Agricultural University**, in the suburbs of Hyderabad. The convergence took place over the next 5 days at the Polam Farm, 3 hours away from the conference venue, in the midst of India's infamous **genetically modified Bt cotton fields**.

We actually bumped into Palestine's representative *Murad al Khuffash* upon arriving at 2:00 a.m. at Hyderabad's international airport. We were totally lost, not knowing in which direction to go but relieved to see we were not alone. Amani had a panel participation scheduled in less than 10 hours, and Karim was volunteering as early as 9:00 a.m. Our intuition told us we still had a long way to go before reaching our beds. By the time we found the taxi driver responsible assigned to us, got to the university, located our sleeping quarters (dealing along the way with an unexpected mixup with Karim's registration) it was already 5:00 a.m. and we were beyond exhausted.

CONFERENCE | 25-26 NOVEMBER 25-26, 2017

Narsanna Koppula, co-founder of **Aranya Agricultural Alternatives Association**, welcomed everyone and introduced *David Holmgren*, the **co-founder of permaculture**, who Skyped with us through a giant screen, from Australia.

Several presentations and workshops were held simultaneously:

- **Vandana shiva (India)** - **Environmental activist and founder of Navdanya, a national movement to protect the diversity and integrity of living resources, especially native seed, the promotion of organic farming and fair trade.**

Vandana talked about the importance of preserving local varieties by establishing seed banks in every region of India to fight against multinational companies like **Monsanto** who are destroying India's rich biodiversity. She explained how in the last two decades, Monsanto acquired a **monopoly over cotton seeds**, replacing Indian farmers' local varieties with genetically modified Bt cotton seeds and coercing extravagant royalties. As a result, **300,000 Indian farmers have committed suicide** because they were trapped in vicious cycles of debt and crop failures.

- **Sultan Ismail (India)** - **Environmental biologist and Director of the Ecoscience Research Foundation**

Sultan spoke about soil health and the importance of living organisms like earthworms to keep the soil at its best. He started by announcing that at this stage, we cannot restore the soil we have already lost, but we can **rehabilitate** it by improving its **living and non-living components**. This was a really enjoyable presentation and a very interactive session. Sultan was able to transmit scientific facts by showing simple examples to explain the activities in the soil, nutrient cycles and the energy flows, communication between trees, the negative effects of chemical fertilizers on the living organism, and the importance of vermitech practices.

Continued on Page 7



[▶ back to contents](#)



LET'S SHARE OUR NEWS

Continued from Page 6

• François Léger (France) - Agronomist and Professor of Agroecology at the AgroParis Tech University

François explained the economic viability of different examples of small French farms that combine ecological innovation (agroecological practices, permaculture, etc.), economic innovation (short food circuits), and social innovation (mutual aid and self-empowerment networks). In fact, research shows that it is possible to live from small-scale farming with dignity and ethics, helping to build healthier, fairer food systems that respect cultural and natural heritage.

• Panel: Permaculture Responses to the Refugee Situation

Amani participated in a panel dealing with the difficulties in the mass migration of refugees and the enormous potential contribution of permaculture to address them. The discussion was facilitated by *Rowe Morrow*, a permaculture educator. Rowe talked briefly about the situation of the Syrian refugees in Lebanon and about our micro-garden project that we implemented in 6 camps. We were very pleased to meet Rowe and get to know more about her work in solving the problems linked to food security and land degradation by applying permaculture tools. *Sarah Queblatin* from the Philippines and *Francesca Simonetti* from Italy also shared their experience using food growing to empower refugees and improve their resilience.

CONVERGENCE | NOVEMBER 27-DECEMBER 2, 2017 - - - - -

The convergence was held at the Polam Farm which was developed under the mentorship of Narsanna and the IPC India team using permaculture design principles.

• Rim Mathlouti (Algeria) - Chairman of the Tunisia Association of Permaculture

Rim spoke about the different permaculture projects implemented by the association. Mainly their work is focused on providing workshops, creating vegetable gardens, and making compost in schools. She also presented an inspiring project that transformed a large plot of land near an orphanage into an edible food forest for the orphanage's consumption. All the work on this land was carried out, and is still being carried out by the boys in the orphanage, under the supervision of the association.

• SOILS Presentation

We talked about our micro-gardening project in Syrian refugee camps in the Bekaa and the learning garden in a Syrian community center. Lots of people came to the session, and from the questions, we felt their interest to know more about the situation of the Syrian refugees in Lebanon and how they can be helped. Also, through this session, we had the chance to meet with people who worked in projects with children in school and would like to collaborate with us.

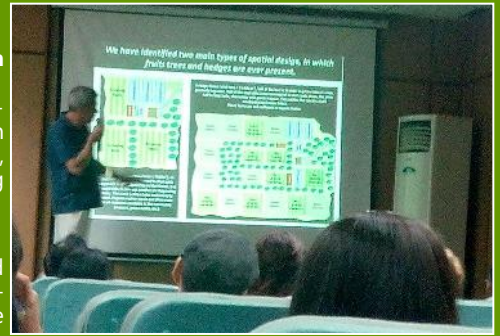
• Aranya Farm Tour

A full day tour of the **Aranya Farm**, 2 hours away from Polam Farm, was organized. It was a great opportunity to visit a land that was transformed **from a barren overgrazed land to a fully mature food forest in just 16 years**. The impressive part is that the transformation occurred without there ever being an irrigation system: over the years, the land was simply and progressively mulched. At the same time, rainwater was allowed to be stocked underground. Later, a small 10 m well was dug. Narsanna, the owner of the land, aimed to make the farm a model of what farmers who own 1-3 acres could do to grow the food they need and eat a healthy diet: cereals, oil seeds, pulses, vegetables, fruits, and nuts as well as a cash crop. Many farmers in India who have land that used to be irrigated can no longer irrigate their land because they cannot afford to dig new bore wells to get to the water that has receded deep underground. Others have never been able to even simply irrigate their land. It was there, surrounded by mango, citrus, teak, moringa, jack fruit and many more tropical trees, that Amani completed her quest to find the **Neem tree**, the source of neem oil, known for its natural biopesticide properties.

• Brett Pritchard (Australia) - Permaculture teacher and consultant, BioWicked Bed inventor

Brett talked about his modified wicking bed system called the **BioWicked bed**. It is a permaculture designed wicking bed system that uses a modified bokashi fermented food waste plus beneficial mycorrhiza to inoculate the beds, stopping methane emissions and pulling both carbon and nitrogen into the soil. He considered this system better from the conventional wicking bed in dryland climates because it retains more water.

Shared by Amani Dagher and Karim Hakim



[▶ back to contents](#)



SAVE PAPER – Do you really need to print this newsletter?

L.E.T.S. Lebanon

PAGE 7/8

LET'S SHARE OUR NEWS

SHOOT ONLY WITH A CAMERA: THE CURLEWS

Curlews are the largest waders from the *Scolopacidae* family to occur in Lebanon. They are given their name by their loud and distinctive "curl-ooo" call they produce. Two species have been recorded in the country so far; The **Whimbrel** (*Numenius phaeopus*), and the **Eurasian Curlew** (*Numenius arquata*). They measure 55 cm in length, with a wingspan of 90 cm and an average weight of 400 grams.

Both species are closely related, and unless you see them side by side it's often hard to tell them apart. They are large, brownish, and streaked, with the Whimbrel being slightly smaller in size, a bit darker, with a shorter bill that is decurved near the tip, and has a dark crown and dark eye stripes. Curlews are usually found in coastal wetlands, muddy shores of lakes and rivers, and on rocky shores. During migrations, they can also be found in farmland and in wet grassland. With their distinctive long and down-curved bills, curlews are able to consume a wide variety of food by pecking and deep probing in mud or damp soil. They will pretty much feed on anything they can catch such as crabs, insects, worms, crustaceans, small fish, amphibians, lizards, young birds, and small rodents, as well as seeds and berries.

The breeding season takes place during spring time, curlews will usually build their nests in grass cover. The nest is a large depression on the ground lined with fine grass and some feathers. The female lays 4 brownish eggs with dark markings. Both sexes will incubate for four weeks and take care of the chicks after that.

In Lebanon curlews are rare passage migrants recorded mainly on coasts and islands. Locally people do not differentiate between the two waders, both species are referred to as "Water Curlews" (Karawan Mayy - كروان مائي), and unfortunately they are still being shot by irresponsible hunters.

Even though curlews are protected under the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (AEWA), their numbers are in a continuous decline due to loss of their habitat, farming practices, and illegal hunting.

Shared by Fouad Itani

This article was originally published on the SPNL website:

<http://www.spnl.org/meet-the-curlews-the-largest-waders-from-the-scolopacidae-family-to-occur-in-lebanon/>

All photos courtesy of Fouad Itani. See more photos on the Birds of Lebanon website:

<https://www.birdsoflebanon.com/>

Facebook: Birds of Lebanon and the Middle East

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



Whimbrel feeding on small insects, notice the dark crown and eye stripes.



Eurasian Curlew looking for food on a grass lawn, notice the long decurved bill

► [back to contents](#)

GET IN TOUCH, GET INVOLVED


Do you enjoy reading this newsletter?


Send us your feedback and suggestions, share your news, photos, tips or thoughts, or find out more.


Email us at: contact.soilslebanon@gmail.com


Editor in chief: Alexis Baghdadi

L.E.T.S. Lebanon is published by
SOILS Permaculture Association Lebanon

 www.soils-permaculture-lebanon.com

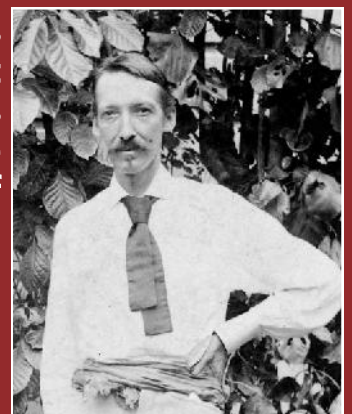
 SOILS Permaculture Association Lebanon

 +961-71-617988

 twitter.com/SOILSLebanon

A THOUGHT TO SHARE ...

"It is not so much for its beauty that the forest makes a claim upon men's hearts, as for that subtle something, that quality of air that emanation from old trees, that so wonderfully changes and renews a weary spirit."



—Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-1894)
Essays of Travel

► [back to contents](#)

