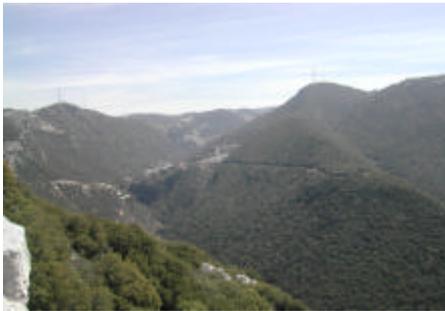


Interim Report to the MAVA board on the Identification and Conservation of New “Important Bird Areas” in Lebanon Project Year 2



March 2007

*A joint project by A Rocha Lebanon and the Society for the Protection of
Nature in Lebanon, the national BirdLife partner.*

1 Introduction

This document is the interim report for the MAVA board on the second year of the *Identification and Conservation of New “Important Bird Areas” in Lebanon Project*, which is funded by MAVA and carried out jointly by A Rocha Lebanon and the Society for the Protection of Nature in Lebanon (SPNL), the latter being the Lebanese partner organisation for BirdLife International. The report covers the Period March 2006 to February 2007.

1.1 The scope of this Report

The *Identification and Conservation of New “Important Bird Areas” in Lebanon Project* has two objectives for each of which there are six outputs which the project aims at achieving.

These are:

Objective 1: Identify new IBAs

Output 1.1 - Produce a unified bird checklist for Lebanon

Output 1.2 – Create the IBA database and input current data

Output 1.3 – Organise launching seminar, inviting all interested parties to participate in the IBA programme

Output 1.4 – Organise two 2-week intensive research surveys with visiting ornithologists per year to coincide with peak migration

Output 1.5 – Survey each site for birds at least six times throughout each year

Output 1.6 – Match data to BirdLife IBA criteria and declare IBAs

Objective 2: Conservation (Protection) of IBAs

Output 2.1 – Survey each site for its habitats, land uses, non-avian biodiversity and threats

Output 2.2 – Draw up a site management statement for each site

Output 2.3 – Identify small teams (up to ten individuals) to form the site support group for each new IBA

Output 2.4 – Train key members (two per site) of site support group in basic bird identification skills, bird monitoring, site management and conservation advocacy

Output 2.5 – Work with the site support group and local council to form a management committee for the management of the site.

Output 2.6 – With each site support group design and implement monitoring schemes to identify new threats and determine the success of conservation measures

For this project the sites are divided into three groups, with a different group being surveyed each year. After each year’s fieldwork has been carried out, the data is sent to the BirdLife International Secretariat, in Cambridge, UK, with recommendations about which sites A Rocha Lebanon and SPNL think should be designated as IBAs, based on the results of the fieldwork and supported by any other recent data available. Once BirdLife has made its decision, the second phase of the project can commence for the successful sites.

Outputs 1.1 and 1.3 were completed in the first year of the project and reported on in the Interim Report for that year, and so will not be reported on here. The other 4 outputs in Objective 1 are ongoing for each year of the project, and will be reported on here for the second year.

At the end of the first year of the project, 5 sites were recommended for IBA status, and this recommendation was accepted by BirdLife International. These 5 sites were therefore ready to move on to the second phase, Objective 2 – The Conservation (Protection) of IBAs. The first 3 outputs of this objective were reported on for these sites in the interim

report for the first year of the project. Outputs 2.4, 2.5 and 2.6, concerned with the training of individuals from the local areas of each new IBA, the formation of management committees and the development of monitoring schemes, for these 5 sites, will be reported on here.

From the batch of sites surveyed in the second year of the project, two are being recommended for IBA status to BirdLife International. Objectives 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3 (above) have been carried out for these sites and will be reported on here.

2 Overview of the year

After a relatively quiet first half of the year in Lebanon, all this changed in July, when a 34-day-long war began between the Israeli Defence Forces and Hizbollah. This created a huge upheaval in the lives of everyone in Lebanon, caused over 1000 deaths and the displacement of up to a million people, and devastated infra-structure throughout the country. It also led to the evacuation of thousands of foreigners resident in Lebanon. This included the entire team of A Rocha Lebanon. Although the war finished in August, uncertainty about the future of the country continued for much longer and a large amount of infrastructure has not yet been repaired.

The war and its aftermath had an unavoidable effect on the progress of the project in 2006. Political unrest between the government and opposition have also led to some disruption of the project, in particular concerning the training of the Site Support Groups and the development of monitoring programmes for the sites which were designated IBAs after the first year's fieldwork.

- i) Autumn visits were not possible to six out of the ten sites surveyed, and the 2-week intensive survey had to be cancelled for the autumn.
- ii) Several proposed dates for the training course for Site Support Groups, of the five newly declared IBAs, had to be changed, and so the training did not happen until early February 2007.
- iii) The postponement of the training course had a knock-on effect on the establishment of management committees at two of the five sites, and the development of monitoring strategies at all of them. These outputs were still able to be carried out within the reporting period, but the time allotted to them was constricted severely.

Despite these problems the second year of the project has generated some significant outcomes, summarised here:

- i) **Two** sites have been proposed for designation as IBAs and are currently under consideration by BirdLife International.
- ii) Across the country 4 sites have been thoroughly surveyed for avian biodiversity importance (minimum six visits per site during the year running from March 2006 - February 2007). A further 6 sites were surveyed in the spring, although surveys were interrupted by the war (see the proposal to the MAVA Board entitled *The final year of the "Identification and Conservation of New Important Bird Areas in Lebanon" Project, following the war of July & August 2006*). This has generated a huge amount of data of great importance to the conservation efforts at the sites and to the building up a national repository of base-line data for further studies.
- iii) The training session for Site Support Groups from the 5 newly declared IBAs was a great success, with 15 people attending. They learned basic bird identification skills, and received training in site monitoring and conservation. There was real enthusiasm among the attendees of the course, both for birds themselves, and for the sites which were being represented.
- iv) Site Management Committees are in place at 3 of the 5 new IBAs.
- v) Monitoring programmes have been designed for four of the new IBA sites.

3 Fulfilment of Objectives and Outputs

3.1 Objective 1: Identify new IBAs

In the original project proposal this objective is stated thus:

“To identify new IBAs by visiting prospective sites and surveying them for their avifauna, working according to BirdLife International protocols”. This is ongoing and in the second year of the project a total of 10 sites were surveyed.

Subsections 3.1-3.6, below detail how the six outputs of Objective 1 were met in the year from March 2006.

3.1.1 Output 1.1 - Produce a unified bird checklist for Lebanon

As stated in Section 1.1 above, this output was completed in the first year of the project and so will not be reported on here.

3.1.2 Output 1.2 - Create the IBA database and input current data

In the previous report we mentioned technical problems with BirdLife International's World Birds Database which were being addressed by staff of BirdLife International and SPNL. These problems have now been resolved and the database is functioning smoothly. Unfortunately, this did not happen in time for the data from this, the second year of the project, to be input prior to the submission of this report and so, as in the previous report, the data collected this year are shown in Microsoft Excel spreadsheets which can be found in Appendix 1.

However, the data from the first year of the project have now been input to the database and will very soon be able to be viewed on-line at www.globalconservation.info. The database is designed so that the data can be input on-line by BirdLife staff and partners, and then viewed on-line by all interested parties.

This database contains data from sites all over the world and is an invaluable record of bird populations. All the data gathered during the course of this project, and not just that from the sites which eventually are granted IBA status, will be stored in the database. For Lebanon, this will be an unprecedented, systematic and accessible resource of information about the birds of a host of sites throughout the country.

3.1.3 Output 1.3 - Organise launching seminar, inviting all interested parties to participate in the IBA programme

As stated in Section 1.1 above, this output was completed in the first year of the project and so will not be reported on here.

3.1.4 Output 1.4 - Organise two 2-week intensive research surveys with visiting ornithologists per year to coincide with peak migration

i) Spring In March and April 2006, A Rocha researchers were joined by visiting ornithologists from the UK. They assisted in visits to 6 potential IBA sites between the 27th of March and the 7th of April. Working in two teams, one of two and one of three, a total of 12 visits were made. All six locations were visited twice.

Total man days = 29

Highlights for each site in the spring fortnight were:

Ras Baalbek - Several desert specialist species, rare elsewhere in Lebanon recorded breeding or possibly breeding including Trumpeter Finch and the second Lebanese record of Desert Lark.

Yammouneh - Migrating Pied Wheatear and Egyptian Vulture.

Bentael - Migrating flocks of White Pelican and Common Crane

Ramlieh – Soaring bird migration, including over 680 White Storks and 183 Lesser Spotted Eagles

Jisr el Qadi – Soaring bird migration, including 9 species of raptor, White and Black Storks and Common Crane.

Lower Damour River – A broad range of migratory and resident species, including Common Crane and White Pelican

ii) *Autumn* Because of the evacuation of the A Rocha Lebanon team during the Summer 2006 war, the 2-week intensive survey of potential IBA sites was not carried out in autumn 2006.

3.1.5 Output 1.5 - Survey each site for birds at least six times throughout the year

In the March 2006-February 2007 time period 10 new sites were surveyed as potential Important Bird Areas. In addition one of the sites from the first year of the project, Cheikh Zennad, which wasn't recommended for IBA status in that year, was revisited on four occasions, as it was considered to still have very good potential.

Of the 10 new sites surveyed, the full set of six visits, as stipulated in the original project proposal, was carried out in four of them. These were, Awali River valley, Hasbani River Valley, Tyre Beach Nature Reserve and Bhamdoun/ Beirut River Valley.

Survey work at the remaining six sites was interrupted by the war which took place in Lebanon in the summer of 2006. As a result no visits were carried out during the autumn migration period to Ras Baalbek, Yammouneh, Bentael, Ramlieh, Jisr el Qadi or the Lower Damour River, as the A Rocha Lebanon team were out of the country, having been evacuated in July. Visits were made during January and February 2007 to 4 of the sites (Bentael, Ramlieh, Jisr el Qadi and the Lower Damour River) bringing the total number of visits for each of these sites to 4. No further visits were made to Ras Baalbek or Yammouneh because of security considerations in those areas (see the proposal to the MAVA Board entitled *The final year of the "Identification and Conservation of New Important Bird Areas in Lebanon" Project, following the war of July & August 2006*).

The raw data from all of the surveys is given in Appendix 1 and summarised in the sections on the individual sites in Appendix 2.

3.1.6 Output 1.6 - Match data to BirdLife IBA criteria and declare IBAs

The process preceding the declaration of new IBAs as a result of this project, are detailed in section 3.1.6 of the interim report on the first year of the project which was resubmitted to the MAVA board in November 2006, and will not be repeated here. The BirdLife IBA criteria which apply to sites in the Middle East are given below:

A: Important Bird Areas - Global importance

A1. Species of global conservation concern

The site regularly holds significant numbers of a globally threatened species, or other species of global conservation concern.

A2. Restricted-range species

The site is known or thought to hold a significant component of the restricted-range species whose breeding distributions define an Endemic Bird Area (EBA) or Secondary Area (SA).

A3. Biome-restricted species

The site is known or thought to hold a significant assemblage of the species whose breeding distributions are largely or wholly confined to one biome.

A4. Congregations

- i. The site is known or thought to hold, on a regular basis, = 1% of a biogeographic population of a congregatory waterbird species.
- ii. The site is known or thought to hold, on a regular basis, = 1% of the global population of a congregatory seabird or terrestrial species.
- iii. The site is known or thought to hold, on a regular basis, = 20,000 waterbirds or = 10,000 pairs of seabird of one or more species.
- iv. The site is known or thought to be a 'bottleneck' site where at least 20,000 storks (Ciconiidae), raptors (Accipitriformes and Falconiformes) or cranes (Gruidae) regularly pass during spring or autumn migration.

B: Important Bird Areas - Middle Eastern importance

B1: Regionally important congregations

The site may qualify on any one of the three criteria listed below:

- i. The site is known or thought to hold = 1% of a flyway or other distinct population of a waterbird species.
- ii. The site is known or thought to hold = 1% of a distinct population of a seabird species.
- iv. The site is a 'bottleneck' site where over 5,000 storks, or over 3,000 raptors or cranes regularly pass on spring or autumn migration.

B2: Species with an unfavourable conservation status in the Middle East

The site is one of the five most important sites in the country/territory for a species with an unfavourable conservation status in the Middle East (threatened or declining throughout all or part of their range in the region) and for which the site-protection approach is thought to be appropriate.

B3: Species with a favourable conservation status but concentrated in the Middle East

The site is one of the five most important sites in the country/territory for a species with a favourable conservation status in the Middle East but with its global range concentrated in the Middle East, and for which the site-protection approach is thought to be appropriate.

All of the data collected in the second year of the project have been submitted to the BirdLife Secretariat in Cambridge, U.K. Of the 10 new sites surveyed, or partly surveyed during the year, 2 have been recommended, by A Rocha Lebanon and SPNL, for designation as Important Bird Areas.

The following tables (Tables 3.1, 3.2 & 3.3) report on Output 1.5, 1.6, and 2.1. They show which sites were surveyed, how many visits were made and which of the two organisations (of A Rocha Lebanon and SPNL) was primarily responsible for surveying the sites. The sites are grouped in a way which summarises recommendations which have been forwarded to BirdLife International for declaration of IBA status. The sites are put into three groups:

- i) Sites that meet the criteria for IBA status (and which are currently being considered BirdLife Middle East.)
- ii) Sites where field-work was interrupted by the Summer 2006 war and to which future visits are planned during the final year of the project.
- iii) Sites that do not meet the IBA criteria.

Table 3.1 Sites meeting IBA Criteria

Site number and name	IBA criteria met	Number of times visited during the reporting period	Organisation responsible
1. Ras Baalbek	A.1.	5 (plus 3 in 2005)	A Rocha
2. Bhamdoun/ Beirut River Valley	A.4.iv	49	SPNL

Table 3.2 Sites not meeting IBA criteria but to which future visits are planned, following interruption of survey work

Site number and name	Number of times visited during the reporting period	Organisation responsible
3. Bentaël	4	A Rocha
4. Ramlieh	5	A Rocha
5. Jisr el Qadi	4	A Rocha
6. Lower Damour River	4	A Rocha

Table 3.3 Sites not meeting IBA criteria to which no future visits are planned

Site number and name	Number of times visited during the reporting period	Organisation responsible
7. Tyre Beach	8	SPNL
8. Awali River	6	SPNL
9. Hasbani River	6	SPNL
10. Yammouneh	3	A Rocha
11. Cheikh Zennad	4	SPNL

Site number 2 (Bhamdoun/ Beirut River Valley) is a very large site in a densely populated area, which falls under several local authorities. Because the river valley is functionally a single entity it was decided to recommend that the whole site be made a IBA. However, because of the large and politically complex nature of the site, it was decided to focus the conservation efforts, initially, on just one local authority in the most important part of the valley, Bhamdoun. As a result, the training workshops etc. for the coming year will be aimed mainly at representatives from this area, (assuming it gains IBA status), although if appropriate people from other parts of the valley will be encouraged to attend the training.

3.2 Objective 2: Conservation (Protection) of IBAs

3.2.1 Output 2.1 - Survey each site for its habitats, land uses, non-avian biodiversity and threats

This section refers only to those sites which were surveyed in the second year of the project. For the newly designated IBAs from the first year of the project, this output was covered in the interim report for that year.

At the sites that were surveyed this year (March 2006-Feb 2007), this was carried out at the same time as the main bird survey visits. The habitat and land-use classes used were those recommended by BirdLife International.

The data is shown in the individual site accounts, in Appendix 2.

3.2.2 Output 2.2 - Draw up a site management statement for each site

For each site surveyed in the second year of the project, a detailed report has been written. These can be found in Appendix 2

For every site the report includes:

- i) General description
- ii) Dates of visits
- ii) All bird records see Appendix 1

In addition for sites recommended for IBA status:

- iv) Supporting notes for recommendation of IBA status
- v) Site Management Statement (see section 3.2.2 of the first year's report for a detailed description of what a Site Management Statement consists of).
- vi) Map of the proposed IBA

For Cheikh Zennad, the site to which extra visits were made after it had been surveyed during the first year of the project, the data is shown in Appendix 1 but a site description is not included as this was given in the interim report from the first year.

3.2.3 Output 2.3 – Identify small teams (up to ten individuals) to form the site support group for each new IBA

The nucleus of each group has been formed with the following key people having agreed to act as the coordinators and facilitators.

Site Support Groups (SSGs) and initial Contacts for Proposed IBAs from the second year of the project.

Site 1– Ras Baalbek

1- Antoun Chaaban

Site 2 – Bhamdoun/ Beirut River Valley

1- Nagib Khairallah

NB Currently there is only one name given for each site. However, these people are very influential in the area and will recommend other members for the Site Support Groups as follow up work continues.

3.2.4 Output 2.4 – Train key members (two per site) of site support group in basic bird identification skills, bird monitoring, site management and conservation advocacy

The following three sections (on Outputs 2.4, 2.5 & 2.6) refer to the five newly designated IBAs that were surveyed in the first year of the project. These are Aanjar/ K'far Zabad, Ebel is-Saqi, Lake Qaraaoun, Tannourine and Riim-Sannine.

During the field assessment of the sites surveyed in the first year of the project, contact people were identified for each site (attached in last year's report) as the nuclei for Site Support Groups. Upon the official declaration of the five new IBAs by BirdLife International, the Site Support Groups were contacted asking them to nominate representatives from these sites to attend the workshop organized by the project.

A two day workshop was organized at Haoush Aammiq, in the Bekaa, on the weekend of 10 & 11 February 2007. This included an introduction to birds, their importance, and bird identification skills on the first day. The second day covered an explanation about the IBA programme, international criteria and conservation issues. Furthermore, the IBA monitoring procedure was described in detail to the participants to facilitate initiatives at their sites. On the first day of the workshop there were theoretical presentations and a field visit to give the participants practical experience of identifying birds in the field. The second day included exercises on IBA assessment, stakeholder analysis, and IBA monitoring.

The workshop was attended by 15 people from the five newly declared sites varying from 2 – 5 representatives from each site. Several publications were distributed to the participants including pamphlets about IBAs and the Hima concept (an ancient system of land management which is currently being revived in Lebanon) (see Appendix 3 (paper only) for copies of these two pamphlets), and copies of the newly published Arabic translation of *The Field Guide to the Birds of the Middle East* (Porter et al. 2006).

The general feedback from the participants was highly positive and they were enthusiastic for future co-operation and follow-up.

The delegates who attended all or part of the workshop were as follows, listed by the sites they represented:-

Aanjar-K'far Zabad : Sami Abou Rjayleh
Rani Chukor

Ebel is-Saqi: Samira Saadeh
Karim Massoud

Lake Qaraaoun: Ali Dabaja
Safa Issa
Abdo Najem
Amer Najem
Safer Najem
Zaher el-Rassi

NB- Lake Qaraaoun is a large site which falls under the authority of several villages. The first two names given here were from Qaraaoun Village, and the last four were from Aitanit village, on the opposite side of the lake

Tannourine: Ziad Yazbik
George Sarkis
Viviane Brakhya

Riim-Sannine: Maroun Chabenne (representing the Riim water company which owns the site)

3.2.5 Output 2.5 – Work with the site support group and local council to form a management committee for the management of the site.

Based on the year 2005-2006 IBAs assessments and field research, five IBAs were officially recognized by BirdLife International, namely: Ebel es-Saqi, Qaraaoun Lake, Aanjar/Kfar Zabad wetlands, Sannine and Tannourine. Contacts were made with their respective municipalities, and individuals from the site communities were identified, organized and participated in the IBA Community Workshop, conducted in February 2007 (see 3.2.4 above).

The SPNL team initiated the processes of establishing site management committees with the IBAs municipalities. Three committees are in place and operating; namely at: Tannourine, Ebel es-Saqi and Kfar Zabad. The names of the members of these committees are given here.:

Aanjar-K'far Zabad: Kasim Shoukir - Mayor / Head of Municipal Council
Salem Alkhatib
Nabil Nabhan
Namie Saseen
Sami Abou Rjayli
Mohamad Majeed
Ibrahim Frayha
Assad Serhal

Ebel is-Saqi: Chafic al Bikaai
Akram Ghobril
Sami al Ghbar
Adib al Jadaa
Riad Abu Samra
Sami Hassan Ghbar
Atef Mounzer and Khaled el Rassi

Tannourine: Tannourine is already an established Nature Reserve with a management committee already in place. The names of the committee members are given here.

Nehmeh Harb (President)
Joseph Issa (Vice President)
Pierre Bassil (treasurer)
Nabil Nemer (Secretary)
Melhem Melhem
Zeina Tamim
Matnious Melhem
Michel Khouzami
Nasri Kawar
Georges Chedid
Antoine Khoury

Riim-Sannine The Riim-Sannine IBA is on private land and so it is under the direct supervision of the land owner. Contacts are on going to explore the possibilities of declaring the site under the Hima procedure for protection rather than as a Nature Reserve (see below for an explanation of the Hima Concept.), and follow up for IBA monitoring will have to be directly with the land owner and his staff, rather than with the community since it is private land.

Qaraaoun Lake. The Lake is surrounded by 7 municipalities. Two municipalities have so far shown interest in establishing SSGs and committees (Aitanit and Qaraon), but establishing Himas where there is such a huge number of municipalities around one IBA is not easy in the Lebanese experience. Communities would rather direct their efforts and resources to their own communal lands, whereas the lake does not belong to any single one municipality of the seven

Also the war of last summer did not help, for the lake area was directly hit, and lives were lost. Also, the area and communities encompass different political and religious groups. Therefore, work for establishing committees will be handled without any rush, in order to ensure sustainability.

The names of the main contact people for the two villages currently showing an interest are the same as those given for the Site Support Group in last year's report, namely:-

1- Qaraon

Rabi'ah Ferzly; Head of Environmental Committee at the Municipality

2- Aitanit

George Rassy; Vice President Aitanit Municipality

The Hima Concept The Hima is a traditional protected area system involving the sustainable use of natural resources by and for the local communities surrounding the Hima. Thus, indirectly benefiting the conservation of biodiversity as well as the natural and cultural heritage of the area.

Governance of Himas was initiated and handled solely by tribal chiefs in Arabia, and was later handed over to religious leaders, to ensure benefits to the underprivileged people in communities and within tribes. In countries of the Near East, such as Lebanon this was later transferred to municipalities and other democratically elected bodies. This transfer ensured equity and the fair use of resources whilst sustaining the natural resources of the Hima.

This community-based approach has been accepted by the Ministry of Environment, and taken into consideration as an option for protecting important biodiversity sites. Thus, raising the adoption of the concept from regional at the municipality level to the national policy level.

Further, SPNL has raised the issue at several regional BirdLife meetings, where by a draft regional strategy has been elaborated.

Currently, SPNL in partnership with BirdLife International, IUCN, SDC and the Ministry of Environment are organizing a regional workshop on traditional approaches for biodiversity conservation.

Field assessments of proposed sites for IBA declaration funded by MAVVA has been the cornerstone for these developments for the conservation of important biodiversity sites.

3.2.6 Output 2.6 – With each site support group design and implement monitoring schemes to identify new threats and determine the success of conservation measures

The workshop described in section 3.2.4, above, covered the issue of monitoring on the second day, with a whole session allocated to IBA monitoring. The morning session clarified the process of field assessment based on the IBA assessment form adopted by BirdLife International (see Appendix 4 for BirdLife International's guidelines on monitoring, which accompany the form). This assessment sheet includes in addition to the general description of the site, the reason for its declaration as an IBA, and the identification of main threats on the site. The monitoring session included a Powerpoint presentation clarifying the process of monitoring, selection of indicators, and the reason for monitoring the sites. This was followed by an exercise where the delegates filled in BirdLife International's IBA Monitoring Form. An Arabic translation of the form was used (see Appendices 5 & 6 for English and Arabic versions of the form). The basic suite of monitoring tools using the BirdLife protocols, needs to be supplemented at a site-specific level. As has previously been discussed the existence and capacity of Site Support Groups/ Management Committees is not uniform across the five sites, (e.g. Tannourine Nature Reserve compared with Lake Qaraaoun). While A Rocha Lebanon and SPNL are committed to the formation of Management Committees at each site, because of the current realities of Lebanon, this will be a slow process at certain sites. In the meantime both organisations are committed to the monitoring process at the sites and so will support the current Site Support Groups and the private landowner, in monitoring the site specific components as outlined below

Site Specific Monitoring Issues

BirdLife International's IBA monitoring scheme is designed to fit all sites and as such forms the basis of the monitoring programme for each of the sites following locally appropriate amendments. The most important of these are outlined here.

1) Tannourine Nature Reserve (*A Rocha Lebanon to support*) – following the recently published data in the literature showing the importance of the site for breeding Syrian Serins (*Serinus syriacus*), monitoring here must include surveys during the breeding season for this species. This is particularly important following the absence of any breeding pairs recorded during the fieldwork in 2005. The Tannourine Nature Reserve committee and staff have been made aware of this issue and A Rocha Lebanon is providing on-going training in bird monitoring for the staff.

2) Aanjar/ K'far Zabad (*SPNL to support*) – currently the importance of the site rests on the presence of breeding Syrian Serins (found during the fieldwork in 2005), so the Site Support Group will monitor breeding numbers on the portions of the site where the species is concentrated. Habitat restoration as part of the on-going Hima project may further increase the importance of the site for other species and bird monitoring will reveal this as part of the SPNL-led Hima initiative.

3) Lake Qaraaoun (*A Rocha Lebanon to support*) – During the monitoring workshop delegates highlighted the significance of pollution and habitat degradation around the lake, as well as the ubiquitous hunting. The presence of dead and dying birds should be monitored as a simple indicator of levels of pollution. Other indicators, such as the sight of visible pollution (e.g. brown foam in the lake and in the River Litani where it enters the lake) should also be recorded when seen.

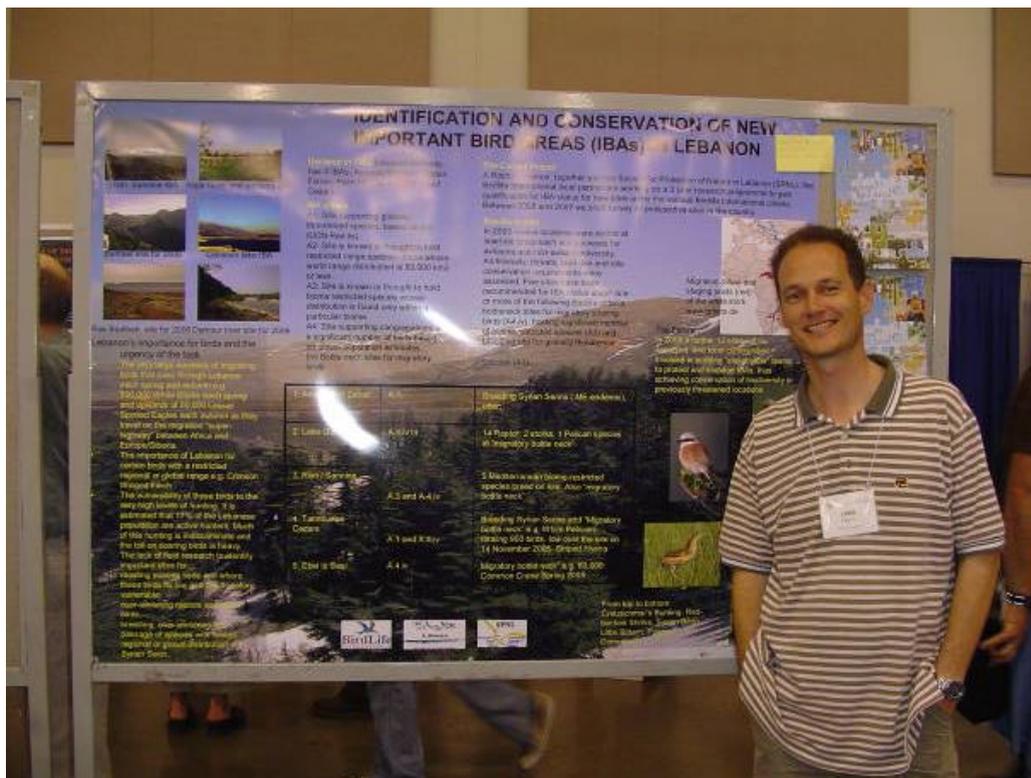
4) Ebel is-Saqi (*SPNL to support*)

5) Riim-Sannine (*A Rocha Lebanon to support*).

4 Publicising the project to the Wider Scientific Community

As part of the efforts to publicise the work of the project in the wider scientific community Chris Naylor presented a poster entitled “Identification and conservation of new Important Bird Areas (IBAs) in Lebanon” (see Appendix 7 for an electronic version of the poster) at the Society for Conservation Biology Annual Conference, San Jose, U.S.A. from the 24th to the 28th of June 2006. The poster outlined; the importance of Lebanon to international bird conservation efforts, a brief history of IBA research in Lebanon, the Birdlife criteria for IBA designation, the results of the 2005 field work and future plans. As well as defending the poster in main session and at the “Asia Area Forum” Chris, together with A Rocha Colleagues from Canada and the U.S. manned the A Rocha booth for the 4 days of the conference, being available to delegates to discuss the project in detail.

Additionally, while in the United States Chris was invited to present the work at the National Center for Ecological Analysis and Synthesis, University of California, Santa Barbara.



5 Conclusion

In the year between March 2006 and February 2007, ten new sites in various parts of Lebanon were surveyed for birds, in all the seasons of the year. In addition, visits were made to one of the sites which had been surveyed during the first year of the project. Of the 11 sites surveyed, recommendations were made, to BirdLife International, that 2 be designated as Important Bird Areas. These sites are still being considered by BirdLife.

The work was carried out jointly by the Society for the Protection of Nature in Lebanon, Lebanon's BirdLife International partner organisation, and A Rocha Lebanon, and environmental NGO. This was the second year of a three year project funded by the MAVA board.

4 References

Porter, RF, Christiansen, S & Schiermacker-Hansen, P. (1996 (Published in Arabic, 2006)). *Field Guide to the Birds of the Middle East*. London: T&AD Poyser.