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A ROCHA

LEBANON



Nature conservation

Land restoration

Mekse. Watering, mulching, but also planting, developing the irrigation system, building a path and a tree nursery, all the gardening in pictures on the link below.



July 2023 in Mekse

Qabb Elias. Between 2015 and 2018, A Rocha Lebanon restored a hill in Qabb Elias and planted a garden. However, after our departure, the garden remained closed to the public. Guillaume de Vaultx made some inquiries in the surroundings in order to entrust the neighbors with the management of the garden.

Scientific work

We continued our work on wild bees and pollinating

insects, regularly catching new species on the site of Mekse in order to create a collection (presentation, p. 27-30).

[Learn More](#)

Education

Training

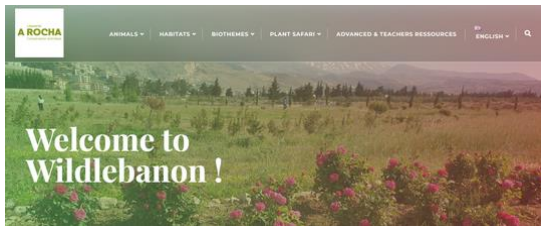
On July 22, Abbas al-Uqla, his nephew Ali, Guillaume de Vaulx and his son Racine participated in the workshop “Building with earth” at Westwood, Zahleh.

On July 29, in collaboration with Carub organization (Elsa and Nadim Zakhia), we organized for our team of local volunteers a trip by the sea in Aamchit and a workshop on weaving with palm. Ali al-Uqla and his niece Qamar followed an intensive course with Youssef Najem who is the last person to master the craft of making hats with palm (presentation, p.31-40).



Church Engagement

On July 13th, Guillaume de Vault met with Rachel Luce from Alliance (network of churches in the Middle East) to discuss cooperation in the region and support for local initiatives in alternative agriculture.



On July 21st, Rev. Nabil Shehadi, Damien Kasper and Guillaume de Vault met with Kirsten Auken and Antoine Abdelmissih from the Dan Mission at their office in Beirut to discuss environmental action and creation care in Lebanon.



July in Mekse – July 2023

Water

The main task during this summer is to water cuttings and seedlings planted last winter, by developing the drop irrigation system connected to the pump and the tranches that bring the water from the spring to the rows of young poplars.







In summer time, life finds refuge in trenches protected from sun rays and wind.



Red Soil

The slope of Mount Lebanon in West Bekaa is characterized by its red soil, indicating a high rate of iron, and giving the warmth of its color to the landscape.









Filamentous algae (Spirogyra)

Summer temperatures multiply filamentous algae in ponds. These water plants can be used as a mulch to protect herbs and seedlings from drought and to nourish the soil by the same time.









Regreening of the land

The main principle of permaculture landscaping is to begin from a small plot and progress gradually, giving time to the soil around to recover.

In Mekse, we progress downwards, starting from the most damaged and dry area.





Labor or Capital?

For a same task, one can use men or a machine. For instance, for mowing a lawn, deeping a pond, etc., the machine seems more efficient. But, being far more expensive, its price is equivalent to many working hour. We obtain the same result with manual work, and we gain the presence of our human fellows. The choice is finally between conviviality and technology.

\$1,000 = 1 excavator for 3 days

or

30 workers for 3 days



We substituted the
Bresilian scythe to
the brushcutter
that was gas
guzzling, always
breaking down and
very noisy.

No excavator was able to clean the reservoir pond without destroying its edges. Mufid did it.



Youth

Our young fellows (our sons and nephews) are for us like the sparrows in the spring.

Mainly playing, sometimes helping, eager to learn, always filling the silence with their laugh and their peep.





A new model of
tree nursery

Transfert of the kois from the reservoir pond (where they daily received electric shocks) to the habitat pond.



Entomology

Megachile solitary wildbees living in aggregation made their nests in an old strain. Numerous leucospis wasp come around to parasite their nests.



Megachile – this genus of leafcutter bees collects the pollen beneath their abdomen



Leucospis – this genus of wasps parasite the megachile's nests. They use their enlarged femur on the hind leg to perforate the nests.



Pollinators

Some of the pollinators found on site:

1° A big carpenter bee

Xylocopa violacea

This solitary bee, even bigger than
A bumble bee, nests in dead wood.

2° A big wasp

Isodontia splendidula

This solitary wasp feeds its larva by paralyzing
the larva of another insect, but themselves eat only
pollen. They are usually found foraging on thistle.

3° A moth

Sesiidae

This moth mimics both the appearance
and the behavior of a wasp.

Vocational Training

Summertime is surprisingly a time for learning, a time for learning what is not taught anymore in schools: handcraft and work with natural material.

Mud is one of the most common and affordable material and weaving an essential technic for many crafts.

Workshop **Building with Earth** – Westwood,
Zahle

After having built rammed-earth beehives, we
aim to develop more complex building
structures...





Workshop **All can be weaved** – Abdallah Zakhia
Forest, Aamchit

We organized a travel to the coast. Departure 6am, the youths were ready from 4am for their first time by the sea.





The place is Abdallah Zakhia Garden in Aamchit harbor. This unique forest in Lebanon was conquered on the rocks by the author of the Lebanese law on protected area. Today, it is managed by Carob organization founded by his children.

For more on this garden, read [our article](#) (in French)



While the gardeners discover the secrets of the garden, youths learn to weave lavender







Youssef Najm is the last craftman who masters the art of weaving palm to make hats.



Recreation time



Back home, exercises are mandatory for not forgetting the gesture.



Progress

Thank to Google Earth update of its satellite view, one can be aware of the progress between the beginning of the project in 2017 and 2023.

Land restoration is possible.



Late Summer 2017



Ain Baidar

May 2023



See you next month