

LIFE Third Countries project number:
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THE SUSTAINABLE HUNTING PROJECT

“Building Capacity for Sustainable
Hunting of Migratory Birds in
Mediterranean Third Countries”



SUMMARY

The Sustainable Hunting project worked in collaboration with hunters, Governments and non-governmental conservation organisations to tackle the issue of unsustainable hunting of migratory birds in the countries of North Africa and the Middle East.

The Project successfully achieved its primary objectives and produced a number of key outputs, including:

- **Eight national reports** on migratory bird hunting from the eight project countries, which provided the first up-to-date information on hunting in many counties;
- **Seven regional synthesis reports** on key topics relevant to the conservation of migratory birds and the management of hunting;
- Regional **“Guidelines for moving Towards Sustainable Hunting of Migratory Birds in MTC countries”** which will serve as a model document for hunting management in the region over the coming years;
- **“Code of Practice for Responsible Hunting of Migratory Birds in MTC Countries”** which provides a quick summary of best practice for hunters.
- **Awareness raising** materials on globally threatened birds and the threat of hunting
- School **education programme** to educate the next generation of potential hunters

Through these achievements this project has made the migrations of millions of birds a safer journey, and enhanced the prospects of survival for some of the world’s threatened birds.

ABOUT THE PROJECT

The Sustainable Hunting Project (2004-2007) was established to tackle the complex underlying issues leading to unsustainable and often indiscriminate hunting of migratory birds. The project goal was *“to strengthen the management of bird hunting in selected North African and Middle Eastern countries of the Mediterranean region to reduce excessive, indiscriminate and illegal hunting of migratory birds, promote more sustainable hunting practices and enhance the compliance of international and regional agreements on the conservation of migratory birds”*.

The Project worked through a series of regional initiatives and model collaborative projects involving government, hunting and conservation groups. Tunisia and Lebanon were the focal countries in North-Africa and in the Middle East respectively for demonstrating the range of activities aimed at achieving sustainable hunting which could be replicated in the other project countries. Even though the scale of impact is different between both countries, hunting of migrants is of socio-economic importance to both of them and also raises related management and conservation issues (e.g. illegal or unregulated hunting). Both countries also have “bottlenecks” and wintering sites of crucial conservation importance for migratory birds, as well as good stakeholder collaboration on hunting issues.



THE ISSUE

Many migratory birds which breed in Europe and central and western Asia follow traditional routes south across, or around, the Mediterranean during their autumn migration in order to reach their wintering grounds, and use similar routes in reverse on their return journeys in the spring (see map). Many migrants (especially waterbirds) stop and over-winter along the North African coast; but many other species continue further south to winter in sub-Saharan Africa. These migrations are vital to the survival of these species, and the migration flyways passing through this region are arguably the most important in the world.

Some species, especially waterbirds, use a chain of predictable stopover sites at wetlands and coastal sites scattered along their migration routes.

Alternatively, other species of birds which migrate by a system of gaining height in columns of rising hot air followed by a long glides (such as storks, pelicans and many birds of prey) choose narrow sea crossings (“bottleneck sites”) at the Straits of Gibraltar and Messina or follow the eastern Mediterranean coast.

Finally, many songbirds and some birds of prey migrate on broad fronts and fly straight across the Mediterranean, sometimes using islands for stopovers.

These migration strategies mean that most of these species of migratory bird pass through the Eastern and Southern Mediterranean in large numbers at predictable times of year (and often at predictable sites), and are therefore especially vulnerable to threats such as hunting within these confined geographic areas.

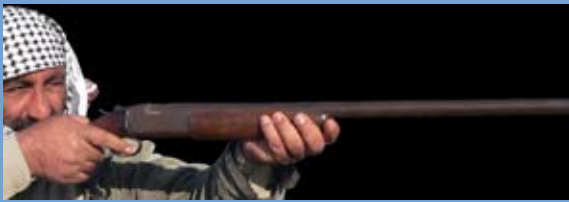
Map of flyway and key countries



The project worked regionally with partners across the entire southern and eastern Mediterranean region (except Libya), with organisations in Tunisia and Lebanon carrying out extensive national activities. Threats in this region have an enormous impact on the successful migration of many species of birds, and the project has helped tackle the threat from hunting in these key countries along the migration flyways.

THE NEED FOR ACTION

Despite clear differences between countries with regard to numbers of hunters per country and hunting practice, migratory bird hunting is an important socio-economic activity across the region, involving hundreds of thousands of people, particularly in rural areas. Methods include shooting, trapping, use of nets, snares, lime sticks (sticks covered in adhesive), traps and decoys, falconry and use of poisons. Subsistence hunting occurs only at very low levels. However, 'sport hunting' has become widespread and the number of migratory birds hunted overall is thought to be increasing as a result of people's increased leisure time and disposable incomes; easier access to guns, cheaper ammunition and 4-wheel drive vehicles to gain access to remote areas. Diminishing populations of some native traditional "game" species may also be leading to increases in numbers of hunters interested in migratory bird species.



Hunters use a variety of hunting techniques, but shooting is the most widespread.

Photo: A.F.Omar

Few countries in the region have accurate information on hunters or numbers of hunters employing different hunting methods. Those countries which record different hunting methods do so according to membership of hunting organizations or issue of hunting permits, not actual monitoring of activity (though some countries also make estimates of numbers of illegal hunters). The distinction between legal and illegal hunters is not always clear. National estimates of numbers of hunters include: up to 1,000 (weapons) in Palestine; 11,400 registered hunters in Tunisia (no figure for illegal hunters); over 40,000 in Morocco; 92,000 in Algeria; up to 20,000 registered hunters in Lebanon; 500,000 (300,000 registered) hunters in Syria; and at least 10,000 individuals in Egypt.

Many foreign hunters travel to Syria from the Gulf and Lebanon, for falconry and, increasingly, to hunt with guns. In Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia, falconry on the protected Houbara Bustard is only practiced by foreign nationals from the Gulf States. In addition, Spanish hunters shoot partridges in Morocco and tourist bird-hunters from Italy, France and Malta shoot thrushes in Tunisia.

A significant feature of falconry and sport hunting throughout the region is that these activities are widely practised by nationals of other countries (particularly the Gulf States) visiting the countries of the southern and eastern Mediterranean for this purpose.



Marbled teal (*Marmaronetta angustirostris*) are globally threatened, yet are still illegally hunted in the region.

Photo: A.F.Omar

In Egypt most foreign hunters are Europeans visiting to shoot waterbirds, with smaller numbers from the Gulf and Lebanon (total of 990 foreign tourist hunters registered in 2000). Clearly, sport hunting is a significant issue in the region.

Quantitative information on hunting methods was extremely limited before the project, and it still remains difficult to ascertain the true scale of illegal hunting. However, the use of guns (shotguns and air guns) appears to predominate in most countries of the region, apart from localized parts of Egypt where the use of traditional nets and lime sticks is widespread. Lead shot is the dominant type of shot and is used on a large scale which presents a widespread environmental hazard in addition to the direct impact of hunting.

Since countries on these migratory flyways hold a shared responsibility for conserving migratory birds, and since unsustainable hunting is wide-spread in countries of the southern and eastern Mediterranean and has serious negative impacts on birds and biodiversity, this project focused on pushing for moving toward regionally and nationally coordinated, internationally accepted and science-based sustainable hunting of migratory birds.

KEY ACTIVITIES

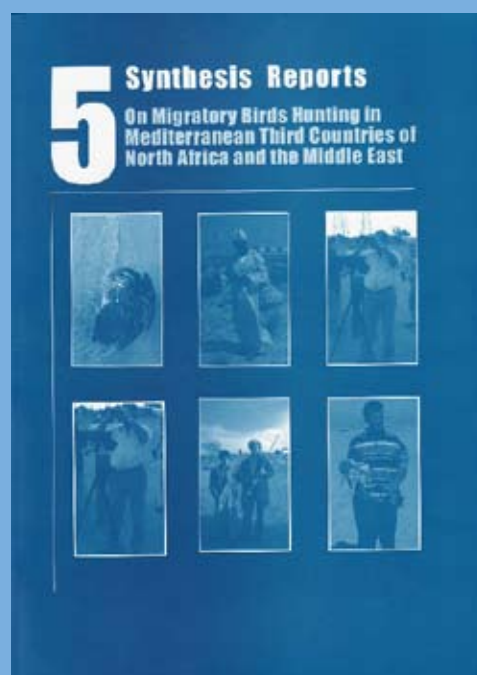
The project carried out a number of coordinated activities to tackle the issue of hunting:

1. A series of reviews of the current status of hunting of migratory birds in the region to inform further project activities;
2. Development of a comprehensive set of guidelines to act as a “model” for a more responsible approach to the hunting of migratory birds;
3. Promoting responsible hunting behaviour among hunters;
4. Improving general public awareness on migratory birds and the threat posed by hunting, and especially focusing on school age children to educate the next generation of potential hunters;
5. Reviews of the hunting legislation and enforcement in Lebanon and Tunisia;
6. Building of effective partnerships between hunters, Governments and conservation organisations to ensure continued future collaboration after the life of the project;
7. Strengthening of national compliance with international agreements that are relevant to the conservation of migratory birds.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS


The Project successfully achieved its primary objectives and produced a number of key outputs, including:

- **eight national reports** on migratory bird hunting from the eight project countries, which provided the first up-to-date information on hunting in many counties;
- **seven regional synthesis reports** on key topics relevant to the conservation of migratory birds and the management of hunting;



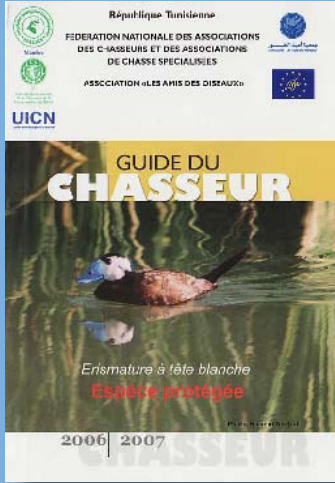
The project prepared a series of regional synthesis reports in both English and Arabic to provide up-to-date information on issues related to migratory birds and hunting in the region. This is the first time that such information has been available.

- regional **“Guidelines for moving Towards Sustainable Hunting of Migratory Birds in MTC countries”** which will serve as a model document for hunting management in the region over the coming years, and was produced in both English and Arabic to reach the key decision makers;



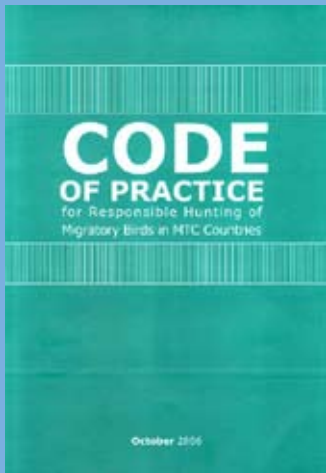
The Regional Guidelines were developed through a consultative process at national, sub-regional and regional levels, culminating in a regional workshop and the production of the final guidelines. These guidelines will act as a reference document for decision makers across the region.

- inclusion of the Code of Practice into an annual hunters’ guide that is widely distributed to all licensed hunters in Tunisia;



The Association “Les Amis des Oiseaux” in Tunisia worked in collaboration with the national federation of hunters to include the Code of Practice developed by this project into an annual guide issued to all registered hunters in Tunisia.

- “Code of Practice for Responsible Hunting of Migratory Birds in MTC Countries”** which provides a quick summary of best practice for hunters, in English, Arabic or French;



The Code of Practice was developed in parallel with the Guidelines, and is intended to act as a practical guide to hunters across the region.

- an innovative, interactive, education programme on migratory birds and conservation for school children in Lebanon, to educate the next generation of potential hunters. The teachers materials were prepared in both English and Arabic to ensure the widest audience;
- Awareness raising materials on globally threatened birds and the threat posed by unsustainable levels of hunting were produced in both Lebanon and Tunisia.

The achievements of this project provide a strong platform at both the regional and national levels (in Lebanon and Tunisia) for continuing to strengthen the management of bird hunting in the region, and to promote more sustainable hunting practices. Ultimately this leads to a safer migration, and a better future, for those birds using these routes.

KEY DOCUMENTS PRODUCED

- National report on migratory bird hunting in the following countries:
 - Algeria (2005)
 - Egypt (2005)
 - Jordan (2005)
 - Lebanon (2005)
 - Morocco (2005)
 - Palestine (2005)
 - Syria (2005)
 - Tunisia (2005)
- Synthesis report 1: Bird hunting practices in the Mediterranean countries of North Africa and the Middle East (2006)
- Synthesis report 2: Bird hunting policy and legislation in the Mediterranean countries of North Africa and the Middle East (2006)
- Synthesis report 3: Bird hunting management in the Mediterranean countries of North Africa and the Middle East (2006)
- Synthesis report 4: Religious, cultural and socio-economic importance of migratory bird hunting in the Mediterranean countries of North Africa and the Middle East (2006)
- Synthesis report 5: Alternative economic models to shooting of migratory birds in the Mediterranean countries of North Africa and the Middle East (2006)
- Guidelines for moving towards sustainable hunting of migratory birds in MTC countries (2006)
- Code of Practice for responsible hunting of migratory birds in MTC countries (2006)

The project team at the Society for the Protection of Nature in Lebanon developed and produced a comprehensive education programme for school children, which included full interactive resources for teachers.



Children participating in the school education programme developed by SPNL in Lebanon.

- Synthesis report on international conventions and agreements relevant to the conservation of migratory birds and management of bird hunting in Mediterranean third countries (2007)
- Synthesis report on the use of lead shot for bird hunting in wetlands in Mediterranean third countries (2007)
- Regional Action Plan for moving towards responsible hunting and the conservation of migratory birds in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean Region 2008-2013 (2007)

Awareness raising posters were produced in both Lebanon and Tunisia





Participants from 18 countries at a project workshop in Jordan 2007

Project Partnership



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European Commission LIFE Third Countries
<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life>

For further information and to download project documents please visit:
http://www.birdlife.org/action/change/sustainable_hunting/