



Nature Iraq Activity Report 2016

Background and Introduction

Nature Iraq is an Iraqi non-governmental organization registered in Iraq, accredited to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and Iraq's first and only Affiliate to Birdlife International, and the only Middle Eastern member of the Waterkeeper Alliance.

Nature Iraq was created to protect, restore, and preserve Iraq's natural environment and the rich cultural heritage that it nourishes. Our mission includes fulfillment of the following goals:

- Improve the capacity of Iraq's institutions to protect its environment, including local and national governmental and non-governmental bodies, along with universities, colleges, and scientific institutes.
- Develop a scientific database of environmental conditions and trends within Iraq and Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) through environmental monitoring and research programs focusing on water resources, ecology, and biodiversity.
- Encourage environmental awareness and stewardship of Iraq's environment by promoting community-based environmental centers and clubs, developing environmental education programs in Iraq, and maintaining global awareness of Iraq's environment.

- Promote the sustainable use of Iraq's environment and resources, respect and balance the traditional use of the environment by indigenous inhabitants, preserve wildlife and biodiversity, and address the economic needs of both local inhabitants and the nation.

Nature Iraq's guiding principles are reflected in the work we do: * We foster dialogue and decision-making through consensus; * We maintain a separation from political, ethnic and religious factions; * We respect cultural diversity and traditional knowledge; * We follow international guidelines and conventions for environmental restoration; * We focus on local capacity building of existing and emerging Iraqi institutions; * We collect and use the best scientific information available; and * We encourage local stewardship and work to engage indigenous inhabitants in planning projects and decision-making.

Over the course of 2016, Nature Iraq implemented a wide variety of projects, and an even wider range of events and activities not directly associated with projects. Our ongoing work revolves around three central issue areas:

- **Water Resources:** We are fighting for the rights of Iraqis to access clean, plentiful sources of water, and monitoring water quality and quantity to have objective standards with which to shape the conversation.
- **Biodiversity:** We are helping to address the gaps in knowledge caused by years of nonexistent scientific research on the biodiversity of Iraq, and train new leaders to catalog and care for the flora and fauna of the country.
- **Sustainable Development:** We are modeling ways which Iraq can guarantee a prosperous, stable future for all its citizens.

Projects

Rehabilitating the Transboundary Habitat of the Persian Leopard through the Creation of a Peace Park

With a grant support from the Prince Bernhard Nature Fund (PBNF), the first phase of this multi-stage project is dedicated to habitat mapping of the Persian Leopard *Panthera pardus saxicolor* and its prey species (Wild Goat *Capra aegagrus* and Wild Boar *sus scrofa*).

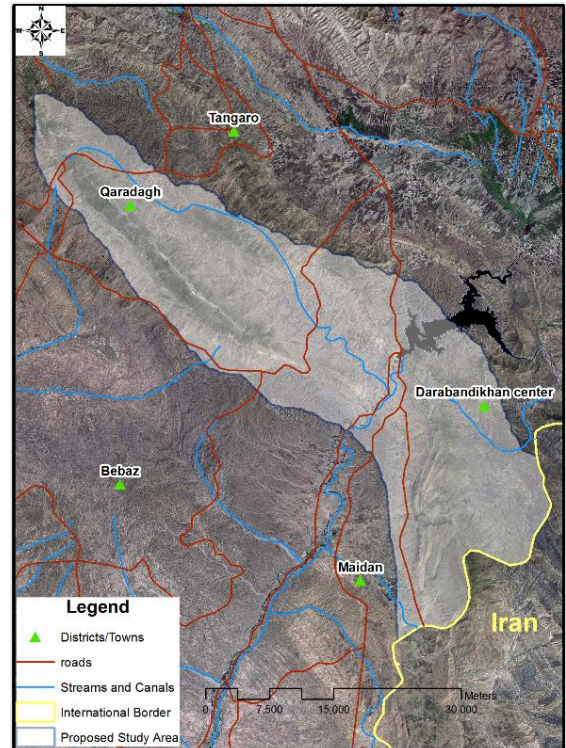
Over the past 30 years, Iraq has seen little to no systematic mammal research. Moreover, the turmoil and wars that Iraq has faced over the past years have increased and intensified the pressure under which many species are striving to survive.

The project's study site is one of the areas identified by the KBA Program (See below), located in the Zagros Mountains Forrest Steppe Ecoregion (PA0446), a critical/endangered ecoregion supporting oak-dominant forests and pistachio forests, with a diversified steppe flora and rich wildlife. There currently is no specific legislation on Protected Areas (Pas) in Iraq.

The existence of the Persian Leopard *Panthera pardus saxicolor* and its main prey species – the Wild Goat *Capra aegagrus* and the Wild Boar *Sus scrofa* (Raza *et al.*, 2012; Hana A. Raza, 2013; Avgan *et al.*, 2015)– has been confirmed in the target area located in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) adjacent to Iran. However, the analysis necessary to map their range and habitat precisely is missing. The Persian Leopard, a subspecies ranked as globally “Endangered” on the IUCN Red List, is found in the mountainous regions of Iraq but is poorly studied despite the current threats of hunting, habitat destruction, and landmines. Little is known about the conservation status of leopards.

In this context, the first stage of this conservation endeavour is to map the status, range and habitat of the Persian Leopard and its prey species, in collaboration between the Kurdistan Botanical Foundation (KBF) and the Persian Wildlife Heritage Foundation (PWHF), a counterpart Iranian organization.

The next stage of the project, once status, range and habitat areas have been mapped, will thus be to begin the process of developing a comprehensive management plan for the study site and to establish the proposed habitat as a protected area through the engagement of stakeholders, government consultation, and awareness-raising.



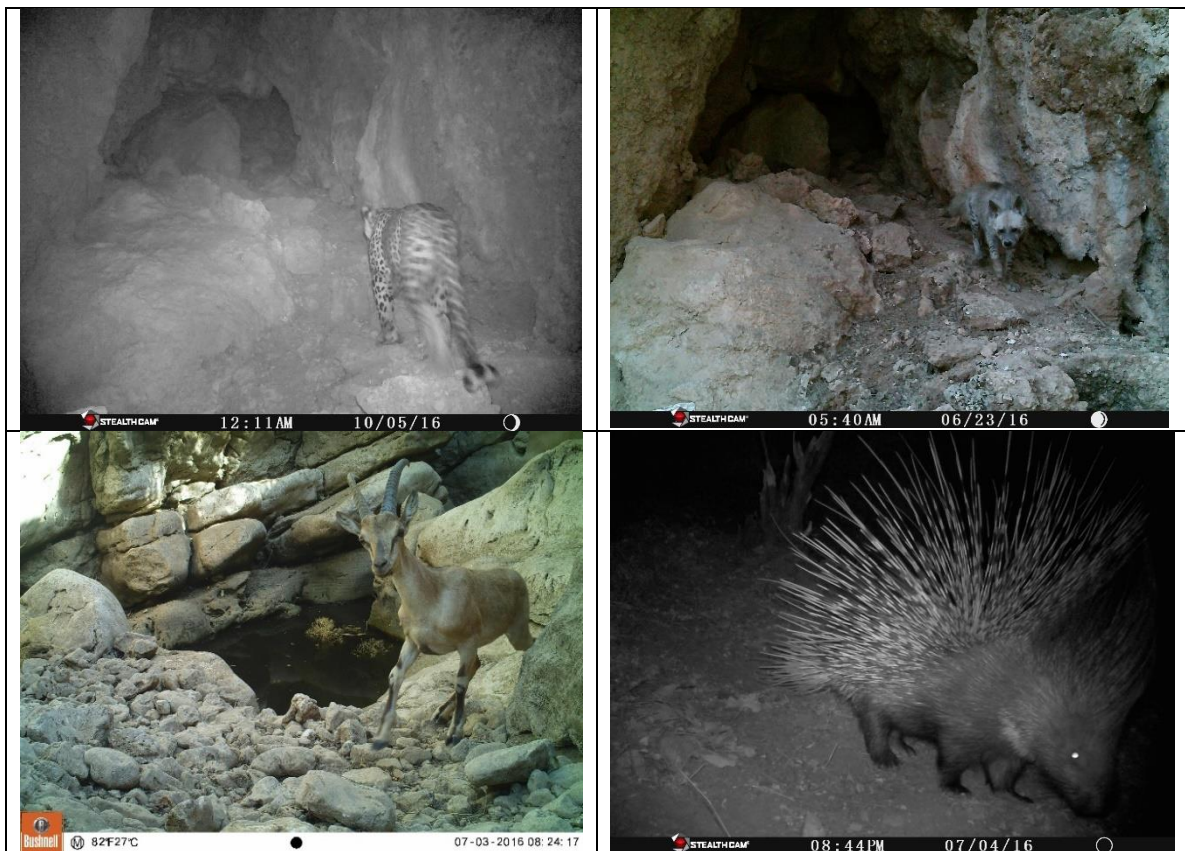
The overarching goal of the first stage of this project is to compile and analyse actual information on the status of the Persian Leopard *Panthera pardus saxicolor* and its prey in the target area, determine their range and habitat within the study area where anecdotal information have been gathered through local reports and directly through camera trap photos and videos of the leopard and its preys, and set the basis for further conservation efforts (next stages). The first phase of the project began in September 2016, which includes presence-absence surveys with camera trapping and local interviews, as well as awareness-raising through the interview surveys, particularly to reveal human-leopard interactions during the camera trapping survey, and media interventions. The gathered information will be used to develop a dataset to understand the current interaction between humans, and human activities, and leopards in the area. Media and outreach is playing a major role in promoting the protection of the leopard. The project will be presented to the public through national and regional media interventions highlighting the needs for biodiversity protection and conservation. The objectives of this project's first stage thus are:

- Map and identify the range and status of the Persian Leopard *Panthera pardus saxicolor* and its prey (Wild Goat *Capra aegagrus* and Wild Boar *Sus scrofa*) in the KRI through:
 - a. Desktop study of the data collected,
 - b. Satellite image analysis,
 - c. Focused fieldwork through camera traps, tracks and interview survey;
- Identify which parts of this range can be protected/are in need of protection;
- Raise public awareness of the leopard and the project through media interventions and participation in PAC meetings;
- Initiate advocacy work through PAC meetings;
- Increase our understanding of the conservation status of the Persian Leopard *Panthera pardus saxicolor* in Iraq.

Activities since the start of the pre-project in May 2016:

1. Camera Trap survey: Our team began camera trapping survey in Darbandikhan and Qara Dagh area for a period of six months. We set camera traps in around 15

stations and the result of the camera traps were significant, obtaining a photo trap of the Persian Leopard in Darbandikhan Area for the first time, as well as first time photos of the Striped Hyena *Hyaena hyaena* (NT) and Grey Wolf *Canis lupus* (LC). Furthermore, we were able to obtain photos of some other significant animals in the study area such as significant numbers of the Leopard prey species (Wild Goat *Capra aegagrus* (VU) and Wild Boar *Sus scrofa* (LC)), Indian Crested Porcupine *Hystrix indica* (LC), the Asiatic Wildcat *Felis silvestris ornate* (LC), Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes* (LC), Golden Jackal *Canis aureus* (LC), Beech Marten *Martes foina* (LC), Persian Squirrel *Sciurus anomalis* (LC), and Persian Jird *Meriones persicus* (LC).





2. During our surveys we were able to make the first direct observation of a Persian Leopard in Darbandikhan Area. In addition, our team was able to find a new bird record Scrub Warbler *Scotocerca inquieta* for Iraq.



3. The Persian Wildlife Heritage Foundation (PWHF) visited Kurdistan in order to supervise the project field work, participate in the project workshop held in Sulaimani, and discuss different issues related to the project. One of the main points discussed during their visit was their suggestion of extending our study site into Hawraman area due to its proximity to the Iranian border and being adjacent to Shaho Kohsalan Protected Area in Iran.



4. In December 22, 2016, the first workshop was held to introduce the project and to hear suggestions and recommendations from the different environmental entities related to the project.



Speech of KRG minister for environment



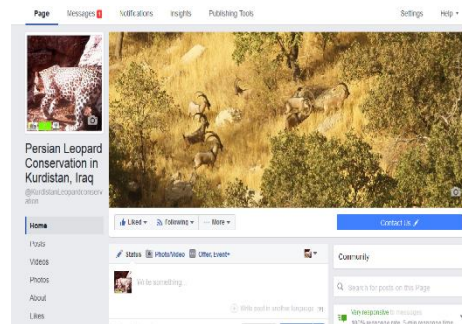
Speech of Sulaimani Governor



Figure 1: First Workshop on the Peace Park Creation for the Persian Leopard and its prey species in Sulaimani, December 22, 2016

5. Media interventions: since the beginning of the project we have participated in two short documentaries covering our project for the Associated Press and ENSIA Institute on the Environment. Our workshop was covered by local media (KurdSAT TV, NRT, and Rudaw).

6. Our project Facebook page (Persian Leopard Conservation in Kurdistan, Iraq) has reached 1866 members since it was created in late June of 2016.



7. Cooperation project with AUIS through giving talks and presentations to their students and filming the project site with a drone.



Iraq WaterKeeper Environmental Law And Advocacy Project (EU Project)

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

First specific objective of increasing capacity, is so often mentioned in proposals for funding, in reports on Iraq, in UN plans and frameworks, that the real need is sometimes lost. Too often “capacity building” consists of a lecture of abstract principles and international norms with little by way of practical instruction. Civil society organizations need hands-on capacity building in running successful advocacy and lobbying campaigns with their local and regional government agencies and in generating public interest and participation. There is widespread interest and passion to affect positive change but local organizations lack the expertise to make significant impact. In our project, local CSOs will learn a range of advocacy tools, like determining achievable systemic changes and outlining action steps as well as more basic items like how to utilize print and social media to further a cause, how to network with other organizations to build momentum and support, and how to work within the societal, religious, and financial constraints of a fledging organization in a place like Iraq.

Second specific objective is to increase cooperative CSO-Government partnerships for problem solving and planning. Relationship building between government and non-government actors in any state is difficult; relationship building in a post-conflict country like Iraq, with its history of dictatorship and mistrust, is an even greater challenge. Added to the history of the country is the culture: communication in Arab countries is less straightforward than in the West, which means that relationship building takes longer and

is more complicated. In what is known as a “high context communication style”, communication in Iraq is indirect and more formal. Whatever inroads can be made between the CSO community and the government must work within these confines.

In addition to raising CSO capacity in running successful advocacy campaigns and increasing cooperative CSO-Government partnerships.

Third specific objective will focus on increasing transparency by hosting joint meetings with municipal and regional government leaders, CSO directors, and community stakeholders to explore mechanisms for greater public involvement in the promulgation of legislation and regulations, including allowing public comment on draft laws. Albeit on a local level, such meetings can help enable public participation in decision-making processes and, as a result, improve transparency and make policies better fitted to the facts on the ground and needs of the people.

Fourth and last specific objective is to increase the capacity of government workers who are responsible for environmental enforcement, and bolster CSO involvement in the implementation of environmental and natural resource laws and regulations. This objective, therefore, has two interwoven components: enhancing the capabilities of governmental workers tasked with enforcement to understand and respond to illegal behavior; and working to create opportunities for cooperation in enforcement between CSOs and the government. The result will be greater technical skills for government workers, better environmental protection and adherence to the rule of law, and increased communication and collaboration between a range of actors, including CSOs, government, and private businesses.

The main activities of this project thus were:

1- Capacity Building for NGOs.



2- Website development.

Iraq Waterkeeper Environmental Law And Advocacy Project (EU Project)

Background Information

Nature Iraq, in partnership with the Water Right Foundation, has a new initiative under its Waterkeeper Iraq program. Over the next few years, the Iraq Waterkeeper Environmental Law and Advocacy Project, funded by the European Union, will seek to facilitate a culture of civil society and environmental protection in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

Summary of the Project

The Iraq Waterkeeper Environmental Law and Advocacy Project will bring together government officials, civil society organizations, and community representatives to increase engagement with the Kurdistan Region's environmental laws. A series of training and meetings as well as the creation of a website, newsletter, and set of multi-lingual guides on the environmental laws of the Region, will bring together these diverse groups through the common interest of protecting water resources and ensuring a clean and healthy future for the next generation.

The Project Funder



This Project is Funded by the EU

The Iraq Waterkeeper Environmental Law and Advocacy Project is funded by the European Union.

Supporting Partners



List of Activities

- 05 March 2014
- 20th June 2014
- 19th June 2014
- 24th - 27th March 2015
- 01st April 2015
- 19th - 20th May 2015
- 27th May 2015
- 17th June 2015
- 18th June 2015
- 05th July 2015
- 08th July 2015
- 13th July 2015
- 29th July 2015
- 19th August 2015
- 08th August 2015
- 05th September 2015
- 08th November 2015
- 19th November 2015
- 21st December 2015
- 12th January 2016
- 16th February 2016
- 10th February 2016
- 22nd May 2016
- 22nd May 2016
- 22nd May 2016

Nature Iraq Attended At EU Visibility Press Conference In Baghdad

Website Manager

Clary Makram
@ClaryMakram


Archives

- January 2017
- November 2016
- October 2016
- September 2016
- August 2016
- July 2016
- June 2016
- May 2016
- April 2016
- February 2016
- January 2016
- November 2015
- October 2015
- September 2015
- August 2015
- July 2015
- June 2015
- May 2015
- April 2015
- March 2015

Key activities:

- * EDUCATION - by UNESCO
- * COOPERATION - by UNDP/UN, NOPS & IOM
- * WULKA - UN/CLU, UN/ALCO & UN/LAL, IN/CG
- * POLICE TRAINING - Iraq Air Force, Iraq Police, Iraq National, TAXI & ASAD Foundation
- * ENERGY - EU & Iraq Energy Centre (IUEC)

Each partner present at a selection of their files via Instagram Project and their activities.



Program Support To Civil Society Development In Iraq

Website Manager

Clary Makram
@ClaryMakram

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- June 2015
- May 2015
- April 2015
- March 2015

Key activities:

- * Environmental data collection and analysis (including case studies)
- * The role and contribution of NGOs and civil society in environmental data collection and analysis (including case studies)
- * Focus group on local knowledge and citizen science
- * The environmental reporting, Tuscany region experience




3- Newsletter development.

Iraq Waterkeeper Environmental Law and Advocacy Project

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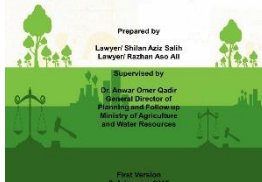
4- Environmental laws Guide in three languages (English, Arabic, and Kurdish).

Environmental Legislation Guides in Kurdistan Region - Iraq

Prepared by
Lawyer Shihab Aziz Salih
Lawyer Rashid Aziz Ali

Supervised by
Dr. Anwar Omer Qadir
General Director of Planning and Policy
Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources

First Edition
Sulaimaniya 2015




5- Joint meetings on public involvement.



6- Trainings on inspections and the role of NGOs.



BENEFICIARIES AND DELIVERABLES OF THE PROJECT IN GENERAL

Deliverables	
Website	1
Quarterly Newsletter	16
Legal Guides (on Land, Air & Water)	1000 (500 copies of 2 guides in Arabic and Kurdish)
Advocacy Trainings	10
Joint Meetings	20
Enforcement Trainings	8

BENEFICIARIES AND DELIVERABLES FOR 2016

Deliverables	
Website	1
Quarterly Newsletter	7 editions
Legal Guides (on Land, Air & Water)	1000 (500 copies of 2 guides in Arabic and Kurdish), English version has been be downloadable from the website
Advocacy Trainings	2
Joint Meetings	4
Enforcement Trainings	2

ACHIEVEMENTS OF OBJECTIVES

Website	1
Quarterly Newsletter	14 editions out of 16
Legal Guides (on Land, Air & Water)	1000 (500 copies of 2 guides in Arabic and Kurdish), English version are available now at the website.

	Completed
Advocacy Trainings	8 out of 10
Joint Meetings	13 out of 20
Enforcement Trainings	4 Out of 8

Different activities done under the Project:-

1- Field site visit, data collections and other activities.



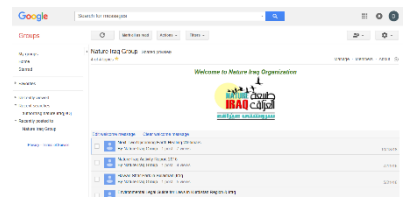
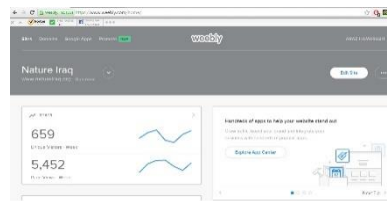
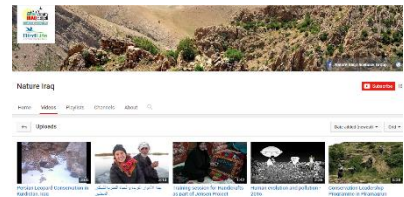
2- Writing Proposals, and two of proposals has been approved from EU.

3- Closing Car washing spots in Zalm stream near governorate of Halabja.





4- Nature Iraq website and the other social media including Facebook group, Twitter page, YouTube channel & Google Email Groups.



Social Media in 2016	Start date	End date	Link
Nature Iraq Facebook Group	3 rd Jan 2016	31 st December 2016	https://www.facebook.com/groups/natureiraq/
Nature Iraq Twitter Page	3 rd Jan 2016	31 st December 2016	https://twitter.com/Nature_Iraq
Nature Iraq Google Email Groups	2 nd February 2016	31 st December 2016	natureiraq@googlegroups.com
Nature Iraq YouTube Channel	25 th May 2016	31 st December 2016	https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCoz4MXQc966tvVaDFQfxg
Nature Iraq Website	3 rd Jan 2016	31 st December 2016	http://www.natureiraq.org

Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) & Environmental Baseline Studies (EBS)

Nature Iraq is assigned to do the Environmental Baseline Studies (EBS), as part of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), for different development projects in Iraq. These assessments were conducted on the ecological (biodiversity, noise, soil, water, and air quality), cultural heritage, and socio-economic conditions found in the area of proposed developments. Also part of the assessment process is to identify the impacts of proposed developments and suggest the appropriate mitigation measures to reduce the impacts. Some of these studies or assessments include developing of environmental and social management plan. A series of baseline surveys were conducted to gather current and historical information on the area of study to enable the teams in understanding the conditions on the ground and come up with a set of conclusions and recommendations aimed at improving the status of both the natural and historical elements of the area as well as the people living within it.

The EBS/ EIA projects were conducted by Nature Iraq in cooperation with our national and international partners. In 2016, Nature Iraq conducted only three environmental baseline studies (EBS) around the country.

Key Biodiversity Area Project (KBA)



The Key Biodiversity Areas (KBA) Programme is an initiative of the Iraqi Ministry of Environment and Nature Iraq aimed at identifying, documenting and protecting a network of sites critical for the conservation of Iraq's biodiversity. The KBA Project, started in 2005, conducted bi-annual, field surveys throughout Iraq to identify areas that contained globally important birds, plants, habitats, mammals and fish. Major field research ended in 2011 and was followed by an intensive period of data analysis and quality control and assessment of the information collected in the field. Since 2013, the core effort has been to assemble the KBA data into a final assessment (in book form) and the selection of 81 Key Biodiversity Areas throughout the country (45 in Iraqi Kurdistan, 12 in Central and Western Iraq, and 23 in Southern Iraq).

The last edits of the Key Biodiversity Areas of Iraq book were finalized in November of 2015 and the Tablet House agreed to publish the book. All basic design work was finished in January of 2016 and a secondary designer was hired to prepare the book for printing.

Currently the last proofing of the KBA book is being done before it goes to print. The expected release of the book is planned for the spring of 2017. For more information see: <http://www.natureiraq.org/draft-inventory-of-sites.html>.

The Mesopotamian Marshland Grassroots Activities

The purpose of Nature Iraq's grassroots activities in the Mesopotamian Marshlands is to recognize the southern Iraqi Marshes and the wetland areas in southern Iraq; raise awareness of the public to the importance of these wetlands; increase the water flow of the marshlands and its re-flooding continuation; and ensuring bonds of cooperation with the central and local governments, universities and other civil society organizations and build bridges of trust with them. Furthermore, Nature Iraq work has been pivotal in contributing to the inscription of the marshes of southern Iraq on the World Heritage List.

The idea of grassroots came to Nature Iraq as a manifesto seeking a better environment for the local Marsh Arabs. Causes, such as low ration of water that is dedicated to the marshes of southern Iraq which causes a fast rate drought in large areas of the southern Marshes; Low level of environmental awareness among the local population about the risks caused by over exploitation of fish harvest and bird hunting and poor knowledge among University students about the importance of the marshes of southern Iraq; and lack of dynamism of the Presidential Committee for the Defense of the Marshlands file and the lack of a thorough understanding of the requirements of defense of it, are, among many others, the reasons which led the Nature Iraq team embrace grassroots activism in the southern Marshes. The main target groups are the local communities, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), the central and local governments, Iraqi universities, and many social strata of artists and intellectuals and those interested in the environment, women working in craftsmanship, and different media outlets.

As part of the grassroots activities, Nature Iraq team conducted different activities. Some of these activities are highlighted below:



Figure 1: Holding talks about the Marshlands and wetlands as a UNESCO World Heritage Site



Figure 2: Bookfair in (Baghdad, Thi-Qar, Karbala and Basra)



Figure 3: Photo exhibition



Figure 4: Media Interventions



Figure 5: Training Course on dairy production for local women



Figure 6: Campaigns against illegal hunting



Figure 7: Organizing tours in the Marshlands for local and international tourists



Figure 8: Participating in the file for the inscription of the Marshlands in the UNESCO World Heritage Site List



Figure 9: Documentary production about the Marshes for UNESCO

Report on the State of Birds in Iraq

This project is implemented through a joint grant from the Aage V. Jensen Charity Foundation (AVJCF) and Nature Iraq, under direct supervision of Birdlife International, which aims to assess the state of Birds in Iraq with a focus on Bird species which are globally threatened and/or have national and regional significance. In addition, the report will be highlighting the endemic Bird species in Iraq. This project started in March 2016 and is planned to be completed by mid-2017. The report, once completed, will include recommendations and a Species Action Plan for Bird species that need to benefit from conservation programs in Iraq. Furthermore, as part of this project, the team conducted awareness campaigns to protect Iraq's Bird fauna from illegal hunting in Iraq.

