



Lebanon's Protected Areas

National Day of Nature Reserves

March 10

March 10 of every year is the National Day of Nature Reserves. And this year, to reflect the hardships through which the Nature Reserves survived, the theme is "*Peace for Parks*".

While the world is moving towards establishing 'Parks for Peace', namely in the form of *transboundary parks* thus combining conservation and protection efforts along the borders of neighboring countries, we in Lebanon are still struggling to build peace for our parks. We need peace to plan, to study and to protect our natural resources and heritage. We need peace to sustain the efforts of sustainable management and conservation we have engaged in, to have the opportunity to inform the world of our unique nature beauty and natural resources and species richness. We need peace to preserve our pristine landscapes and lively resources for future generations.

Organizing the Nature Reserves National Day 2007 'Peace for Parks', the Ministry of Environment and the nature reserves community is holding a workshop about the impact of the recent hostilities on Lebanon on its nature reserves where each and every nature reserve will present the difficulties it faced, summarizing the impacts it left, the challenges remaining to be dealt with and their needs.

War impact on nature reserves was multi-scale ranging from indirect disturbance of daily activities to indirect oil pollution to direct bombing of core areas of nature reserves. These different impacts entail different levels of intervention and active management most of which depended on availability of funds that exacerbated the problem.

A general impact encountered by all the Nature Reserves was socio-economical where the nature reserves and their surrounding community lost income from eco-tourism and selling of local products. In the Al Shouf Cedars Nature Reserve, different sections were directly bombed a total of 5 bombs which necessarily disturbed the fauna and avi-fauna of the reserve and polluted its soil and flora. In Tyre Coast Nature Reserve, the reserve was not hit; nevertheless, the reserve lost millions of Liras due to the forced shut off of the touristic beach. While Palm Islands Nature Reserve, it was heavily polluted by the oil spill caused by the Israeli deliberate bombing of oil tanks of Jieh station. The oil spill at PINR affected its sandy and rocky beaches adversely damaging its biodiversity and threatening its whole ecosystem's health and resilience.

What is the status of these reserves today? Have they recovered from the impact of the recent hostilities and How? What are their priorities now? And where we can help are the questions to be answered in the National Day of Nature Reserves Workshop.

Help us build peace. Help us build our nature reserves.

NB. Proceedings of workshop will be published timely after the workshop.