

# National Report on Hunting

Country:  
Palestine

2005

**BUILDING CAPACITY FOR SUSTAINABLE HUNTING OF MIGRATORY BIRDS IN  
MEDITERRANEAN THIRD COUNTRIES**

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**Country:  
Palestine**

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## **Hunting and hunting activities**

Hunting in Palestine had not been on the spotlight till lately due to the continuous deterioration in the political situation. Since 1995, the Palestinian authority had worked intensively to develop the laws and regulations to run the country with prioritization to laws that have direct affect on the Palestinian lives, such as the education, agriculture and so on, but not hunting.

Nevertheless, from the time that the Palestinian authority took the control of the Palestinian territories, the hunting phenomenon had been increasing, for having the accessibility to own and license guns, as well as the availability of a market for such profession.

Based on the above, and on an attempt to protect the species and the environment, the Governor of Jericho had issues a regulation to stop hunting with all of its forms within the district to protect the wildlife and biodiversity, with the cooperation of Palestine Wildlife Society and the police force in the area. Furthermore, Palestine Wildlife Society had established a club for hunting that represents number of hunters in the area, who are committed to the protection of the Palestinian biodiversity.

Covering the hunting sector is the current concern of many governmental and non-governmental organizations, nevertheless, since none had concentrated on it before, there had not been any sufficient studies or statistics that had been collected about the status of hunting, hunted species, and tools used in hunting.

There are no specific numbers of hunters in the area and neither their types, nevertheless, out of observing the current situation and involvement there are more than 400 hunters who are registered by the government to hold weapons, based on the police force offices in Bethlehem and Jericho, where most of them are practicing hunting as a sport more than an income generated business. However, in some rural areas, many of the residents there disturb the nests of the birds (especially raptors) and steal their eggs or chicks and sell them in the black market.

As mentioned above, there are some attempts to control hunting by the Governor of Jericho area Dr. Sami Mosalam along side with Palestine Wildlife Society through establishing a club for hunters within the area.

## **Hunting status within the Palestinian Territories**

The hunting sector within the Palestinian Territories is rather juvenile and that is due political and economical situation within the area, where people have the priority of living a decent life and fighting for their freedom from the continues occupation. The forms of hunting in the area are restricted to shooting as well as collecting the eggs and chicks from the nests and then sell them in a market.

Since the Palestinian Authority took control of the Palestinian Territories, it had worked hard in regulating the area by put down the basic laws and legislation for the

country. Nevertheless, hunting was not a priority to focus on at that time, but with the involvement of the environmental organizations, they pushed toward recognizing the hunting sector and work toward regulating it for what it has from negative affect on the wildlife.

There were around 350 registered hunters legally since 1998, but due to the deterioration of the economical situation, and the inability of the hunters to pay the fees, the number had dropped to 150 registered hunters, who have hunting weapons imported from different countries such as Spain, the US, France, Belgium and others but are quite old. Each of those weapons is registered within the records of the Ministry of Interior by giving it a number and recording it within the license.

Nevertheless, there are around 1000 illegal hunting weapons that are used within the Palestinian Territories, where the most focus on the areas of Jericho, Halhul and Biqu'a that starts during Friday afternoon till late Saturday for it is the official holiday for the Israeli. Furthermore, there have been many cases where hunting was practiced by the Palestinian soldiers as a hobby and using the automatic weapons that they regularly carry and shooting at birds such as the Soaring Birds as a target.

Based on the findings, the current hunting law is quite insufficient and doesn't reflect the protection of species and conservation of the wildlife, for it says that the license fees for the hunting is only paid once in the life time of the hunter, where the current shift is toward licensing holding the hunting weapon till future notice to secure the outcome of any action that might be taken by the hunters.

The number of supplies for the ammunition was limited while under the control of the Palestinian Authority, where the supply during the Israeli occupation reached to 20,000 bullets a year. Yet, since the beginning of the new Intifada, the Israeli soldiers had destroyed almost every ammunition supply stores, and the hunters tended to store whatever they have from ammunition since the political situation led to the raise on the price of the ammunition. The following ammunitions are used in the area for hunting:

- Floochi (25-36), made in Italy and most used by the hunters.
- LG Eley made in England
- Double Charge U.E.E 12 made in Spain
- Blitz Trap 1 7 1/2
- 12 Vicotry 24gr Compak
- Saga Ungaza 34
- Gordon System 12 Mammoth
- Hilti (either manufactured in Israel or on local bases)
- Locally made using a base material.



Figure 1: Ammunitions used in the area

Many migratory species are hunted through their migration routes, stop over areas or wintering sites, some of them are globally endangered species and their populations are in decline. In Palestine many of these species are hunted. The following are list of the most hunted migratory species in Palestine:

Table 1: Most hunted migratory bird species in Palestine

English Name	Latin Name
Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>
Gargany	<i>Anas querquedula</i>
Quail	<i>Coturnix coturnix</i>
Turtle Dove	<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>
Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>
Tree Pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>
Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>
Nightingale	<i>Luscinia megarhynchos</i>
Thrush Nightingale	<i>Luscinia luscinia</i>
Bluethroat	<i>Lucinia svecica</i>
Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>
Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>
Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>
Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>
Garden Warbler	<i>Sylvia borin</i>
Black Cap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>
Orphean Warbler	<i>Sylvia hortensis</i>
Lesser Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia curruca</i>
Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia communis</i>

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English Name	Latin Name
Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>
Spotted Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>
Golden Oriole	<i>Oriolus oriolus</i>
Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>
Greenfinch	<i>Carduelis chloris</i>
Siskin	<i>Carduelis spinus</i>
Syrian Serin	<i>Serinus syriacus</i>
Corn Bunting	<i>Miliaria calandra</i>

### Legislation and law enforcement related to hunting of migratory birds

As it has been mentioned before hand, there were no groups for managing hunting till recently, where some of the governmental and non-governmental agencies had been trying to formulate a club aiming at regulating hunting and implement the hunting policies.

Based on that, a club for hunters had been established during the past months in the area of Bethlehem with the participation of at least 50 hunters between professional hunters and practicing hunting as a hobby. They have held several meeting in which they discussed the types of hunted birds and animals, the hunting weapons and ammunition used and the damage that they area causing to the rich Palestinian wildlife. Furthermore, they have conducted several meeting with some of the police figures to formulate a strategy that will regulate hunting in the area especially when it comes to selling the hunted birds in the local markets.

Some of the member hunters have either a Jordanian or an Israeli license that is applicable in the area for there is no Palestinian regulation that they can go accordingly.

The existing law for hunting is driven from the Jordanian one, but still there is no legislation for it or mentioning the kind of species to be hunted. Hence, due to the lack of enforcement to the law resulted in the ignorant of the hunters in the species to hunt and their status, seasons for hunting, as well as the areas for hunting, keeping in mind there is no special areas or reserves for hunting within the Palestinian Territories. As part of the attempts to regulate hunting, the governor of Jericho had released a resolution stating that:

- **Article One:** Hunting is forbidden in the area of Jericho till it is regulated through a legislative law.
- **Article Two:** Whoever breaks the resolution will bare all the legal responsibilities for his/ her actions.
- **Article Three:** All the responsible parties and the police force have to act based on the released resolution starting from February, 2005.

It is worth to mention that Palestine Wildlife Society runs the Jericho Wildlife Monitoring Station of more than 190 dunums, which includes a bird watching centers, ponds to attract birds, educational center, bird ringing station, and agricultural ponds consisting of the native and medical plants of the area. This area is protected by a

fence as well as a guard and that is to control the activities inside the station and forbid any actions against the wildlife such as hunting.

Nevertheless, Palestine Wildlife Society with the coordination of the local police in areas such as Bethlehem and Jericho are trying to decrease from the hunting phenomenon through getting more hunters to join the established club and be an active member in the anti-hunting activities. Yet, the information and statistics that shows the number of weapons used in hunting, the number of hunters, kinds and number of animations, the kind of hunted species, zonnations for hunting areas, hunting seasons and other important regulations.

As part of the activities of the hunting club, some of the hunters along side with the staff of Palestine Wildlife Society and members of the police force had scattered the markets looking for birds that are illegally hunted or trapped and being offered for sale, where they had confiscated more then 10 Lesser Kestrel, 2 Barbary Falcon, 2 Long Legged Buzzard, 14 chukar then rehabilitated, ringed and released to the nature. Furthermore, they also had confiscated 70 eggs for chucker, incubated but only 15 of them had survived and are being taken care of till they are able to be released to the nature again.

### **Socio-economic and cultural importance of hunting of migratory birds**

Although there are some cases where people rely on hunting as a living provider, yet, the majority of hunters practice hunting as a hobby within the Palestinian territories. Some of the hunters became professional in it that they even produce high quality ammunicions and sell it unofficially to their fellow hunters around their area. Nevertheless, there is no information regarding the quantity of ammunition that exists within the area, nor about the quantity of the guns used.

Since hunting is not regulated, there is no indirect economic impact on hunters that can be clearly seen for two reasons; first of all, the hunting sector is not so active that people would go and spend money on a hunting trip that requires camping, booking in a hotel and so on, but on the contrary, hunting is basically practiced for one or two days only in specific hours such as the afternoons during Fridays and Saturdays due to the political situation, and the other reason is that there are many Israeli soldiers who enter the area for hunting purposes and there is no control over them from the Palestinian Authority.

The sale of migrants and summer breeding birds in Palestine considered one of the major problems that facing these species. Other related problem is the stealing of the chicks of these species specially the Raptors. This phenomenon can be found every where within the Palestine territories. In each major city there is within the public markets at least one or two places for the trade of raptors wither they alive or staffed. There is not any official information about the prices or the quantities of this trade in Palestine, but on another hand with the efforts of PWLS some of this information has been collected. The prices of these species can be ranged from 5 to 250 US\$, while the quantities of these species is not determined, and it is varied from year to year.

As for education and awareness regarding hunting within the Palestinian Territories, there have been little attempts to do so among students through a project called "Environmental Student Mail" where one of the issues had covered information about

the Lesser Kestrel and the need to protect it on national and global level. Other than that, the hunting issue was not covered till recently through holding annual gathering among the participant hunters in the hunting club.

### **Alternatives to hunting migratory birds**

The status of resident game birds species in Palestine is critical and in decline due to the intensive and extensive hunting of these species, and due to the collection of the eggs of these species.

There is only one case for programs that includes the game birds, even through we don't have such a sport within the Palestinian Territories and that is for the chukar, where after the confiscation of 70 eggs, PWLS staff had been trying to incubate them but only 15 of them had hatched and we are currently in the process of rehabilitating them.

### **Alternative economic models to hunting**

Bird watching phenomenon as part of the eco-tourism concept is on its peak within the Palestinian territories. Palestine Wildlife Society along side with other NGOs and GOs had been stressing on the need to promote eco-tourism as one of the fields that can support the economy of the Palestinian Territories.

Based on the above, the Jericho Wildlife Monitoring Station had been established that would support the eco-tourism objectives and open the opportunity for the Palestinian to get acquainted with their environment and felt he need to conserve it and protect the species in it. in order to achieve that, Palestine Wildlife Society have hooked up with the Ministry of Education, Environmental Quality Authority as well as the Ministry of Tourism to put the Station into their agenda and promote for it as part of putting the eco-tourism sector on the map.

As of the subject of sustainable hunting issue within the Palestinian Territories, there is a need first to review the existing law, update it and then promote and enforce for it to be able to achieve sustainable hunting, for the current situation doesn't allow for such a move to take place by the Palestinian Authority, until there is a support from the local hunters as well as the interested NGOs in the area. Keeping in minds again that hunting or trapping is not considered as a source of income as much as it is practiced as a hobby.

1. Current status and potential of bird-watching and ecotourism in country, especially in regions most important for migratory birds and where hunting most occurs
2. Economic incentives to promote sustainable hunting, such as flexible tax benefits for well-managed lands (with copies of arrangements)
3. Other sources of income available to bird trappers, trap manufacturers, bird sellers and others associated with hunting industry

### **Best practice models and guidelines for responsible hunting and conservation of migratory birds**

Based on what is mentioned above and in order to regulate hunting, the following measures should be undertaken:

- Review and enforce the hunting law within the Palestinian Territories.
- Build the capacity of the hunters of the best hunting practices that can lead to the conservation of the wildlife and species
- Getting the full cooperation and support of the police force to hold an anti-hunting campaigns
- Hold awareness and educational campaign targeting the general public regarding hunting activities as well as the ecological importance of Palestine.
- Regulate hunting

These measures was driven form the fact that there was no enforcement of the hunting law; the lack of information by the hunters in specific and the public in general about the species; the insufficient number of programs and projects that support conservation of species and migratory birds, except for the humble work that is done in the Jericho Wildlife Monitoring Station; and there are no research studies on management regimes for sustainable hunting that is for any bird species. Regardless of all of that, and as it is mentioned above, lots of work had been done in the past 3 years with the confiscation of bird species, rehabilitating them and then release them to the nature, which lead to have some kind of conflicts between the PWLS staff and the hunters.