Hundreds of hikers walking through Lebanon for the conservation of birds

Title

The Lebanon Mountain Trail Association (LMTA) launched on March 30, 2013 its **fifth annual thru-walk from Andaket in North Lebanon**. This year, 150 hikers from 9 countries will spend up to 28 days on the trail, **walking for birds** and promoting new hunting regulations and sensitizing trailside communities (about 70 villages and towns) to the importance of birds and bird populations and the critical need to end hunting malpractices, including the massacre of migratory soaring birds. Armed with Lebanon's new hunting regulations, the group of hikers will present and discuss a string of new procedures during preset evening seminars. These seminars are hosted in five different communities (Sir el Dannieh, Bsharre, Kfardebian, Maaser el Shouf, and Ibl es Saqi) and are organized in collaboration with the UNDP/GEF-funded Migratory Soaring Birds project which is implemented by the Ministry of Environment and BirdLife's national partner, the Society for the Protection of Nature (SPNL). Additionally, the LMT group of hikers will organize two empty shell casing cleanup events on Sections 8 (Bsharre) and 12 (Kfardebian) of the LMT. The objective is to clear tracts of landscapes and meadows that are used as hunting grounds. The empty shell cases will be delivered to the nearest police station in an effort to remind the Internal Security Forces of their duties and responsibilities in relation to enforcing the country's hunting regulations. The month-long program also includes bird talks and bird watching in three of Lebanon's protected areas two of which are also listed as Biosphere Reserves (Jabal Moussa and Al Shouf Cedars). The group is expected to arrive in **Marjayoun on April 28, 2013**. *The (LMT) is the first long-distance hiking trail in Lebanon. It extends from Andaket in the north of Lebanon to Marjaayoun in the south, a 450-km path that transects more than 75 towns and villages at altitude ranging from 600 meters to 2,000 meters above sea level. The LMT showcases the natural beauty and cultural wealth of Lebanon's mountains, brings communities closer together, and expands economic opportunities in rural areas through environmentally and socially-responsible tourism.*

Hikers will also be clearing up empty shell cases and delivering them to police stations as a reminder to enforce the new hunting laws. *Photo: Lebanon Mountain Trail Association*

The objectives of the Lebanon Mountain Trail Association are to: • Develop, maintain and protect the Lebanon Mountain Trail **• Protect** the natural and cultural heritage and landmarks near the trail **• Enhance** economic opportunities in trailside communities To learn more about the trail and their activities, please visit www.lebanontrail.org