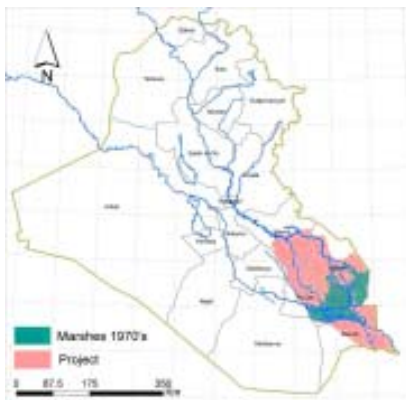


## Interim Report on the Master Plan Released

Nature Iraq and its partners the Italian Ministry of Environment and Territory (IMET) have just released the Interim Report on the Master Plan for Integrated Water Resource Management in the Marshland Areas of Southern Iraq. The Master Plan includes proposals for the inundation of the marshes, and restoration of the natural hydro-period of marsh rivers to allow for continued vitality and biodiversity in the affected region. Moreover, Master Plan takes into account the basic desires of the indigenous community, and includes provision of modern life conveniences such as: potable water, electricity, healthcare, and education, etc. Improving the quality of life in the Marshlands promotes reverse migration and provides options for development of the marshes in the future as a prime ecological & historic tourism destination.



Master Plan Project Area

The working group from NI and IMET (called the New Eden Group) aim to develop a tool (the "Master Plan") to provide the Iraqi ministries involved in the restoration and redevelopment of the marshes with sound scientific information. The Master Plan, in coordination with initiatives carried out by other donor's countries as well as Iraqi institutions, provides the bases for the implementation of a larger plan, a "Strategic Development Plan." The overall approach proposed to the Iraqi government, relies on a modified, centrally-planned Master Plan with limited stakeholder involvement. This methodology depends on input from technocrats and academics that have some influence from stakeholders.

From October to December 2004, the New Eden Group successfully completed its inception phase, resulting in staff and equipment acquisition, office organization, and development of the

*Continued on Page 2*

## Environmental NGO Roundtable

*"We are a world to ourselves because we've been disconnected."*

- an Iraqi Group at the Roundtable

In September, as a follow-up to the Environmental Health in Iraq Conference held in Amman, Jordan (held 19-22 Sep and organized by Stony Brook University of New York), Nature Iraq organized a meeting of Iraqi and regional environmental groups to participate in a roundtable discussion and training. The goal of the roundtable was to expose the members of the new Iraqi organizations to their peers and colleagues from related organizations in the region; provide some basic training; help build partnerships, and develop a needs assessment of the Iraqi environmental NGO community and a list of recommendations for their future support.



Site visit at the Ajloun Nature Reserve in Jordan

*Continued on page 4*

## Looking forward

by Azzam Alwash,  
Director, Nature Iraq

This year we will complete our extremely ambitious hydrologic, environmental and socio-economic studies, conducted with Iraqi technocrats and academicians along with Italian, Canadian, and American experts. These studies will provide some of the building blocks for restoration and redevelopment of the marshes of Iraq. We are planning a lot of work for 2006 with Italian and Canadian funding as well as cooperation with UNEP and UNOPS, and you will hear more about that in the near future. For now, I would like to talk to you about the challenges of the political process.

With the adoption of the new constitution, come new challenges for the marshes that need to be addressed if their restoration and development are to be assured. The new Iraqi constitution, gives the power over water management to the federal government, which is logical, but there is ambiguity as to how the power of the federal government is to interact with the powers of the local governorates and the various regional entities that will be created in the future. The ambiguity covers many areas, from commerce, to security, to water. Laws are going to be written in the next Parliament that are intended to clarify these ambiguities and clearly demark the responsibilities of the Federal, regional, and local governments.

For Marsh supporters, this is a challenge, given that the marshes exist in three different governorates (and thus under the authority of three different councils). But, given the political discussions in the south and Baghdad, it is safe to assume that there will be calls for the creation of a southern region (Federation between Basrah, Nassriyah and Amarah). This can be a blessing for the marshes as it would bring the issue of

*Continued on page 3*

## ▶ ABOUT US ◀

*Nature Iraq is a Iraqi Environmental Non-Governmental Organization registered in Iraq. Nature-Iraq builds civil society networks to protect the environment of Iraq and develops capacity within Iraq, both in private and publicly-owned industries, to help clean and protect the environment.*

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Eden Again Project - [www.edenagain.org](http://www.edenagain.org)

**Together to Protect Humans & the Environment  
&  
The Green Peace Organization of Kurdistan**

present their 1st

## **Environmental Conference**

**Irbil**

**Thursday & Friday  
30-31 March, 2006**

This conference will focus on ten problems in Iraq. They are:

1. Waste Management
2. Water Management
3. Air Pollution
4. Biodiversity Management
5. Salination and Desertification
6. Environmental Education Management
7. Environmental Media Management
8. Industrial Pollution Management
9. Green Marketing
10. Environmental Legislations

This conference is free (with generous funding from the Kurdistan regional government) but you must fill out a registration form. Forms and information can be obtained from:

Saadia Hasson  
[saadiafalsalhy@yahoo.com](mailto:saadiafalsalhy@yahoo.com)

*Interim Report, Continued from Page 1*

preparation for the plan. The New Eden Group comprises 115 experts from various disciplines and nationalities, and is directly involved with numerous technicians from relevant Iraqi ministries at every hierarchical level. Major activities are supervised by Nature Iraq's Baghdad office in Iraq and by the office in Padova, Italy. The contingent workforce is subdivided into several teams, with ecology and hydraulic/hydrology as the most prevalent groups.

The New Eden Group will provide the ultimate plan needed to achieve each Marshland restoration level. The Group projects a sustainable marshlands restoration plan with short- (one-year), medium- (5-year), and long-term (25-year) strategies.

New Eden's Master Plan provides recommendations for the achievement of each level of restoration, from infrastructural (new regulators, new canals, etc.) to socio-economic (retaining culture, providing income). New Eden's scenarios are designed to deliver tools for MoWR, MoE and MoMPW of Iraq to make informed decisions for the re-development of the Marshlands. The New Eden Group's Master Plan supports a comprehensive socio-economic evaluation/methodology for Iraqi ministries to choose the best restoration scenario. Currently, a socio-economic model is in process, and, once delivered, evaluation of the individual benefit obtained by investing available water for different uses (agriculture, navigation, marshes, etc) will be clear. This model promises to be fine-tuned via a socio-economic survey, which is under development in 250 villages, selected to equally represent the population more or less dependent or affected by the condition of the marshes. New Eden's survey projects a value-add to sundry goods, with positive impacts to the people of Southern Iraq first and with benefit to national and regional communities.

When New Eden's work is done, findings will be summarized into a three-volume document comprised of a compilation of 10 books in English and Arabic.

Volume I one will present the state-of-the-art of the hydrologic network and the marshlands conditions. It will also address results gathered during field campaigns, with a comprehensive overview of the current situation in the Marshland region.

Volume II is projected to encompass extensive descriptions of each marshland restoration scenario and to include tools for the evaluations of each scenario.

Volume III details the selected scenario(s) in terms of costs, steps required for the achievement of restoration goals, and recommendations by New Eden to the Iraqi government on how to implement the Master Plan on behalf of the people of Iraq.

Final delivery of New Eden's Master Plan to the Iraqi ministries is scheduled for early spring 2006. The purpose of New Eden's Interim Report is to provide a glimpse into New Eden's methodology for the development of a Master Plan to restore water to Iraq's Mesopotamian Marshlands, and to outline major activities, contributions and results conducted by the New Eden Group, in cooperation with Iraq's relevant ministries, achieved thus far.

Copies of the Interim Report can be obtained on the Eden Again Website under Marshland Info/Reports: <http://www.edenagain.org/reports.html>. (Warning, the file is quite large)

**Possible restoration levels are classified into four recovery scenarios:**

- 0% -25% recoveries – the marshes will remain at the 2002-level, implying that no effort will be made by the Iraqi government to sustain the marshes and that marshes will disappear in the medium to long-term.
- 25-50% recovery – the marshes will remain at the current level, and efforts from the Iraqi government will be required to maintain the current water allocation for future levels in the marshes. During wet years, a minimal improvement might be achieved with a small effort in term of water management at the national level.
- 50-75% recovery – the marshes will remain at the early 1990s-level, with efforts of the Iraqi government required to improve the irrigation system at the national level, and with best management of agriculture practiced at the local level. (Note: The upper limit of the recovery under 50-75% recovery plan might be achieved through an agreement with Turkey, Syria and Iran.)
- 75-100% recovery –reinstates the marshes at the 1970s-level, with the bulk of additional water required for this scenario provided by agreements with other countries.

# Field Activities in the Marshes

by Barry Warner,  
CIMI Project Manager

The Canada-Iraq Marshlands Initiative has assembled field teams who have been active gathering ecological data over the past several months at key reference sites in newly reflooded areas of the marshes, two in each of the Hawizeh, Hammar and Central Marshes. Six field teams, focusing on major biological groups comprise 44 students and technical assistants working under the supervision of university professors from Babylon, Baghdad, Basra, Kufa, & Thi Qar, and Al-Qadisia.

The major biological groups include: phytoplankton, zooplankton, benthic invertebrates, macrophytes, fish, and birds. Much of the field data are preliminary and have not been completely analyzed as yet. Early indications show obvious seasonal patterns in the phytoplankton and benthic invertebrates. Zooplankton, somewhat surprisingly, have remained poorly represented in many parts of the marshes. Fish continue to be moderately diverse but individuals are small.

Plant macrophytes are well established in many of the sites with moderately high biomass values. Nearly all of the well known rare and endangered species of birds have been found to be present, with some confirmed to be breeding and nesting in the marshes.



*Part of the Key Biodiversity Area and Bird team at a training course in Nov 05 conducted with Birdlife International in Damascus.*

Early interpretation of the data is revealing that some localities are beginning to show signs of full wetland ecosystem recovery after about 18 months of flooding. The teams will be continuing their field surveys in the coming months and more data will be able to shed light on the nature and rate of restoration, which in turn, will prove invaluable in identifying priorities and options for future management. All the early signals so far indicate a good news story for many parts of the new marshes.



*Mahmoud B. Mahmoud collecting aquatic macrophytes for biomass measurements*



*Team collecting plankton samples*

*Looking forward, Continued from page 1*  
the regulation of water flow in the south under one direct administration that can interact with the Federal Government, instead of three sub-districts all trying to coordinate their actions separately.

We all understand that the successful restoration of the marshes must account for issues of sustainable use and development of the area to better serve the needs of the Marsh Arabs. Planning of the redevelopment of the area must be done in a coordinated fashion and to this end, a series of meetings are being planned between technocrats from the Federal government as well as district level officials to come to an understanding of where all the various studies have lead and to map together a way forward. This can not be completed until the National Assembly is seated, members of the Marshes Committee selected and local elections (which are to be held in June) are completed and the local governing bodies seated. This, however, need not delay the technical discussions, the first of which is being held in February in Irbil, Kurdistan-Iraq.

As always, problems provide opportunities to be innovative in finding solutions. The ambiguity of the Iraqi constitution brings to us, marsh enthusiasts, an opportunity to help similar thinking Iraqis come up with solutions that are uniquely Iraqi. Despite protestations elsewhere that the federal system may bring with it a fragmentation of the country, I am viewing it as an opportunity to help preserve our world heritage, but this must be done by Iraqis, for Iraqis, and our job is to help them achieve what they want.



## Marshland Photo Exhibit sponsored by the Canada-Iraq Marshland Initiative

A traveling photo exhibit of photos taken in the Iraqi Marshes by Modafar Salim will be on display in the following locations:

- Feb 1 to March 15 - Waterloo, Ontario,
- April 15 to 30 - Eastern UK, Norfolk at a Gallery near the UK's first Ramsar site,
- June 20-25 - Rhodes, Greece as part of the annual EcoFilms and Visual Arts Festival.

For more information, contact Clay Rubec at [clay.rubec@ec.gc.ca](mailto:clay.rubec@ec.gc.ca)



## Available through the Eden Again Website!

Original Oil Painting by  
Kamal Al Mousawi

Support Iraqi Artists and Nature Iraq! Nature-Iraq has over 45 unique and colorful oil paintings in the impressionist style by Nassaria painter Kamal Al Mousawi. Mousawi who graduated from the Fine Arts Institute of Iraq in 1967 still lives and paints in Iraq. You can view the Nature-Iraq collection on the Eden Again website at [www.edenagain.org](http://www.edenagain.org). These paintings are available by check or money order. Check the website for pricing and purchase details.

**The following regional groups attended the Roundtable:**

*Al Aydat Society (Syria)*  
*Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature (Jordan)*  
*Friends of the Earth - Middle East (Jordan)*  
*Jordan Environment Society*  
*Jordan Heritage Development Society*  
*Envirotech*  
*Queen Zein Al Sharaf Institute for Development, Jordan Hashemite Fund for Human Development (Jordan)*  
*Greenpeace Mediterranean (Int'l based in Lebanon)*  
*Environmental Protection & Sustainable Development Society (Syria)*  
*Syrian Society for Wildlife Conservation*  
*Via Nova Group*

Iraqi groups were selected from northern, southern & central Iraq on the basis of a survey of known Iraqi environmental organizations, conducted by Nature Iraq and the Iraqi environmental group, Together to Protect Humans & the Environment. Twelve Iraqi groups were selected for this project but Nature Iraq now maintains a database of over 35 different Iraqi environmental organizations. Workshops were provided on organizational structure, fundraising, training and NGO/Government relations. In addition, Iraqi NGOs were given an opportunity to talk about their work and their projects in Iraq and to get some feedback from the regional groups that attended.

Though all of the Iraqi NGOs are seeking funding and list that as a major need, the primary recommendation made by all participants, both Iraqi & regional groups, were focused on the need for additional training. Training needs were listed in four major categories in this order of priority:

- 1) Strategic Planning,
- 2) Administrative & Management Skills,
- 3) Capacity Building for environmental impact assessments/evaluations,
- 4) Advocacy Skills.

**Regional Environmental Forum (REF)**

An important result of the Roundtable was the agreement by the participants to meet again as part of a Regional Environmental Forum what would develop future information sharing, cooperation, coordination and support between the environmental NGOs in the region.

Yasser Al Mohammad of the Environmental Protection & Sustainable Development Society in Syria agreed to be the focal point for the Forum and to call and organize a meeting within approximately six months time in Damascus, Syria. As of this writing, plans are in the works to organize the REF for spring 2006.

For more information on the REF, contact Yasser Al Mohammad at:  
**+963 114461221 (tel) & env-pro@mail.sy or yasser-m@scs-net.org**

**Some comments by Iraqi NGOs at the Roundtable:**

*"We are a world to ourselves because we've been disconnected."*  
*"New groups have no history, so donors discount us"*  
*"Our biggest problems are- Security, No Funding, and Lack of cooperation between NGOs & Government"*  
*"Decision-makers do not have any environmental awareness, so there is a lack of monitoring, a lack of interest."*  
*"How long does it take to establish credibility?"*  
*"Funds from the government may turn you into a political partner"*  
*"Training is focused in Baghdad alone ... not to the regions and not always to people in their proper fields"*  
*"How can there be funding to train Iraqis on the environment and not a single Iraqi environmental NGO gets invited?"*  
*"We need to make the Iraqi government understand the need for civil society."*

**Some comments by Regional NGOs at the Roundtable:**

*"We can't compare ourselves to Iraq. We don't have a catastrophe"*  
*"As Civil Society, you can work with both government and private sector. NGOs are dynamic and don't get tied up in state bureaucracy."*  
*"Decision-makers are not against the environment, they just lack awareness. Enhance the dialogue between government & NGOs. We can't succeed if the government works against us. If they don't respond to us, talk to them through the mass media."*  
*"Everything is a priority, but you need to specialize into different areas"*  
*"First you tell me that you do health classes and then constitution classes and then you tell me you focus on water. The work on the environment is very wide, but we have to focus and determine exactly what we are doing."*  
*"We were talking about searching the internet for information on funding and one of the [Iraqi] NGOs said, How do you search the internet? ... They are asking the most basic questions."*



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