

## Evaluation of Awareness of Local Hunters about Environmental Values of Wetland Birds and Feasibility of Their Cooperation in Sustainable Protection and Management of Water Birds and Waders (A Case Study on Shirin Su Wetland)

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### Abstract

Water birds are recognized as a taxonomic group and have always been considered by local hunters. Most of relevant species have inappropriate situations in the world in terms of protection. Therefore, hunters must receive the necessary information on the value and importance of biodiversity and conservation status of birds so that these animal groups and their habitats could be optimally managed with the cooperation of these individuals. Since water birds are among the main inhabitants of Shirin Su Wetland, measures must be taken to eliminate the threatening factors and support and protect these animals. Due to being in the middle of birds' immigration path, Hamedan Province in west of Iran is regarded as a biological connection corridor. Every year, the wetlands of this province host a great number of water birds and waders. The Shirin Su Wetland is one of the rich water ecosystems in west of Iran. In this research, we first detected the water birds and waders using binoculars, bird-watching telescopes, cameras and camcorders. In addition, various species were observed through survey and using camouflage huts in areas with a high density of birds. Afterwards, a questionnaire was applied to evaluate the local hunters' awareness of environmental values of wetland birds. After collecting the questionnaires and analysis of the data, results demonstrated that above 32% of hunters had a relatively good knowledge of the Shirin Su Wetland, whereas 12% and approximately 50% of the hunters had a relatively low and complete awareness of the birds in the mentioned wetland, respectively. However, 10% of these individuals had no knowledge of the birds in the Shirin Su Wetland. In this research, the main reasons for bird hunting were livelihood and commerce and entertainment, reported by more than 44% and approximately 56% of the subjects, respectively. Therefore, it could be inferred that hunting of birds and endangering their lifecycle can be prevented by providing recreation and occupations in other fields. By creating revenues for hunters, we can change their cultural level as well.

**Keywords:** Environmental Values, Hunt, Water Birds, Shirin Su Wetland, Hamedan Province.