

Birds bring jobs to Azerbaijan



Social Impact Report

Besh Barmag Bird Migration Count

Autumn 2018

Editor Tomas Axén Haraldsson

Birding Azerbaijan
Email us

www.birdingaze.blogspot.com
beshbarmag@posteo.de



Birds bring jobs to Azerbaijan

Introduction (English/Azerbaijani).....	3
Job creation.....	5
Local financial gains.....	7
Capacity building – individual & institutional.....	8
Conclusion, Links and media	10



Birds bring jobs to Azerbaijan

Introduction

The sacred rock Besh Barmag overlooks the narrow coastal plain between the Caspian Sea and the foothills of the Greater Caucasus. Field research and explorative activities at Besh Barmag since 2007 have revealed this place to be one of the most important bird migration "bottlenecks" in the entire Eurasia. The monitoring period September – December 2018 was the most extensive to date and a fairly complex operation with paid staff, volunteers, organized monitoring, logistics and communication.

Nearly 3 million migrating birds were counted during the three month period which has sent awe through the international ornithological community. The interest these birds have attracted can be detected also outside the ornithological sphere; in terms of job opportunities, local income, strengthening of local organisations and individuals as well as positive images from a rural part of Azerbaijan. This report will describe these non-ornithological results and values and how a source from Mother Nature, birds in this case, can bring about jobs, income and positive change in rural areas.

A wealth of short reports, photos and impressions from the field can be seen at www.birdingaze.blogspot.com

A research paper with the ornithological result of the period will be published in Sandgrouse, the journal of the Ornithological Society of the Middle East, Caucasus & Central Asia (OSME)

We are grateful to the organisations, charities, tour operators and individuals who have sponsored our work during this and previous seasons.

Kai Gauger

biologist and co-founder of the Besh Barmag Bird Migration Count.



ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF THE MIDDLE EAST
THE CAUCASUS AND CENTRAL ASIA





Birds bring jobs to Azerbaijan

Quşlar pul qazandırır!

Xəzər dənizi və Böyük Qafqaz dağları arasında yerləşən Beşbarmaq ərazisi son illərdə dünyanın vacib ornitoloji ərazilərindən biri olduğunu isbat etmişdir. Son illərdə ərazidə aparılan müşahidə və monitoring proqramları eyni zamanda yerli iqtisadiyyatın canlanmasında, yeni iş imkanlarının formalaşmasında da rol oynamaqdadır. Məlum məsələdir ki, əsas gəlir qaynağı aqro-iqtisadi fəaliyyətlərə dayanan ucqar bölgələrdə əlavə gəlir qaynaqları yaratmaq çətinidir.

Üç aylıq Beşbarmaq Quş Müşahidəsi proqramı çərçivəsində yaradılmış iş imkanları bunlardır:

Akkomondasiya (gecələmək) yeri:

Lahiyə ərzində gecələmə üçün müşahidə məntəqəsindən cənubda, Zarat kəndində yerləşən "Zaratuştra Ailəvi İstirahət" adlanan və 5 ədəd iki mərtəbəli evlərin olduğu kompleks istifadəyə götürülmüşdür. Sözsüz ki, yerli istifadəçilərin az olduğu payız mövsümündə bu kompleksin 3 ay istifadəsi əlavə gəlir deməkdir. Yerli əhalidən olan bəzi xanımlar təmizlik işlərinə köməklik edərək əlavə qazanc əldə etmişlərdir. Kompleksin evlərdən kənarında yerləşən mətbəxi üçün ödəniş olunmuş və yeməklərin hazırlanması üçün Bakıdan aşbaz dəvət olunmuşdur.

Bazarlıq:

Lahiyə müddətində kənddə yerləşən mağazalarda 8000 AZN-dən çox pul ərzaq məhsulları və digər şeylərin alınmasına xərclənmişdir. Yerli dükən sahiblərinin gəlirləri bu 3 ay ərzində 30% artmışdır. Eyni zamanda bəzi şeylərin alınması üçün Siyəzəndəki marketlər, habelə Beşbarmaqda olan dükənlər də istifadə olunmuşdur.

Loqistika:

Gələn ziyarətçilərin Bakıdan Zarata gətirilməsinə və aparılmasına kömək etmək üçün 5 ədəd yerli sürücü işə cəlb olunmuşdur. Lahiyə ərzində onlar ortalama 150 saatlıq məsafə qət edərək əlavə gəlir əldə etmişlərdir. Həmçinin, ərazidə küləyə qarşı qorunmaq üçün tikilmiş kiçik qorucağın hazırlanmasında yerli ustalar cəlb olunmuş və 1600 AZN pul xərclənmişdir.

Lahiyə çərçivəsində yerli tərəfdaş kimi çıxış edən Təbiət Dostları (NFA) təşkilatından olan könüllülər lahiyənin təşkilində, idarə olunmasında, yerli iştirakçıların seçilməsində və digər məsələlərdə əvəzsiz köməklik göstərmişdir.

(translation by Zülfü Ferecli, Azerbaijani ornithologist and project participant)



Birds bring jobs to Azerbaijan



Bird migration counts going on. The sacred rock of Besh Barmag in the background. Photo Michael Heiss

Job creation

The socio-economical situation and opportunities for making a living in rural Azerbaijan are severely limited and strained. The old agro-economy of the past is not in balance with present time challenges and demands and at the same time the fertile ground needed for new ideas and entrepreneurship is often lacking. Remnants from the Soviet era (1923 – 1991) are scattered across the landscape with crumbling industrial complexes, where thousands of people used to work, and the oil boom has largely failed to infuse money and raise living standards in rural Azerbaijan.

In this context, even a limited operation like the present project can provide both jobs, income and a sense of attention and international interest. Each visiting foreigner, each meal and each local transport is an income and the project management has tried persistently to keep the income opportunities for the local inhabitants.



Birds bring jobs to Azerbaijan

The job opportunities being created can be summed up;

Accommodation

The project hired the entire complex called "Zarathustra Istirahat Ailevi" in the village of Zarat, some 7km south of the observation area at Besh Barmag. The premises consists of five simple two-storey holiday units each with 3 beds plus one additional, bathroom and small kitchen. It also has a garden and a small separate kitchen and dining room with seating for about 30 persons. Our project cook used this kitchen and dining room to provide full board for all participants and paying visitors.

The hotel management obviously was delighted to make such good business on a "low season" since the place is mainly used for holidaying families from Baku during the summer months.

Local women villagers were employed as staff for cleaning and laundry during this period. Two individuals were involved and were paid by the hotel management a part time salary for the hours per day they worked.

Cook

For the entire three-month project period the hotel had hired a cook from Baku. His income is estimated to an above-average Azerbaijani monthly salary. His duties apart from preparing three meals per day to the participants present (3-18 persons) was also some general coordination and linking up with the hotel management, cleaning staff and caretaker.

Groceries

The project cooking organisation spent a total of 4.900\$ in the local grocery stores where 2-3 people worked. This is a very small village store so this period of heightened sales is estimated to have increased the turnover by 30% during those three months. Another 500\$ were spent in grocery stores in Siyazan, a town 15km north of Zarat.

The visitors also bought an estimated 100+ meals from the local kebab stalls at the rest houses at Besh Barmag as well as their own supplies from the supermarkets.

Logistics and coordination

A volunteer coordinator was provided from Nature Friends Azerbaijan (NFA). Among his duties were to meet and arrange for the visitors, link up with local authorities and support with technical issues. He was also instrumental in organising and building a wind shelter. The project also extends its great appreciation to NFA for their crucial backoffice work and general support.



Birds bring jobs to Azerbaijan

Transports

Taxi drivers and minibus drivers were employed on a regular basis to take participants from Baku Airport to Zarat and back. The project had arranged a minivan for the main daily transportation purposes.

An estimated total of 150 hours of driving/work for five different drivers constitutes an important part of their income.

The wind shelter

A local craftsman was charged to build a wind shelter (see photo above) for the observation spot. The construction work was done within a few days and costed a total of 1600AZN.



Local produce enjoyed daily during the project. Photo Michael Heiss

Local financial gains

Aside from the jobs created and the individual income for families in the area, other financial gains for the local economy can be noted. Visiting international groups not part of the



Birds bring jobs to Azerbaijan

project operation stopped by for meals, snacks, bathroom visits and shopping. The extensive promotion of Besh Barmag as an international birdwatching destination, including thousands of followers on social media and a news program by BBC Azerbaijan, has resulted in a rise of visitors and it is likely to continue to grow.

A seminar was given in Baku on 3 December and attended by a number of people, including a tour operator, state tv AzTV as well as the head of the Swedish embassy.

Capacity building

To plan, fund, organise and execute such a complex project in a challenging context like rural Azerbaijan is a process of learning, experiencing and strengthening on both institutional and individual levels.

Institutional level

Nature Friends Azerbaijan has been the main partner in Azerbaijan for this project. NFA is the Azerbaijani branch of International Young Nature Friends (IYNF), an international youth organization with more than 120.000 young members across Europe.

NFA have been involved in the creation and development of this wider initiative since 2015. Its leadership have been closely involved in planning the field work, recruit young local participants, communicate in Azeri on web pages and leaflets, organise the logistics and support with administrative work.

An international bird conservation project with this number of participants has not been done in Azerbaijan before and to be involved in that has been useful.

Saida Valadzada, volunteer coordinator with NFA:

"Throughout the birding events for the past years Nature Friends have placed open calls in social media for involvement of new enthusiasts, students of relevant disciplines in bird-watching camps and monitoring. This attracted both ecologists and ornithologists as well as the young people who were interested in birdwatching but were never engaged, in fact. Some of those enthusiasts participated in each event held at least once a year and more than that, they became active NFA members who were involved in decision making process."



Birds bring jobs to Azerbaijan

Individual level

One of the most tangible outcomes of the project has been the personal learning and training of young Azerbaijani naturalists. From basic visitors in nature to skilled field assistants, and some cases also co-leaders with foreign birdwatching tour groups. About ten Azerbaijani nationals, aged 17 to 30, have been involved in both this project as well as the running up Bird Camps done in 2016 and 2017. Four of them are now OSME members. Their own journeys from beginners to skilled birdwatchers are well reflected in three guest blogs at www.osme.org by Zülfü Ferecli, Gunay Behramzade and Leyla Muslim, see links below.



Part of the team during a sunny November day. Zülfü Ferecli, second from left, and Leyla Muslim, fourth from left.

One of the Azerbaijani participants, Leyla Muslim, describes her feelings in a guest blog at the OSME web:

“Everything was different and new for me. I was really impressed. That passion and enthusiasm of birders motivated me so much. I have learned many bird names, which was new for me. I wanted those two weeks never to end. So, I was looking forward to the next project.”

Another participant, Zülfü Ferecli, has joined this and previous activities at Besh Barmag as well as being a co-leader on birdwatching tours in Azerbaijan. He is running a popular YouTube channel on birds in Azerbaijan and currently starting up his own birding guide business.



Birds bring jobs to Azerbaijan

In conclusion, the Besh Barmag Bird Migration Count is not only an internationally widely recognised bird conservation project, it is also develops to a matter of national prestige providing income to the local communities. Building on the recent achievements a further development with local support can make the Besh Barmag Bird Migration Count to a flagship project in the Caucasus and along the Caspian.

This project has strengthened the local capacity and helped foster the Azerbaijani nature conservationists and youth leaders of tomorrow.

Links and media

Main project web Birding Azerbaijan

www.birdingaze.blogspot.com

News program by BBC Azerbaijan (English and Azerbaijani, from autumn 2018)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=53id2G1nvFI#action=share>

Article by Baku Magazine (English, from spring 2017)

<https://baku-magazine.com/conservation/wings-across-caspian/>

Article by 1News (Russian, from autumn 2018)

<http://www.1news.az/news/sezonnoy-migracii-millionov-ptic-cherez-beshbarmag-mozhet-ugrozhat-novaya-strategicheskaya-trassa-foto-video>



Birds bring jobs to Azerbaijan

Bird Camp Besh Barmag documentary (English, from spring 2017) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zZf6-mPuXD&t=18s>

Guest blogs at the OSME web (English and English/Azerbaijani, from 2017-2018)

Gunay Behramzade <https://osme.org/content/azerbaijan-and-besh-barmag-project>

Zülfü Ferecli <https://osme.org/content/i-love-nature-2>

Leyla Muslim <https://osme.org/content/i-love-nature-6>