

PERSONALITY
OF THE MONTH**Walid Salim Basha**

His dream was to be a zoologist, but for social and economic reasons, Walid Salim Basha couldn't realize his dream. In 1995 he earned a bachelor's degree from Al-Quds University in medical laboratory sciences, which became his career. In 2005, Walid returned from Japan where he had been granted an MA and PhD in health sciences (molecular microbiology). He worked for four years at the faculty of allied medical sciences at Arab American University – Jenin, and then moved to the faculty of medicine and health sciences at An-Najah National University, where today he is an assistant professor of microbiology and immunology in the faculty of medicine and health sciences.

In 2006 he made plans to revive his dream and started his own research center (Basha Scientific Centre for Research and Studies) for biodiversity and environmental studies. He chose not to create an NGO since he believes

himself to be an NGI (nongovernmental individual). Through the center, Dr. Basha put Al-Muqata Valley in Jenin on the biodiversity map of Palestine where he recorded more than 40 bird species, including the moorhen, marsh harrier, water rail, and black-winged stilt, in addition to the Egyptian mongoose and coypu (water rat), which Israeli farmers introduced to the area in the mid-twentieth century and freed to the Jordan Valley and Hula.

In cooperation with international NGOs, Dr. Basha built the first environment pathway, which passes through Um-Altoot Forest. And now he has started the first fenced-in national environmental park with Zababdeh Municipality, Anazaha Co., and the Ministry of Agriculture in Raba Forest, which will include the first butterfly and reptile garden, and birding area.

As an alternative method for charcoal production, and in partnership with

World Vision, he introduced the first environment-friendly charcoal production in Yabbad-Jenin to avoid the pollution caused by traditional charcoal production.

Dr. Basha's daily routine includes at least one hour for birding, and he has documented many records for Palestine. In December 2013, he recorded the Black Vulture in Iz-Aldeen Mountains in Jenin, and, for the first time in Palestine, the Yellow-billed Stork in Qana Valley-Salfit in late March 2014. In 2010 he announced the first couple of common mynas as invaders in the West Bank (Jenin), and in 2015, he warned of the danger that this bird could present to the local house-sparrow community and other local birds.

Dr. Basha's mission is to enhance environmental awareness within the population. All new records are published in the local newspapers and on a Facebook page (Jenin Environment). During the past ten years, he has presented five photo exhibitions of his biodiversity records in Jenin and Nablus, and published four brochures – two field guides (birds), one of Jenin butterflies, and one of Palestinian poisonous snakes.

As a volunteer at the Palestine Museum of Natural History in Bethlehem, Dr. Basha believes that creating a healthy environment in Palestine requires the efforts of everyone, including NGOs and NGLs.



The red fox is the most prevalent of the true foxes.



The legs of the Black-winged Stilt make up about sixty percent of its height and give it a feeding advantage in deep water.



The Palestine Sunbird has orange tufts at the sides of the breast that are visible only from close range.