

Threats to fauna at Mouteh Wildlife Refuge in Isfahan Province

Iranica Desk

Mouteh Wildlife Refuge in Isfahan Province is known to everyone as the habitat of the Iranian gazelle; a valuable habitat in the north of Isfahan Province with mountains, hills, and vast plains that is considered an important refuge for various wildlife species.

What has multiplied the importance of this region in the country and even in the Middle East is that Mouteh is one of the best habitats for Iranian gazelles, which harbors the largest number of this valuable species.

In addition, the mountains of this region are also important habitats for wild goats and sheep, which have been trembling for years with the terrifying sounds of explosions, power generators, and treasure hunters drilling machines.

What is important in wildlife sanctuaries is that these natural habitats with specific climatic conditions for wild animals should be safeguarded as much as possible in order to protect the ecosystem and animal species.

Mouteh Wildlife Refuge, with an area of 205,000 hectares, has various terrains that are monitored day and night by only nine rangers; a tough and exhausting task that is complicated enough with the hunting problems and incidents threatening the rangers' lives, but becomes even more complicated when treasure hunters also threaten the lives of the animals.

The first threat of treasure hunters in this area is disrupting the wildlife's tranquility, especially if these operations, usually accompanied by explosions, coincide with the mating and breeding season of the animals.

However, the most serious threat is when



gazelles, goats, and sheep are forced to travel kilometers further to find water, or even leave the Mouteh and enter the free habitats.

The danger in free habitats is lurking wildlife due to the unrestricted movement of ordinary people, from poachers to accidents with passing vehicles and other various damages, which is extremely challenging considering the limited number of rangers to monitor the habitats.

With only one ranger per 10 hectares of land monitored by the Department of Environment in Iran, it is clear that protecting animals would become even more challenging if wildlife were to flee the region. Rasoul Jalali, the head of Mouteh Wildlife Refuge, told IRNA that the rangers recently arrested three individuals who were illegally drilling in the wildlife refuge to unearth artifacts.

He also mentioned that this is not a new occurrence, and similar incidents have taken place in the area in previous years. According to him, a significant number of illegal drilling activities were conducted in the Takht Abbas Khan and Takht Sorkh regions, where the deep holes caught the attention of onlookers.

The explosions that occur in the search for treasures disrupt the peace and tranquility of the animals, leading them to flee the area," Jalali stated. He added that the wildlife leaving the region might venture into an area called Goud-e Khosroabad, where they are at risk of being hunted.

Jalali emphasized that there are no artifacts hidden in the area, and profit-seekers deceive treasure hunters into buying metal detectors.

Head of Meymeh's Cultural Heritage, Handicraft and Tourism Organization Javad Chehrizi said that local reports about excavations are submitted to Police and if there is a report of excavation for the discovery of historical objects, the matter is reported to the Cultural Heritage Protection Unit.

Alireza Jafarizand, an archeologist, said some rocks and highlands are considered as the treasure signs, and cause some individuals to engage in digging at these locations. Highlighting the importance of raising public awareness about illegal digging, he noted that some archaeologists are tasked with identifying signs of hidden treasures in the area, and steps should be taken to prevent these actions.

Sanandaj Bazaar, a gateway to Kurdistan Province's rich cultural heritage

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In many of Iran's historical and prominent cities, remnants of old bazaars stand as testament to their rich commercial past. Sanandaj, the capital city of Kurdistan Province, is no exception to this, boasting a historical roofed bazaar that serves as one of the key tourism attractions in the city.

Considered the primary traditional bazaar in all of Kurdistan Province, the origins of the Sanandaj Bazaar can be traced back approximately 400 years. Constructed during the Safavid era, when Sanandaj served as the capital under the Ardalan rulers, the bazaar drew influence from the architectural styles of its time. Soleiman Khan Ardalan, then the governor of Sanandaj, oversaw its development, firmly establishing the city as the capital of the expansive Kurdistan Province.

Over time, urban developments led to the division of the bazaar into two distinct sections. Presently, the southern part is known as Asef while the northern counterpart is referred to as Sanandaji. The bazaar's unique triangular layout, resembling the Naqsh-e Jahan square

in Isfahan, houses several courtyards, adding to its architectural allure.

Capable of accommodating bustling trade activities, the bazaar originally boasted four entrances, with three of them still in use today. Strategically located at the heart of the city along Enqelab (formerly known as Sirus) street, the bazaar continues to serve as a vital hub for commerce and a focal point for locals, despite the emergence of modern shopping centers in Sanandaj. Preserving traditional artisanal practices such as forging, goldsmithing, and other traditional trades, the bazaar offers a glimpse into the cultural heritage and craftsmanship of the Kurdish tribe. Recognized for its significance, the old Sanandaj bazaar was officially designated as a national heritage site in Iran.

Visitors to Kurdistan Province should not miss the opportunity to explore the vibrant Sanandaj bazaar, a place where shopping transcends mere retail transactions, offering a deeper connection to the region's history, culture, and the enduring traditions of the Kurdish people.

