

AVAYEBOOM BIRD
CONSERVATION SOCIETY

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A Message from the CEO

2024 was a year of staying focused on what truly matters. We didn't try to chase every opportunity or expand into new territories just for the sake of it. Instead, we focused on deepening our existing work: supporting the people and places we've committed to. Whether it was continuing the waterbird census in Hormozgan, strengthening community involvement in Arjan, or empowering volunteers across the country, our goal was to build stronger networks and create lasting impact for birds and the people who share their habitats.

I've always believed conservation is about people as much as it is about wildlife. The success of AvayeBoom has come from the dedication of our team, the passion of volunteers, the trust of communities, and the partnerships we've built with other organizations. Together, we've kept moving forward, even when resources were limited and challenges were many. We've learned to do more with less, to adapt, and to stay rooted in the idea that real change takes time.

This year also marked a personal milestone for me. After nearly a decade, I have decided that this will be my last year as CEO of AvayeBoom. This decision was not made lightly, but I believe it's the right moment to let new energy and ideas guide the organization's future. Watching AvayeBoom grow from a small initiative into one of the most important bird conservation networks in Iran has been one of the proudest chapters of my life. I know the path ahead won't always be easy, but I trust in the people who will continue this journey. Together, we will keep fighting for birds, for nature, and for a more hopeful future.

Thank you all for being part of this journey
Iman Ebrahimi



Workshops



First Workshop on Waterbird Census for volunteers in Iran

In February 2024, AvayeBoom Bird Conservation Society held Iran's first training workshop on the "Mid-winter Waterbird Census" in Bandar Khamir, Hormozgan Province. The workshop aimed to build capacity among nature enthusiasts in bird monitoring and census techniques, following International Waterbird Census (IWC) guidelines developed by Wetlands International.

The course was led by Iman Ebrahimi (AvayeBoom), Meysam Ghasemi (Deputy of Natural Environment and Biodiversity at the Hormozgan DOE), and Fahimeh Goodarzi (Head of Wildlife Office of Hormozgan Province, DOE). Participants received both theoretical and practical training, including fieldwork sessions in natural habitats. The workshop marked an important step toward improving waterbird monitoring and conservation efforts in Iran.



Workshop on Invasive Species and Human Interventions

On October, AvayeBoom Bird Conservation Society held a workshop titled "Invasive Species: The Role of Human Interventions" in collaboration with Tabiat Yaran NGO at the Hemmatabad Community Office in Isfahan. The session was attended by local environmental activists. The workshop covered the impact of invasive species on native biodiversity, key invasive species in Iran, human-driven spread, and control strategies. Participants also discussed effective public outreach methods to prevent the spread of invasive species, with a special focus on urban wildlife feeding practices.



Bird Migration Workshop at "Bird Cafe"

In December, AvayeBoom Bird Conservation Society held a hybrid (in-person and online) workshop on bird migration at the invitation of Bird Cofe. The session was led by Iman Ebrahimi, author of the book Bird Migration, and covered key topics such as the reasons for migration, types of migration, navigation, timing, and the impacts of climate change. The workshop aimed to introduce participants to the wonders of bird migration—one of nature's most fascinating phenomena—and concluded with a discussion on the ecological importance of birds and their migratory journeys.



Bird Awareness Workshop for Boat Operators in Soheili Village, Qeshm Island

On December 9, 2024, AvayeBoom held a training workshop in collaboration with Qeshm Free Zone Environment Office and the Soheili Village Council. Led by AvayeBoom field expert Farnoush Farhadi, the session introduced 80 of local boat operators to the bird species of the mangrove ecosystem and the basics of birdwatching. Participants learned about key wintering migratory birds in the Hara Protected Area and discussed the importance of conserving these habitats. The workshop aimed to promote sustainable ecotourism and strengthen the role of boat operators in bird conservation.



Birdwatching Workshop for mountaineers in Kazeroon, Fars Province

AvayeBoom, in collaboration with Sepehr Mountaineering and Canyoneering Club and the Kazeroon Environmental House, held a birdwatching workshop for mountain hikers. Hosted at Kazeroon Municipality, the event brought together 90 participants eager to learn about bird diversity, behavior, and identification in mountainous regions.

Led by Iman Ebrahimi, IUCN member and author of Bird Migration, the workshop introduced hikers to bird behavior in high-altitude environments and essential birdwatching equipment. The event aimed to empower mountaineers to become allies in bird monitoring and conservation.



Projects



Mid-winter Waterbird Census of Hormozgan Province

The Mid-winter Waterbird Census of Hormozgan marked the third consecutive year of collaborative efforts between AvayeBoom Bird Conservation Society and the Hormozgan Department of Environment. Conducted under the guidelines of the International Waterbird Census (IWC) of Wetlands International, this project aimed to monitor population trends and species diversity of waterbirds and shorebirds in southern Iran—crucial data for shaping conservation strategies, habitat management plans, and national reporting.

Spanning 28,039 hectares of wetlands across Hormozgan Province, the survey achieved an average area coverage of 59%. In total, 16,696 birds were counted across 204 species, including 11 species of raptors and other water-dependent birds. Notable counts included Bar-tailed Godwit (1,064), Great Cormorant (1,015), and Red-necked Phalarope (973). Khour Tiyab, the Hara Protected Area, and Khour Shorno were identified as key hotspots of avian biodiversity.

The project also featured a four-day training workshop for bird enthusiasts and conservationists across Iran, blending theoretical learning with hands-on field surveys. Volunteers joined AvayeBoom experts in the census, highlighting the society's commitment to fostering community involvement and capacity building in bird conservation across the country.



Phase 3 of the Flagship Species Project in Arjan International Wetland

The Ruddy Shelduck Conservation Project in Arjan International Wetland continues as a unique, community-driven conservation model in Iran. Originally initiated with support from UNDP and the Mirase Parishan Association, the project entered a new phase with funding from Divar online platform. For the first time in Iran, a waterbird—the Ruddy Shelduck (*Tadorna ferruginea*)—was selected as a flagship species through a participatory process involving nomads, villagers, and local stakeholders. The Ruddy Shelduck plays a critical role in maintaining the Arjan Wetland ecosystem. Population monitoring began four years ago, and this year recorded the highest count to date: 580 birds, up from 320 the previous year. With Divar's support, the team launched an extensive community outreach program, including school and mosque sessions, engaging infographics, posters, and distribution of illustrated materials such as pins, coloring sheets, keychains, and tote bags featuring the Ruddy Shelduck.

Future plans include creating a large Ruddy Shelduck statue in the village square, mural paintings in schools, and promoting eco-tourism in Arjan to enhance livelihoods and deepening community ties to conservation.



Monitoring the Breeding Status of Western Reef Heron in Harra Protected Area

In 2024, AvayeBoom expanded its monitoring efforts to a new site, focusing on the breeding population of the Western Reef Heron (*Egretta gularis*) in the Harra Protected Area, Qeshm Island. This waterbird species is a vital part of the mangrove ecosystem, and monitoring its breeding sites helps assess ecosystem health, habitat quality, and potential population declines.

In July, AvayeBoom field researchers, along with local guides, conducted a 38-kilometer boat survey through the mangrove forests of Qeshm under harsh field conditions, including 40°C temperatures and over 70% humidity. They identified and geotagged 68 active Western Reef Heron nests during the survey.

The mangroves of Qeshm and Bandar Khamir are among the most important breeding habitats for the species in Iran. These Ramsar-listed wetlands hold high ecological value, and their protection is critical for the sustainability of coastal ecosystems and waterbird populations.



Breeding Bird Census on Shidvar Island

Since 1972, the Iranian Department of Environment has monitored the breeding populations of terns (*Sterna* spp.) across the country, with a focus on Shidvar Island beginning in 2002. From 2021 onward, this important census has been conducted on Shidvar and Bani Farur islands through collaboration between the Hormozgan Department of Environment and AvayeBoom Bird Conservation Society.

In the summer of 2024, experts from both organizations surveyed Shidvar Island to assess the breeding status and population estimates of key seabird species. The survey focused on three tern species: the Lesser Crested Tern (*Thalasseus bengalensis*), Bridled Tern (*Onychoprion anaethetus*), and White-cheeked Tern (*Sterna repressa*).

Shidvar Island, an uninhabited island in the Persian Gulf, plays a critical role as a breeding site for these species. The annual census, conducted in late spring and early summer, aims to monitor population trends, document threats to breeding birds, and support conservation planning for these vital seabird colonies.



Birdwatching Events

Birdwatching has been a core part of AvayeBoom's mission since the very beginning. For nine years, we have regularly organized birdwatching walks to connect people with nature and foster appreciation for the rich birdlife of Iran. These walks are typically held once a month and are open to everyone, from expert birdwatchers seeking community to curious newcomers hoping to discover birds for the first time.

We provide binoculars and field guides to participants, ensuring an accessible and educational experience for all. These walks are more than just outings; they serve as an introduction to bird conservation and often inspire participants to engage further with AvayeBoom's programs. In 2024, walks were held in Isfahan (at Saffeh Forest Park, Zayandeh Rood riverside, and Bagh-e-Javan) and in Tehran (at Ashghabad and Salehiyeh wetlands, and other local parks), with over 80 people joining across events. This initiative continues to build a growing, informed, and connected community of bird enthusiasts across Iran.



NEWS



AvayeBoom Recognized as a GBIF Data Publisher

AvayeBoom Bird Conservation Society has been officially recognized by the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF) as a trusted data publisher representing Iran. GBIF is a global network that collects, manages, and openly shares biodiversity data from verified sources. It plays a key role in documenting species distributions and informing conservation efforts, including data used by the IUCN.



AvayeBoom is now the fifth organization in Iran accepted as a GBIF data publisher in Iran, marking an important step in contributing reliable bird data from Iran to the international scientific and conservation community.

AvayeBoom Joins Forces with Wader Quest

Iran is one of the most important host countries for waterbirds and shorebirds along the Central Asian Flyway. In light of alarming global reports regarding declining populations and the downgraded conservation status of five shorebird species in Iran—now listed as Vulnerable or Near Threatened—AvayeBoom has taken action to strengthen international cooperation for the protection of these birds.



In response to an invitation from Wader Quest, a global charity dedicated to shorebird conservation, AvayeBoom participated in the international event WCWW (World Shorebirds Day) to help raise awareness and public attention toward the plight of shorebird species.

Meeting with Shina Ansari, Head of the Department of Environment

Shina Ansari, the newly appointed Head of Iran's Department of Environment, held her first official meeting with environmental activists and wildlife experts on the third day of her term. The meeting took place on August 30, 2025, at the Presidential Office of the Department. Iman Ebrahimi attended the meeting on behalf of AvayeBoom and as a bird conservation expert. Representing the organization, he called for a shift in Iran's bird conservation strategy, emphasizing the need to prioritize threats and develop targeted action plans to address the most pressing challenges to bird survival in the country.



Record-Breaking Traffic to AvayeBoom's Website

AvayeBoom's website has long served as a vital platform for sharing our projects, research, and environmental stories with the public. In 2024, we witnessed unprecedented engagement with our digital presence. On October 15, the site reached a new record with 1,216 visitors in a single day. Over the course of the year, more than 189,000 users accessed the website—most arriving through organic search, indicating growing public interest in birds and conservation in Iran.

Academic Study Highlights AvayeBoom's Social Entrepreneurship Model

In 2024, a peer-reviewed article published in the *International Journal of Geography and Tourism Research* analyzed AvayeBoom Bird Conservation Society's strategies in promoting bird-based ecotourism through social entrepreneurship.

Authored by Sanaz Tamimzadeh—former HR manager at AvayeBoom and now a graduate student in tourism studies in Turkey—the research was based on semi-structured interviews with eight core members of the NGO.



The findings identified community engagement, education, social capital building, cross-sectoral collaboration, and diversification of ecotourism services as key strategies enabling AvayeBoom to support sustainable tourism while advancing conservation goals in Iran.

Connecting Youth with Diwar's Wildlife Monitoring Initiative

As part of the third phase of AvayeBoom's collaboration with Divar—one of Iran's largest online marketplaces—to combat illegal wildlife trade, AvayeBoom facilitated a new approach to youth involvement. At Divar's request, AvayeBoom introduced a team of dedicated young nature enthusiasts and student researchers to the platform's content moderation team.

During the initial coordination meeting, it was agreed that these youth volunteers would be granted special accounts on Divar, enabling them to directly access and remove posts related to the sale of wild animals. This initiative not only enhances online wildlife monitoring but also empowers a new generation of conservation-minded citizens.

Birds seen last year

- African Pied Crow Recorded for the Third Time in Iran

The African Pied Crow (*Corvus albus*) was observed and photographed on Qeshm Island by Mohammad Dakhteh and reported to AvayeBoom on March 4, 2024. This marks the third national record for the species in Iran—all occurring in 2024. The sightings strongly suggest that this species is now part of Iran's official bird checklist.



- White-eyed Buzzard Spotted in Bandar Deylam

A rare White-eyed Buzzard (*Butastur teesa*) was observed and photographed in Bandar Deylam by Dr. Shiva Mirdamadi, a volunteer of AvayeBoom. Native to the Indian subcontinent, this raptor is only occasionally seen in southern Iran, making its appearance on the Bushehr—Khuzestan border a remarkable record.



- Brahminy Kite Observed in Qeshm's Mangrove Forests

On November 23, 2024, Mr. Ebrahim Khanghah reported a sighting of a Brahminy Kite (*Haliastur indus*) in Qeshm's mangrove forests. With very few records in Iran, this majestic bird of prey is believed to have one of its westernmost populations here, making the observation especially significant.



Rescue and Rehabilitation Efforts in 2024

In 2024, AvayeBoom Bird Conservation Society continued its vital role in rescuing and rehabilitating injured wild birds in Iran. Despite limited resources, our team handled 12 cases directly back into the wild. Unfortunately, some birds, including swifts, a young owl, and a buzzard suffering from poisoning, did not survive due to the severity of their injuries or the challenges of hand-rearing orphaned chicks. Many birds continue to be admitted annually, a reflection of the increasing human-wildlife interactions in urban environments. In addition to direct care, AvayeBoom has strengthened its role as a consultant, guiding the public and local vets in 41 cases to safely release birds themselves, an approach driven by our limited budget and resources.

Our work relies entirely on volunteer contributions and community support. While our capacity is small, each bird rescued is a testament to the collective effort of AvayeBoom, local communities, and environmental authorities working together for Iran's avian wildlife.

Released	count	Species name
2	3	Kestrel
1	1	Chukar partridge
0	2	Common swift (chick)
1	2	Common swift (adult)
0	1	common buzzard
0	1	little bittern
0	1	Long-eared Owl (chick)
0	1	Sparrowhawk (injured wing)
4	12	Total