

Technical Working Group on Conservation of the Liben Lark and its Habitat in the Somali Regional State, Ethiopia



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The Liben Lark Research Team

Jigjiga, Ethiopia

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1. Background

The Somali Region is very well known for its rich biodiversity. It has a diverse species of trees, wild animals and birds. Among the bird species is the Liben Lark (*Heteromirafrarcheri*) which is only found in the Somali Region and the Liben Plain in Oromia. The Liben Lark is an endemic species to Ethiopia which cannot be found anywhere else in the world. The bird species is Critically Endangered and thus on the brink of extinction.

The Liben Lark is highly dependent on grasslands for its survival. It uses the grasslands to find its food, to build its nest and to raise its young. Within the Somali region, the Liben Lark can only be found in the Haroreys Woreda of Fafen Zone. The habitat in Haroreys Woreda is ideal for the Liben Lark because of the availability of extensive open grasslands. Given the ongoing degradation of its grassland habitat due to land-use changes, in recent years, the population of the Liben Lark has been dramatically decreasing and driving the species towards extinction.

This has called for an urgent need for coordinated conservation efforts. To facilitate future multi-sectoral cooperation, integrate research and development strategies, and provide guidance for implementing effective conservation actions to save the Liben Lark and its habitat a “Technical Working Group” has been established on the 5th of October, 2024 in the Somali Regional city of Jigjiga. A half day workshop was called to engage Stakeholders, carry out consultation and form a Technical Working Group (TWG) for the Conservation of the Liben Lark. The venue for the workshop and establishment of the Technical Working Group was held in the Hall of Somali Regional State Livestock and Pastoral Development Bureau.

2. Objective:

Working in Collaboration with the Ethiopian Wildlife and Natural History Society (EWNHS) and member Institutions, the main objective of the TWG is to guide, coordinate, and oversee the development and implementation of strategies, programs and projects for the conservation of the Liben Lark and its Habitat in the Region and Project Implementation Areas.

3. Composition:

The TWG will consist of representatives from the following member institutions:

No	Member Institutions	Departments	Positions
1	Environmental Protection and Rural Land Administration Bureau	Biodiversity development conservation departments	Chairperson

		Rural land	
		Administration and uses directorate director	
2	Culture and Tourism Bureau	Tourism development research and marketing Culture development directorate	Co-chairperson
3	Livestock and Pastoral Development Bureau	Forage development and Rangeland management	Secretary
4	Agriculture Bureau	Crop development Directorate Natural resource management Directorate	Member
5	Investment and Development Bureau	Investment promotion Directorate director	Member
6	Pastoral and agro-postural Research Institute	Rangeland and forest Research Directorate	Member
7	Jigjiga University	College of dry land agriculture Wildlife and ecotourism management	Member
8	Fafen Zone Administrative Office	Fafan chairman	Member
9	Haroreys District Administrative Office	Harorays chairman	Member
10	SRS President Office		Member
11	SRS Peace and security bureau		Member
12	SRS Police Commission		Member

Technical experts: Representatives from relevant NGOs, International Research Institutes and development partners may be included as needed.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

4.1 General Roles and Responsibilities of the TWG

In Collaboration with the Ethiopian Wildlife and Natural History Society (EWNHS) and the Liben Lark Research Team, the Technical Working Group and Member Institutions will:

- Foster cooperation between the member institutions to ensure a unified approach to the conservation of the Liben Lark and its habitat.
- Liaise with relevant national and international stakeholders, such as NGOs, research institutions, and conservation bodies.
- Provide technical inputs and recommendations to the regional government on policies related to critically endangered wildlife species (with a particular emphasis on Liben Lark in this case) and management their habitat (the rangeland in this case as well).
- Advocate for legislative and regulatory reforms that enhance the protection of critically endangered wildlife species (in this case Liben Lark) and the grassland ecosystems
- Identify priority areas for conservation based on scientific research and traditional knowledge.
- Provide technical support and guidance on sustainable land use, habitat restoration, and community engagement for conservation.
- Organize capacity-building programs for government officials, local communities, and other stakeholders to promote sustainable management of the critically endangered Liben Lark and its habitat.
- Develop a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework to assess the effectiveness of conservation measures and participatory level of community-based Intervention Project
- Ensure that conservation activities are evidence-based, incorporating data on Liben Lark population trends, habitat quality, and human impact.
- Identify funding opportunities and develop proposals to secure financial support from national and international donors.
- Facilitate partnerships with NGOs, private sector, and development partners to co-fund and support conservation projects.

4.2 Specific professional Roles and Responsibilities of TWG member institutions

4.2.1 SRS Pastoral Development Bureau

(With Emphasis on Forage Development and Rangeland Management Directorate)

The Forage Development and Rangeland Management Directorate plays a crucial role in ensuring that sustainable practices are implemented to conserve grassland ecosystems, particularly those that serve as critical habitats for the Liben Lark. In collaboration with EWNHS and the Liben Lark Research Team, the specific roles and responsibilities include but not limited to:

- Provide technical and professional support in assessing the carrying capacity of rangelands to ensure that livestock densities are appropriate, avoiding overgrazing and degradation of important habitats.
- Develop and recommend optimal grazing strategies to balance livestock needs with the ecological health of the Liben Lark.
- Collaborate with EWNHS and other stakeholders to create land use plans that prioritize both livestock production and conservation of the Liben Lark.
- Designate protected grazing areas or rotational grazing systems to preserve critical habitat zones of the Liben Lark
- Promote the cultivation of indigenous grasses that are known to support the Liben Lark and other wildlife species
- Collaborate in establish forage development, forage banks and reserves in key areas to reduce pressure on natural grasslands, particularly during the dry season or periods of drought.
- Ensure forage reserves are managed and harvested sustainably, considering both the needs of pastoralists and the ecological importance of rangelands.
- Lead rangeland restoration efforts, focusing on reseeded degraded areas with native grasses and restoring water resources such as ponds and wetlands critical for livestock, the Liben Lark and other coexisting faunas.
- Organize training programs for pastoralists and community leaders on sustainable rangeland management, focusing on practices that protect grassland ecosystems while maintaining livestock productivity.
- Promote alternative livelihoods and grazing practices that reduce pressure on critical habitats, such as promoting stall-feeding or controlled grazing zones.
- Assist in developing strategies to resolve conflicts between conservation goals and livestock grazing needs, ensuring that local communities and pastoralists are engaged in conservation activities.
- Foster collaboration between pastoralists, local government, and conservationists to ensure that rangeland management strategies are inclusive and consider local needs

4.2.2 SRS Tourism and Culture Bureau

(With Emphasis on Tourism development research and marketing)

The Tourism Department plays a key role in promoting eco-tourism, raising awareness, and contributing to the sustainable development of areas where conservation efforts are focused. With regard to the conservation of grasslands and the Liben Lark habitat, the department can contribute by integrating tourism with conservation efforts, engaging local communities, and enhancing economic benefits through sustainable tourism. In

collaboration with EWNHS and the Liben Lark Research Team, below are the specific roles and responsibilities for the department during conservation interventions:

- Work with the conservation project to integrate the Liben Lark Habitat as critically endangered bird species conservation area.
- Promote eco-tourism within the focusing on the Liben Lark's habitat and surrounding grasslands.
- Collaborate with environmental and rangeland management departments to establish zoning regulations that limit tourism activities in highly sensitive or critical habitat areas.
- Ensure that tourism development is low-impact, preserving critical habitat areas while providing income opportunities for local communities.
- Work with the conservation project team to meet visitor carrying capacity limits to prevent over-tourism, which could degrade grassland ecosystems and disturb the Liben Lark Habitat especially during the breeding season.
- Collaborate with the intervention project in developing tourism infrastructure (e.g., bird-watching stations, eco-lodges) in ways that support conservation objectives, minimizing habitat disturbance and promoting bird view opportunities.
- Support and promote ****community-based tourism**** ventures, ensuring that local communities directly benefit from tourism linked to the Liben Lark and Rangeland conservation.
- Provide training and capacity building for community members in tourism-related skills, such as guiding, hospitality, and managing eco-tourism enterprises.
- Establish a system for regularly evaluating the impact of tourism on the Liben Lark conservation Habitat and the Rangeland.

4.2.3 SRS Environmental Protection and Rural Land Administration Bureau

(With Emphasis on the Rural Land Administration and Biodiversity Conservation and Development Departments/Directorates)

Department of Rural Land Administration and Uses

This department is responsible for the allocation of land needed for conservation, proper land allocation, legal compliance, and ensuring that the interests of local communities are addressed. In collaboration with EWNHS and the Liben Lark Research Team, the following are the specific roles and responsibilities for the department.

- Work with the conservation project team, local communities and other relevant stakeholders to identify and prioritize key areas that need to be expropriated for the conservation of the Liben Lark.
- Ensure the conservation area includes critical habitats like breeding grounds, feeding areas, and mobility corridors that are essential for the survival of the species.
- Follow established legal and administrative procedures to expropriate land for conservation purposes in a way that is compliant with national and regional laws.

- Ensure all allocations are done transparently and fairly, following the laws and regulations of Ethiopia's and the SRS rural land allocation framework.
- Collaborate with local landowners, pastoralists, and communities to ensure that land tenure and usage rights are properly considered and respected during allocation processes.
- Engage local communities, landowners, and pastoralists in consultative processes to explain the importance of land allocation for conservation, as well as their roles and responsibilities.
- Work with legal authorities to ensure that customary land rights and traditional land use systems are respected in allocation processes, minimizing conflicts with local communities.
- Ensure that all conservation land is clearly demarcated and recorded in the official land registry, preventing illegal encroachment or land use.
- Issue the necessary land titles and legal documents that formally recognize the expropriated land as protected conservation areas.
- Establish mechanisms to protect expropriated land from illegal settlement, agricultural expansion, or commercial exploitation after it has been designated for conservation.
- Enforce penalties for violations of land use regulations within conservation areas, including illegal grazing or construction, and ensure regular monitoring of compliance

Department of Biodiversity Conservation and Development

In the case of the Liben Lark, which is critically endangered and limited to specific grassland habitats, the department's responsibilities encompass species protection, habitat management, scientific research, and public awareness. In collaboration with EWNHS and the Liben Lark Research Team, the following are the specific roles and responsibilities for the department during conservation interventions for the Liben Lark and its grassland ecosystems.

- Develop and implement a “Species Conservation Action Plan” specifically targeting the critically endangered Liben Lark, identifying key actions to prevent further population decline and ensure the species' long-term survival.
- Carry out discussion and consultation with decision makers so that critical habitats for the Liben Lark are formally designated as community protected areas, with strict regulations on land use and human activities to prevent further habitat loss.
- Collaborate with the Department of Rural Land Administration to secure legal protection for these areas through land allocation and ensure effective enforcement of conservation laws.
- Support efforts to restore degraded grasslands by reseeded with native grass species, controlling invasive plants, and preventing overgrazing in the Liben Lark's habitat.
- Establish and maintain nest protection programs and other field-based initiatives to directly safeguard the breeding success of the Liben Lark.

- Develop and implement a species monitoring program to regularly assess the population size, breeding success, and survival rates of the Liben Lark.
- Monitor habitat quality in the Liben Lark's range, tracking changes in vegetation cover, prey availability, and other factors that impact the species' survival.
- Provide education and awareness programs to inform local stakeholders about the importance of protecting the Liben Lark and other biodiversity, emphasizing the ecological and cultural value of the species and its habitat.
- Design ****educational programs**** for schools and community groups that focus on biodiversity conservation, the Liben Lark's endangered status, and the ecological services provided by healthy grasslands.
- Develop and submit proposals to international conservation donors, governments, and other stakeholders to secure funding for conservation projects focused on the Liben Lark and its habitat.
- Ensure that sufficient resources are allocated for on-the-ground conservation activities, such as habitat restoration and species monitoring.

4.2.4 SRS Pastoral and Agro-pastoral Research Institute

(With special Emphasis on Forestry and Rangeland Research)

The Department of Forestry and Rangeland Research plays a vital role in providing scientific knowledge, data, and recommendations to support the conservation of endangered species like the Liben Lark and their associated ecosystems. The department's activities are centred on conducting research, developing strategies for species and habitat conservation, monitoring biodiversity, and ensuring sustainable rangeland management. In collaboration with EWNHS and the Liben Lark Research Team, the following are the specific roles and responsibilities for the department during conservation interventions for the Liben Lark and grassland ecosystems.

- Monitor the ecosystem health and biodiversity trends in critical habitats to identify emerging threats and assess the effectiveness of conservation interventions.
- Research the ecological processes that sustain grassland and rangeland ecosystems in the Liben Lark Habitat, including plant species composition, soil health, hydrology, and the impacts of grazing.
- Develop strategies for sustainable rangeland management in collaboration with Forage Development and Rangeland Management Directorate of SRS Pastoral Development Bureau
- Conduct research on the presence and impact of invasive species (both flora and fauna) in and around the Liben Lark Conservation area and develop management strategies to control or eradicate invasive species
- Identify new areas with suitable grassland that are habitat of the Liben Lark.
- Work closely with other government departments such as the Department of Biodiversity Conservation, the Bureau of Livestock and Pastoral Development, and

Rural Land Administration to ensure a coordinated approach to wildlife conservation and sustainable land use.

- Provide training and capacity-building programs for local communities, particularly pastoralists, to improve their knowledge and skills in sustainable rangeland management, biodiversity conservation, and wildlife monitoring.
- Produce scientific reports and publications based on research findings related to the Liben Lark, biodiversity, and rangeland health. These reports should be shared with policymakers, conservation partners, and the broader scientific community.
- Carry out research on the impact of the conservation and intervention projects on local communities taking baseline data of intervened communities and conducting periodic socioeconomic survey in collaboration with the socioeconomic research directorate of the Institute.

4.2.5 SRS Agricultural Bureau

(With Emphasis on the Department of Crop Production and Development as well as Natural Resource Management)

The Department of Crop Production and Development is responsible for overseeing agricultural practices and ensuring that crop production meets regional food security and economic goals. However, in areas where agricultural expansion threatens important ecosystems like the grasslands critical for the Liben Lark, the department has a crucial role to play in balancing agricultural development with biodiversity conservation. In collaboration with EWNHS and the Liben Lark Research Team the following are the specific roles and responsibilities for the departments during interventions aimed at conserving the “Liben Lark” and its grassland habitat, particularly in the context of mitigating the impacts of agricultural expansion.

- Coordinate with the Department of Rural Land Administration and other relevant departments to ensure that land-use planning integrates both agricultural needs and conservation priorities, particularly in areas that are home to the Liben Lark.
- Develop zoning regulations that designate buffer zones and “no-go areas” around critical habitats for the Liben Lark to prevent agricultural encroachment into sensitive grasslands.
- Promote the adoption of sustainable agricultural practices that minimize the conversion of grasslands into croplands, such as agroforestry, conservation agriculture, and crop rotation, which enhance soil fertility and reduce the need for expanding farmland.
- Advocate for “land/agricultural intensification” (improving productivity on existing farmland) as an alternative to agricultural expansion, thereby reducing pressure on grassland habitats.
- Collaborate with the regional research institute, map areas where agricultural expansion is encroaching into the Liben Lark’s habitat and monitor and check the rate of habitat loss due to farming activities.

- Promote the use of agro-ecological farming practices that maintain ecosystem services and biodiversity conservation and compatible with the preservation of grassland ecosystems.
- Promote the establishment of “buffer crops” around sensitive grassland areas that can serve as transitional zones between intensive agriculture and conservation areas. Buffer cropping can reduce the negative edge effects of farming on the Liben Lark’s habitat.
- Encourage farmers to maintain “habitat corridors” and patches of natural vegetation within and around their farms, ensuring connectivity between grassland habitats and allowing the movement of wildlife.
- Provide training and educational programs to farmers and agricultural stakeholders on the importance of conserving grasslands and the critically endangered status of the Liben Lark. Emphasize the need to balance agricultural expansion with the protection of critical habitats.
- Raise awareness about the role of grasslands in maintaining ecosystem services such as water regulation, soil fertility, and carbon sequestration, which benefit agriculture in the long term.
- Work with local communities and pastoralists to ****promote alternative livelihoods**** that reduce dependency on expanding croplands, such as sustainable livestock grazing, eco-tourism, or value-added agricultural products (e.g., organic certifications).
- Engage in community-led conservation efforts, where farmers play a role in protecting grasslands by voluntarily setting aside land for conservation in exchange for incentives or technical support.
- Develop and implement “incentive programs” for farmers who adopt “wildlife-friendly agricultural practices” or agree to preserve sections of their land as grassland habitat. Incentives could include tax breaks, financial compensation, or access to sustainable farming resources.
- Promote “payment for ecosystem services (PES)” schemes that reward farmers for conserving grassland areas that provide essential ecosystem services, such as Liben Lark Conservation, carbon sequestration or water retention, which benefit both agriculture and biodiversity.
- Provide access to “sustainable farming technologies” and practices that enhance productivity on existing farmland, thereby reducing the need for expansion into grassland habitats. This could include access to improved seed varieties, soil conservation techniques, and irrigation technologies.
- Mobilize resources from regional and international agricultural and conservation programs to support sustainable farming projects that align with the goals of ecosystem conservation and protection of the Liben lark habitat.
- Develop and enforce regulations that ****limit agricultural expansion**** into protected or sensitive grassland areas. Collaborate with the ****Department of Rural Land Administration**** to ensure that land-use regulations are adhered to and that farmers are aware of legal restrictions on land conversion.

4.2.6 Jigjiga University

(With emphasis on College of Dry Land Agriculture & Ecotourism Management)

Jigjiga University's College of Dry Land Agriculture & Ecotourism Management is well-positioned to provide critical research, education, and technical support for the conservation of the Liben Lark and the protection of grassland ecosystems. As a leading academic institution in the region, the college can play a key role in advancing sustainable practices, ecotourism, and habitat conservation, while training the next generation of conservationists and ecotourism managers. In collaboration with EWNHS, the Liben Lark Research Team and other TWG member Institutions, the following are the specific roles and responsibilities of the college in conservation efforts for the Liben Lark and its habitat.

- Conduct detailed research on the Liben Lark's ecology, behaviour, and habitat requirements, including its feeding habits, breeding ecology, and population dynamics.
- Identify and quantify the main threats to the Liben Lark, such as habitat degradation, climate change, predation, and human-induced land use changes.
- Perform ****biodiversity assessments**** of the Liben Plain and surrounding areas to document the full range of species that depend on the grassland ecosystem, ensuring that conservation efforts target the entire ecosystem, not just the Liben Lark.
- Conduct comprehensive research on the grassland ecosystems that serve as the habitat for the Liben Lark. This research should focus on habitat requirements, threats to the ecosystem, and best practices for restoration and management.
- Investigate the ecological interactions between the grassland environment, wildlife, and human activities (e.g., livestock grazing and agriculture) to provide a knowledge base for sustainable land management strategies.
- Engage in habitat monitoring and work closely with conservation organizations to assess the effectiveness of ongoing conservation interventions and identify areas where additional protection is needed.
- Develop and implement training programs for students focused on biodiversity conservation, habitat management, and sustainable agriculture, with a particular focus on Liben Lark Habitat.
- Incorporate field-based learning opportunities where students can actively participate in conservation projects, conducting field research and supporting habitat restoration efforts.
- Provide specialized training in ecotourism management, equipping students with the skills necessary to manage sustainable tourism operations that protect and promote the region's unique biodiversity, including the Liben Lark.
- Develop courses that integrate sustainable land-use practices, community engagement, and eco-friendly business models in tourism, ensuring that future ecotourism initiatives contribute to the conservation of grassland habitats.

- Engage in public education campaigns aimed at raising awareness about the critically endangered status of the Liben Lark and the importance of conserving its grassland habitat.
- Organize workshops, seminars, and public talks for local communities, stakeholders, and government officials to promote environmental stewardship and conservation ethics.
- Support the development of community-led conservation initiatives where local stakeholders are empowered to take an active role in protecting the grasslands. This could include community monitoring programs, habitat restoration projects, and sustainable grazing practices.
- Facilitate participatory research where local communities contribute to data collection and habitat monitoring, fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility for the conservation of the Liben Lark.
- Establish long-term monitoring programs to assess the health of the grassland ecosystems and the effectiveness of conservation interventions for the Liben Lark. This includes tracking changes in land use, species populations, and habitat quality.
- Collaborate with the Department of Forestry and Rangeland Research to ensure that research findings are integrated into management plans and used to guide adaptive management strategies.

4.3 Specific Roles of Technical Working Groups that play Administrative Roles

4.3.1 Somali Regional State President's Office

The Somali Regional State President's Office holds a pivotal position in setting the political and strategic direction for the region's development, including conservation efforts. As the highest governing body in the Somali Regional State, it plays a key role in mobilizing resources, shaping policy, and ensuring the alignment of various governmental agencies, local authorities, and communities in the conservation of the critically endangered Liben Lark and its grassland habitat. Below are the specific roles and responsibilities of the President's Office during the conservation intervention.

- Ensure that conservation priorities are integrated into the region's long-term planning, including economic development, land use, and environmental protection strategies. The office should position the conservation of the Liben Lark as a key issue on the regional political agenda.
- Lead the development and approval of policies and regulations that support the protection of critically endangered fauna and other species.
- Provide legal backing to the TWG, EWNHS, the Liben Lark Research Team and Member institutions to engage with international donors, such as multilateral environmental funds and international conservation organizations, to secure additional resources for the long-term conservation of the species and its habitat.

- Create the conditions for the TWG to advocate for the Liben Lark's conservation at the national level, ensuring that the federal government recognizes the importance of protecting the bird and its habitat. Lobby for national funding, legal protections, and research support for the Liben Lark.
- Provide legal support to the TWG to engage in international diplomacy to bring attention to the Liben Lark's plight. The President's Office can position the Somali Regional State as a leader in global conservation efforts and secure international partnerships for biodiversity protection.
- Provide final decision for the allocation of land for conservation purposes, ensuring that the process follows legal procedures.
- Approves the designation of critical grassland habitats as community protected areas, ensuring that conservation zones are legally recognized and that adequate measures are put in place to protect these areas from agricultural expansion, infrastructure development, and other threats.
- Support the collaborative effort of the TWG member institutions and EWNHS in the development of eco-tourism as a potential revenue stream for the region, ensuring that it is developed in a way that protects natural habitats and promotes the conservation of species like the Liben Lark.
- Receive regular reports from the various implementing agencies and take corrective actions when necessary.

4.3.2 Fafen Zone and Haroreys Woreda Administrative Offices

The Fafen Zone Administrative Office plays a key role in coordinating and overseeing various conservation efforts in the region, particularly when it comes to managing land-use, community engagement, and ensuring that regional policies align with the conservation objectives for the critically endangered Liben Lark and its grassland habitat. As a government body, the Fafen Zone Administration is crucial in implementing conservation interventions, supporting local communities, and ensuring that development initiatives are in harmony with environmental sustainability.

The Haroreys District Administrative Office plays a pivotal role in local governance, coordination, and the implementation of conservation initiatives for the critically endangered Liben Lark and its grassland habitat. As the main administrative body at the district level, it is responsible for ensuring that local communities, government departments, and stakeholders align their activities with conservation goals. Below are the specific roles and responsibilities of the Haroreys District Administrative Office in conservation efforts.

In collaboration with EWNHS, the Liben Lark Research Team and TWG member Institutions and the research team the following are the specific roles that the two administrative offices can play:

- Collaborate with the TWG, EWNHS, the Liben Lark Research Team and Member Institutions in efforts to raise awareness among local communities, pastoralists, and farmers about the importance of conserving the Liben Lark and the broader grassland ecosystem. This includes explaining the long-term benefits of habitat protection for livelihoods, biodiversity, and regional sustainability.
- Organize community meetings, workshops, and outreach programs in collaboration with Jigjiga University and local NGOs to educate residents on sustainable land-use practices, the impacts of overgrazing, and the need for responsible agricultural expansion.
- Collaborate with the Department of Rural Land Administration to implement zoning regulations that designate protected areas for conservation, agricultural land, and sustainable grazing, ensuring that human activities do not further degrade the Liben Lark's habitat.
- Ensure that land-use changes, such as agricultural expansion or development projects, are carefully reviewed and assessed for their potential environmental impacts on the grassland ecosystems.
- Work with local authorities to ensure that the Liben Lark's habitat is given appropriate legal protection, such as being designated as conservation areas or community-managed reserves, where human activity is regulated to support biodiversity conservation.
- Foster community participation in conservation efforts that involve traditional leaders, pastoralist groups, and women's groups in decision-making processes related to land management and conservation.
- Provide legal support for community-led initiatives such as community-based natural resource management programs that empower local communities to take responsibility for managing and protecting the grasslands and the species that inhabit them.
- Work closely with the Bureau of Environmental Protection and Rural Land Administration and other relevant agencies to enforce environmental protection laws, particularly those that regulate land-use, agricultural expansion, and grazing practices that impact the grassland ecosystem and the Liben Lark.
- Ensure that any illegal activities, such as unauthorized farming or grazing in protected areas, are identified and addressed through appropriate legal or administrative actions.
- Oversee the implementation and compliance of land management practices in the zone, ensuring that policies aimed at protecting the grasslands are adhered to by local communities, farmers, and developers.
- Establish a system for reporting and monitoring land-use practices in collaboration with local government agencies, to ensure the sustainable management of the grasslands

- Act as a mediator in resolving conflicts that may arise between different land users, such as pastoralists, farmers, and conservationists, ensuring that all stakeholders' concerns are addressed while prioritizing the conservation of the grassland habitat.
- Facilitate dialogue between local communities and government authorities to ensure that conservation efforts do not lead to tensions or grievances, and that alternative livelihoods are provided where necessary to mitigate the impact of restricted land use.
- Encourage peaceful coexistence among local communities by promoting equitable access to natural resources, particularly grazing land and water, while ensuring that the grassland habitat remains protected from overuse or degradation.

4.3.3 SRS Security Bureau and The Police Commission

The Somali Regional State Peace and Security Bureau plays a critical role in ensuring a safe and secure environment for the successful implementation of conservation efforts, particularly in areas prone to conflict over resources, land, and livelihoods. The Bureau's involvement is vital in maintaining peace and preventing conflicts between different stakeholders, including pastoralist communities, conservation agencies, and government departments, especially in the context of conserving the critically endangered Liben Lark and its grassland habitat. Below are the specific roles and responsibilities of the Peace and Security Bureau during conservation interventions.

The Somali Regional State Police Commission plays a critical role in ensuring law enforcement, maintaining security, and preventing illegal activities in the context of conservation efforts. Their involvement is particularly important when addressing the protection of the critically endangered Liben Lark and its grassland habitat. The police commission ensures compliance with conservation laws, provides security for personnel, and manages conflicts that may arise between different stakeholders, especially when land-use changes or allocations are involved. Below are the specific roles and responsibilities of the Police Commission during conservation interventions.

In collaboration with EWNHS, the Liben Lark Research Team, and TWG member Institutions, the following are the specific roles that the SRS security Bureau as well as the Police Commission of the Region can play:

- Monitor and address potential conflicts over land and resources, particularly between different user groups such as pastoralists, farmers, and conservationists. The Bureau should work closely with local communities and stakeholders to anticipate and resolve disputes before they escalate.
- Facilitate peaceful coexistence between various communities and land users, especially in areas designated for conservation. The Bureau should work to

prevent clashes over grazing lands, water resources, and land-use changes associated with conservation efforts.

- Mediate in conflicts arising from land allocation for conservation purposes. The Bureau should ensure that all stakeholders are heard and that conflicts are resolved in a fair, transparent, and peaceful manner.
- Work with traditional leaders, elders, and local authorities to mediate disputes between communities affected by conservation measures, such as the establishment of protected areas or changes in land-use practices.
- Ensure that conservation laws and regulations are enforced in areas designated for the protection of the Liben Lark and its habitat. This includes preventing illegal activities such as poaching, land encroachment, unsanctioned agricultural expansion, and deforestation within protected areas.
- Coordinate with local law enforcement agencies, including the police and community rangers, to carry out patrols and monitoring of conservation areas, ensuring compliance with the rules governing the use of these lands.
- Ensure the safety and security of conservation staff, researchers, and field workers involved in the protection of the Liben Lark. The Bureau should work to prevent any form of harassment or violence against individuals or organizations working on conservation projects.
- Provide security for conservation infrastructure, such as research stations, ranger outposts, and eco-tourism facilities, particularly in remote or conflict-prone areas.
- Develop a rapid response mechanism for addressing security threats or conflicts that may arise in conservation areas. This could involve deploying security personnel, mediators, or peacekeepers to areas where tensions escalate quickly, particularly during periods of land allocation or community relocation.
- Work with other government agencies to provide a coordinated response to environmental emergencies (e.g., drought, wildfire) that may threaten both the Liben Lark's habitat and local community livelihoods.

5 Operational Structure:

In Collaboration with the Ethiopian Wildlife and Natural History Society (EWNHS) and the BirdLife Partnership of which EWNHS is a member, the Liben Lark Research Team and the Technical Working Group and Member Institutions will conduct the following operational activities:

Meetings:

- The TWG will meet on a quarterly basis to review progress, discuss challenges, and update strategies.
- Ad-hoc meetings may be convened in response to urgent issues, such as significant habitat degradation events or external funding opportunities.

Reporting:

- The TWG will submit quarterly progress reports to the President's Bureau and relevant Regional Bureaus, detailing the status of conservation efforts, key achievements, and challenges.
- An annual report will be prepared and shared with all stakeholders, including donors, to track the overall impact of the TWG's initiatives and the Liben Lark Conservation Projects

Sub-working groups:

- Biodiversity& Habitat Management Sub-group: Focused on technical issues related to habitat restoration and species conservation.
- Community Engagement & Livelihood Sub-group: Focused on integrating local community needs into conservation strategies and identifying alternative livelihoods.
- Funding and Partnerships Sub-group: Tasked with resource mobilization and establishing partnerships with NGOs, international organizations, and the private sector.

6 Key Deliverables:

1. Regional Grassland Conservation Strategy: A comprehensive strategy document guiding conservation efforts.
2. Funding Proposals: At least two funding proposals per year submitted to national or international donors.
3. Monitoring and Evaluation Framework: A detailed M&E plan, with indicators and timelines for tracking the progress of the conservation and intervention projects
4. Annual Report: A report detailing the impact of the conservation and intervention projects and the TWG's activities.

7 Duration:

The TWG will operate for an initial period of five years (2025–2030), with the possibility of extension based on the outcomes of the conservation program.

8 Amendments:

The terms of reference may be amended by consensus of the TWG committee and members institutions

9 Composition of the Research Team

This Terms of Reference has been prepared by the Liben Lark Research Team. The ToR development process took two stages: 1) First Carrying out consultation and discussion with respective TWG institutions to reach a consensus on the roles and responsibilities of

individual institutions and 2) Organizing a consultation, stakeholder engagement and sensitization workshop.

The Liben Lark Research team was organized by the EWNHS in Collaboration with BirdLife International through drawing researchers from various organizations within Ethiopia. The Research team is composed of two major groups: The Bird Survey group and the Socioeconomic assessment group. Below is the composition of the Liben Lark Research team.

Name	Position within the Liben Lark Research Team	Expertise
Bruktawit Abdu (PhD)	Head of Research Team	Ornithologist
Samson Zelleke	Member of the Bird Survey Group	Environmentalist and bird expert
Abiy Dagne	Member of the Bird Survey Group	Bird expert
Henok Samson	Member of the Bird Survey Group	Bird expert and wildlife photographer
Temesgen Yohannes	Member of the Socio-economic Assessment Group	Sociologist

The research team has also been assisted by experts from the Bureau of Environmental Protection and Rural Land Administration and Bureau of Tourism and Culture. Mahad Mahamed and Nur Carab from Bureau of Environmental Protection and Rural Land Administration and Bureau of Tourism and Culture have been facilitating the socioeconomic work respectively. For the bird survey work, Awale Muhumed and Hashim Baylood both based at the Bureau of Environmental Protection and Rural Land Administration were supporting the work.

10 Approval and Endorsement:

This Terms of Reference was reviewed and endorsed by all the member institutions of the Technical Working Group for the Conservation of the Liben Lark and its Habitat during the stakeholder meeting held on October 5, 2024 in the city of Jigjiga, Somali Regional State.

Signature: _____

Chairperson, Technical Working Group _____

Date: _____