**Potential Collaboration with the United Arab Emirates**

The Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel (SPNI) is Israel's oldest and largest environmental organization. Since 1953, the SPNI has been actively protecting and preserving Israel's nature in multiple ways, including promoting policies, education, touring and hiking.

In spite of being a small and densely populated country, Israel abounds with exceptional natural diversity on a global scale and is home to a plethora of flora and fauna. Due to Israel’s unique geographical position as an intercontinental land bridge, over half a billion birds migrate through our skies twice a year.

In appreciation of Israel’s unique environments, in conjunction with the developmental challenges of a densely populated country, the SPNI has accumulated a tremendous knowledge base and vast experience in dealing with the challenges of the protection and conservation of the natural environment. Nature knows neither boundaries nor borders, and now with the normalization of ties with the UAE, we look forward to working together and sharing our accumulated knowledge and experience with the parallel knowledge base of the UAE, and jointly promoting conservational co-initiatives.

Below are some of the SPNI’s main areas of activity, and a preliminary proposal for possible cooperation.

**Environmental Education and Youth Activities**

**What we do**: “Children Leading Change” is an SPNI environmental education program that has garnered tremendous success and recognition. Initiated in 2006, it is active in over 400 schools throughout the country, with 40,000 participating youth and children. This is a multi-year program focuses on the young generation and is designed to encourage and promote issues of sustainability and conservation.

For over 45 years, the SPNI has run outdoorsman curricula for youth, exposing them to nature through experiential experimentation. The young scouts develop concepts of environmental responsibility along with challenge coping strategies.

**What we suggest**: A sharing and exchange of knowledge in creating materials for educational programming within the formal and informal education systems, and exchange of envoys and missions of educational staff, counselors, guides, and students and participants of various outdoorsmanship groups.

**Urban Nature**

**What we do**: 90% of Israelis live in or around urban environments. For the past decade, the SPNI has led the initiative to conserve, rehabilitate and create natural habitats within the urban sphere. This not only enables protection of the ecosystem, it also allows for a direct and unmediated experience with nature, even in the heart of the urban jungle.

Cultivating a model of surveying urban-based nature, the SPNI utilizes this data in suggesting programs for preserving and rehabilitating natural resources, both existing and potential, all the while accompanying the project along with the local community.

We invite you to familiarize yourself with one such SPNI initiative, “Gazelle Valley,” which we operate on behalf of the Jerusalem municipality: <https://www.gazelle-valley.com/eng/>

**What we suggest**: A sharing and exchange of knowledge on topics regarding urban nature, consultations regarding surveys of nature in and around urban environments, promoting and developing projects for conserving nature sites within the urban environment.

**Climate Crisis**

**What we do**: The climate crisis is a threat to humanity and nature. The SPNI deals with the relationship between the status of the natural systems and the climate crisis. The natural systems hold a crucial role in coping with the climate crisis through mitigation and adaptation to the ever-changing world, and thus the SPNI encourages and promotes “nature-based solutions.”

**What we suggest**: Strategic cooperation promoting “nature-based solutions” in various fields: urban development, agriculture, shores and oceans, rivers and runoff, energy and forestation to name a few.

Promoting joint educational and informational programming for advancing awareness in coping with the climate crisis, and adopting life-style patterns and behavior aimed at minimizing the crisis.

**Bird Watching**

**What we do**: Due to our unique global position, Israel is an internationally recognized bird watching haven. For many years, the SPNI’s bird watching division has been active in protecting our local and migrant bird populations through many educational, research and tourism projects.

For more details and information, we invite you to browse our projects at: [www.birds.org.il](http://www.birds.org.il)

**What we suggest**: A wide degree of cooperation in the field of bird watching – monitoring, research, informational exchange, mutual exchange missions, mutual events and more. As birds do not recognize borders or limits, so too this field has limitless potential through cooperation.

**Trail Marking and The National Trail**

**What we do**: The SPNI is responsible for marking over 9,000 kilometers of hiking trails throughout the country. These hiking trails allow for maximizing the encounter with the nature’s treasures, while granting those same treasures maximum protection. The ‘Israel Trail’ is our most renowned - even nominated by the National Geographic Magazine as one of the twenty-most recommended trails in the world.

**What we suggest**: A sharing and exchange of knowledge relating to trail development, marking and maintenance, and the creation of a UAE national trail.

**Surveillance by Civilians**

**What we do**: The last few years have seen a growth in environmental research based on data accumulated by the general public. The SPNI has accumulated experience in gathering data from the public regarding issues related to conservation and protection of the regional biosphere and its biological diversity: butterfly census, bird census, reporting of animal sightings such as gazelle, hedgehogs, and road kill sightings.

**What we suggest**: Sharing our accumulated knowledge, and establishing a shared regional civilian surveillance system.

**Protection of Biological Diversity**

**What we do**: Israel is fortunate to have a variety of special and unique wildlife, but unfortunately, many are threatened with extinction, regardless of whether they are aerial, terrestrial or aquatic. These include the griffon vulture, mountain gazelle and fish of the Mediterranean and Red Seas. The combination of construction and development along with accelerated human activities threaten the continual existence of important ecological systems. The SPNI is active in multiple disciplines – research, advisory councils to local and state authorities, and enlightening the public – all for the benefit of protecting our biological diversity.

In recent years, we have utilized our resources towards oceanic conservation through promoting oceanic nature reserves, and advancing new reforms on fishing.

**What we suggest**: Sharing our knowledge on conservational efforts protecting endangered aquatic and terrestrial species, promoting protection for important habitats slated for conservation, rehabilitation of ecological systems, environmental research, and advancing mutual Israeli-UAE conventions.

The SPNI is active in a variety of other fields, which we can elaborate on based on interest. These include promoting the managerial approach of stream basins, promoting the management of eco-hydrologic concepts, advancing renewable energy solutions that do not harm natural resources (mainly rooftop solar energy panels), establishment and management of a network of field-schools as environmental education centers that double as guesthouses for students and families (eco-tourism).