**Annual Report:**

**Streams**

Streams are Israel’s “circulatory system”, a network that winds throughout open areas and developed areas throughout the country. They comprise a unique habitat, essential for recreational activities, and a significant part of Israel’s ecological corridors.

**Watershed Basin Planning and Management**

1. We prepared a detailed legal document on integrated basin management in Israel comparing the current situation to the desired situation, with descriptions of barriers, and proposals for legislative changes. The document also reviews various models used around the world for the integrated management of watershed basins.
2. We wrote the organization’s position paper on integrated river basin management, with recommendations for institutional changes, processes, and planning related to the topic of drainage. We promoted this position and approach in meetings with stakeholders and decision makers.
3. We promoted the raising the level of protection for areas in the watershed environment and riparian areas by formulating and promoting joint positions on issues related to protecting and restoring waterways, among a forum of ecological (green) organizations: the Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel (SPNI), the Ministry of Environmental Protection, Israel Nature and Parks Authority, and KKL-JNF, in cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture and Drainage and River Authorities.

The outputs of the aforementioned activities were:

* We drafted national policy tools, with a chapter on natural water resources and open areas in the *Strategic Plan: Israel 2040*, pertaining to zoning and delineating stream boundaries from their source (top) to mouth (bottom), wetland habitats, and springs along streams.
* We drafted a planning tool (together with Moti Kaplan Planners Ltd.): *A Planning Guide for Israel’s Waterways*, inspired by Israel’s *National Outline Plan TAMA 1*. Main topics include: a uniform language for waterway management and planning, principles and guidelines for planning the restoration of streams and riparian areas, both in open spaces and developed areas. We were involved in launching the plan and the first stages of its implementation.
* We promoted a hydrological basis for the area necessary for the natural functioning of a waterway, with solutions supported by this basis. *A Place for the River* integrates waterway restoration in open areas and flood damage prevention in extreme situations; determining the boundaries of a waterway’s flow corridor based on an eco-hydrological approach and engineering design; and promoting beneficial solutions (diversions and bypasses of excess flow). We wrote a report and presented it to government agencies (the Executive Committee, Ministry of National Defense). At a national level, we promoted the implementation of runoff management programs, and a demonstration project (presented to קש"פ).
* We promoted implementation of waterway planning and basin management principles in national outline plans, regional plans, and drainage projects: TAMA 7/1, TAMA 47(n), National Infrastructure Plan 122, TAMA 75(nn), National Infrastructure Plan 33(a), the drainage plant for Nahal Taninim, and more.
* We formulated and promoted principles of river basin planning and waterway conservation with the goal of assimilating them into policy documents proposed by the Planning Administration: urban runoff management, recommendations to the Executive Committee, basin management principles for the Planning Administration, and more.

**Water Quantity and Quality**

1. We promoted an amendment to the Water Law for the prevention of pollution of water sources, which included: discharge levies, financial sanctions, change of status and composition of the committee issuing permits. The amendment is based on a legal and economic opinion on levies for discharge into streams and rivers. A proposal was introduced in the Knesset, but the procedure had to be started again from the beginning with the new government.
2. We renewed a lobby in the Knesset for the rehabilitation of rivers and streams, to be reestablished with the new government.
3. We promoted an environmental approach on the issue of connecting the upper region of the Sea of Galilee (Kinneret) to the National Water Carrier system in this era of climate change. We presented this issue to decision makers and relevant governmental bodies and participated in discussions with the Water Authority. We presented our position at conferences and publications in the press. We submitted a petition to the Supreme Court detailing consequences and achievements: a public hearing with the participation of the director of the Water Authority; preventing a decision by the Water Authority Council on connecting the Kinneret to the Water Carrier (May 2021); further postponement of this action (July 2022) in the Water Authority Council’s decision regarding water sources.
4. Releasing the Slope Springs: a lake reservoir plan to release the Slope Springs into several channels was presented to the Water Association, the Water Authority, and environmental organizations (enlisting KKL), and made a presentation to the קש"פ. We discussed the impact of continued utilization of water from the Ein Divsha spring as a representative case, that contradicts the plan to release the Slope Springs: in this case, plans to replace a water line that would contain the springs was stopped. The campaign included public activity, cooperation among a wide range of organizations, publicity, discussions, and presenting alternatives that received support from the Water Authority. We drafted and promoted a new resolution for releasing the springs (see below).
5. We wrote and presented a proposal to decision-makers for restoring waterway drainage basins: this is a continuation of a decision to restore seven streams, currently in four river basins: Taninim, Carmel, Kishon, and Hula.
6. We actively participated in research on the impacts of climate change on streams in Israel and wrote a summary report.

**Public Involvement**

1. A public coordinator for the Yarkon Drainage Authority implemented the following: development of communities around four rivers, in partnership with the local authorities (Lod, Or Yehuda, Rosh HaAyin, and Sdot Dan). A professional training program on the subject of the river was developed, in partnership with local authorities (Nahal Pardesim - Tel Aviv and Ramat Hasharon). The second year of the project will be completed in July 2023.
2. We developed partnerships with River and Drainage Authorities and River Authorities to promote community development and empowerment and public involvement on behalf of streams and rivers. We gained representation with the community around the Lower Jordan River; the Nahal Hadera administration; and the Friends of the Nahal Association, which is active in the Arab community in the Kishon Drainage local authority. We worked to strengthen cooperation between the Carmel Drainage Authority, the Carmel Beach Field School, and the local community.
3. We promoted events to raise public awareness about rivers: the annual River Festival (in partnership with Agma), Carnival on the River (third year), webinars, and training courses for tour guides.
4. We promoted joint responsibility among the stakeholders in Nahal Saadia: Haifa Municipality, Association of Haifa Cities, Ministry of Defense (national and regional), Israel Nature and Parks Authority, Kishon River Authority, Kishon Drainage and Rivers Authority, Aquatic Center, SPNI. A steering committee will include three teams working on the following topics: ecology, planning and community, and managing enforcement. A model will be developed for addressing challenges pertaining to rivers at the local level.
5. We began creating trans-organizational work plans for the assimilation and promotion of the issue of rivers into various departments, with the aim of creating resonance among organizations to successfully change perceptions of rivers among decision makers and to recruit public involvement (Public Engagement Work Plan 2022-2023).

**Israel Ornithological Center**

Dr. Yoav Perlman was appointed director of the Israel Ornithological Center this year, replacing Dan Alon, who left the role after directing the center for 27 years.

After the years of the Covid-19 pandemic, this year, we returned to full-volume activity. Inbound tourist activity from abroad has returned. In the spring, we hosted a bird-watching festival in Eilat, as well as several lengthy tours for international birding associations in the spring and fall. Domestic birdwatching activities have resumed as well, at the Israeli Ornithological Center and through birdwatching workshops held across the country. Educational and tourist activities have returned to their full scope at the Jerusalem Bird Observatory and the Eilat Ornithological Center. On September 22, 2022, the Israel Ornithological Center participated in an international conference to commemorate and celebrate the 100th anniversary of activities of BirdLife International.

Habitat restoration, with an emphasis on wetland habitats, continues to be a central area of activity for the Israel Ornithological Center. Establishment of the Start-Up Nature pilot project in Kfar Ruppin continued, and its Amud Reservoir is becoming a high-quality and significant nature reserve for the entire area. Agricultural management activities, and the strengthening partnership with Kibbutz Kfar Ruppin and other project partners, have enabled the natural ecosystem to support a high level of biological diversity.

Efforts to establish a Birding Center in cooperation with Kibbutz Ma'agan Michael, are progressing rapidly. A high-quality wetland habitat is being developed at one of their fish ponds. An impressive entrance hall has been built, in cooperation with the Sde Hof HaCarmel field school.

The Israel Ornithological Center is leading major efforts to expand habitat restoration activities in Israel, both at the ground level, in identifying and promoting new projects, and also at the policy level, with the start of work to implement a habitat restoration policy in Israel. Collecting data to improve our understanding of the situation of the birds of Israel continued in 2022, the third year of field work carried out by hundreds of volunteers. Collecting information for the Israel Bird Nesting Atlas has been completed. Now the process of data analysis and processing begins, in order to promote an information-based nature conservation policy. Extensive survey work was carried out in the Golan Heights, in the area of Judea and Samaria, and in the Nitsana area. A joint project with the Nature and Parks Authority to monitor breeding birds of prey in Israel continued. The Israel Ornithological Center is a leading partner with the Nature and Parks Authority for a special project to preserve the desert Houbara bustard.

After a hiatus due to the Covid-19 pandemic, this spring the Champions of the Flyway project has resumed its international format. In a project called The Year of the Turtledove, resources were mobilized to protect the European Turtledove in Malta, Greece, and Cyprus. In Israel, the project was supported by the Ministry for Regional Cooperation. In the spring, teams of youth from countries around the world competed at the peak event, and the highly successful project ended with a large celebration at the Ornithology Center in Eilat. This event was followed by two workshops at the end of the year, attended by participants from countries around the Mediterranean Sea and the Middle East, including the Caucasus, the Balkans, Jordan, Egypt, and even the Palestinian Authority. The workshops were highly successful, and established the Israel Ornithological Center as a regional leader in nature conservation, and an appropriate infrastructure for international cross-border activity to maintain bird migration routes.

The Jerusalem Bird Research Station continues to be a national hub for birding activities. The Israel Birding Club began many of its activities there, including dozens of birding tours for families from throughout the country, and high-quality birding workshops for the general public and for expert ornithologists. The Jerusalem Bird Research Station is the base of operations for birding clubs around the country with participants of a wide age range, and for a national birding club for youth. The research station is striving to promote diversity in the community of birdwatchers in Israel, with targeted activities to encourage female ornithologists.

The Ornithology Center in Eilat, which operates in partnership with the Eilat Municipality, KKL-JNF, the Nature and Parks Authority and the Eilat Regional Council, is taking great strides to develop the natural infrastructures and facilities to accommodate the public there. In addition to the extensive activities in the park area, the center’s team leads research and nature conservation activities in the Eilat area and the Southern Arava. They are conducting a wide range of pioneering activities with national impact, such as transforming the Eilat sewage reservoir into a high-quality wetland nature reserve with international value.

The Israel Birding Portal’s online camera project has entered its seventh year, and continues to break boundaries and have a massive impact, transmitting images and information across the internet. In 2022, for the first time, a camera was placed near the nest of a Bonelli's eagle (*Aquila fasciata*)*,* and broadcast dramatic incidents never before shown on the screen. The Birding Portal project has reached millions of followers in Israel and around the world. This project, conducted in cooperation with the Nature and Parks Authority, continues to prove to be as a crucial tool in nature conservation. The Israel Birding Portal website and its related social platforms are a key hub for information about birds and ornithology in Israel. The website features high-quality, varied, and changing content, making important and up-to-date information about the activities of the Israel Ornithology Center available to the general public.

***Keren HaDukhifat* (The Hoopoe Foundation)**

*Keren HaDukhifat* was established 11 years ago, with the aims of raising resources to promote projects for the conservation of birds and their habitat, initiating studies and surveys that support bird conservation, educational activities, and activities that will expose the general public to this issue.

In 2022, Major General (res.) Doron Almog resigned from his position as chairman of the foundation, after being elected as the chairman of the Jewish Agency. He was replaced by Brigadier General (res.) Dr. Alaa Abu Rochen, who was the military secretary for the Israeli president. We express our appreciation to Doron Almog for his dedicated activity on behalf of the foundation for ten years.

Over its years of existence, the Foundation has supported over 45 projects, including ongoing support for a project promoting barn owls as biological pest control agents in agricultural areas. With the Foundation’s support, this became a national project and was then been expanded into an international project, joined two decades ago by participants from Jordan and the Palestinian Authority, in 2015 it expanded into Cyprus and Greece, and in 2022 it was joined by Morocco, following the signing of a normalization agreement with Israel.

During the Hanukkah holiday, the Foundation offers a learning day. This year it was attended by 1200 bird lovers, teachers, and academics. This tradition has continued for 43 years!

Every year, the Foundation produces a book on ornithology. In 2022 Prof. Yossi Leshem’s book titled *50 Years of Birding: To Fly with Birds and People* was published in collaboration with the Society for the Protection of Nature and Yedioth Books. Within two months, the first edition of the book was sold out.

These are just a few of the many examples of the extensive activities of Keren HaDukhifat, which is an integral part of SPNI, and is managed by representatives of SPNI’s administration: Shay Teitelbaum (Chief Financial Officer), Dan Alon (Deputy Director of Nature Conservation), and Dr. Yoav Perlman (Director of the Ornithology Center), together with Prof. Yossi Leshem (Secretary of the Foundation), Prof. Yoram Yom Tov (Tel Aviv University) and Prof. Ido Itzhaki (Haifa University).