**Protecting the Marine Environment**

The State of the Oceans Report published this year presents a problematic picture. Israel’s marine space is not preserved, planned, protected, managed or prepared for pollution events. The Mediterranean Sea has suffered for many years from negligence, and the state has no management framework, and a number of players have entered the resulting vacuum, including infrastructure companies, fishermen and other parties, who acted without adequate environmental regulation.

The Mediterranean Sea adjacent to Israel’s coast, which until recently was an open space that did not attract public attention, is slowly changing its face. The reliance of the State of Israel on desalination to provide the main source of drinking water on one hand, and the discovery of natural gas in Israel’s economic waters on the other hand, have turned the Mediterranean Sea into an existential resource for the State of Israel. Maintaining a healthy marine ecosystem is of national interest.

There is a real need to protect the sea; therefore, together with a coalition of organizations and active citizens we are leading a process to establish marine reserves along Israel’s coast, in the belief that declaration, enforcement and management of marine nature reserves constitute the optimal solution for nature conservation in the sea.

Many studies from around the world have emphasized the importance of marine reserves for maintaining sound functioning of marine ecosystems. Protecting areas without fishing and infrastructure development leads to marked recovery of the fish population inside the reserve and even in areas adjacent to the reserve, within just a few years.

In Israel, only 0.25% of the Mediterranean Sea space is protected in declared nature reserves (in contrast to 25% of the land surface). In addition, the few protected spaces do not actually receive maximum protection due to a lack of marine enforcement resources; currently only the Rosh Hanikra reserve is effectively protected.

In order to protect marine nature, we must lead declaration of large reserves to facilitate protection of entire ecosystems and of large marine animals with extensive living areas.

The Society for Protection of Nature in Israel’s (SPNI) program for expanding marine reserves to 20% of the territorial marine space that has recently been submitted to the planning authorities also includes extensive areas of stony reefs and soft substrates. We hope that the plan will be authorized as soon as possible. Nevertheless, we note that declaration itself is not sufficient for conserving ecosystems; adequate resources must be allocated to enforcement and monitoring to facilitate effective management.

Moreover, it is important to conduct a survey to identify stony reefs and unique habitats within Israel’s economic waters, outside of the territorial waters, and to protect these sites within the framework of marine nature reserves. A condition for this is securing the appropriate legal tools in the “Marine Areas Law”, which regulates legal conduct in Israel’s economic waters.

**Marine Areas Law**

Within the framework of the Marine Areas Law, which is intended to regulate state law in the economic waters of the Mediterranean Sea, in particular with respect to gas and crude oil drilling, the suggested version of the law does not grant adequate status to the Ministry of Environmental Protection, and leaves the entire decision-making process in the hands of one party, the Ministry of Energy, which has one clear interest – development. This is an unbalanced and dangerous situation.

The Mediterranean Sea is a very important source of drinking water for the Israeli public, a source of food (fish), of oxygen production and of climate change mediation. Furthermore, the Mediterranean Sea is home to dolphins, sea turtles, rare tuna, and hundreds of other fish species. Unfortunately, mishaps and disasters during gas and crude oil drilling are not a slight possibility but a real issue that is already relevant.

It happened in 2010 in the USA, in the Gulf of Mexico, in a disaster of tremendous proportions.

Leaks and small mishaps occur all the time in the Mediterranean Sea – we simply do not hear about them because no one looks after us out there. The Minister for Environmental Protection must accompany the planning and execution processes with respect to environmental aspects and represent us and nature against the narrow interests of energy companies.

**This year we demanded and we continue to demand from the Economic Affairs Committee to amend the Marine Areas Law to include:**

1. Establishment of a supplementary planning committee (SPC) to maintain the decision-making balance between development and conservation, while also maintaining public transparency.
2. Effective separation between the process of licensing gas and crude oil drilling facilities, conducted by the Ministry of Energy, and the environmental supervision conducted by the Ministry for Environmental Protection: equal rights and independence for the Ministry for Environmental Protection when making decisions about authorizing energy drilling in the economic waters, with the right to veto in instances of severe risk to the environment.
3. Maintaining transparency and granting the public right of first refusal during the drilling authorization process.
4. Defining marine reserves in the Marine Areas Law for protecting suitable natural areas via strict conservation.

A team will be established for public monitoring of the Leviathan oil rig and manpower positions will be allocated to the Ministry for Environmental Protection to increase supervision in the sea.

This is a significant achievement with respect to the supervision of the Leviathan oil rig that will be constructed off the Dor beach. In the agreement with the Ministry of Energy and the Ministry for Environmental Protection, in which Adam Teva V’Din is also a partner, it was decided to establish a “Leviathan Rig Development Supervision Team”.

A joint team was established, combining government ministries, environmental organizations and the public, to monitor the effects of the Leviathan rig for natural gas production, established in the sea about 10 km from the Dor beach on the Carmel coast – on the environment, sea and atmosphere, in order to ensure that all of the obligations with respect to the rig are being fulfilled. In addition, following our correspondence with the Ministry of Finance, about 20 new positions were authorized for the Ministry for Environmental Protection, to facilitate implementation of the national preparation plan for sea pollution events.

**Fishing Reform**

In January 2017 the general fishing reform went into effect; we present the main achievements of the reform which were still tangible during 2018:

* Ceasing damaging fishing methods: ceasing trawler fishing in some of the sensitive areas – covering one-third of the Israeli Mediterranean Sea region, thanks to the pooling of 20 million NIS from the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry for Environmental Protection and the Israel Nature and Parks Authority (INPA). This money was used to compensate the trawler fishermen in northern Israel (Kishon port) and will close the northern third of the Mediterranean Sea to trawler fishing.
* Prohibiting trawler fishing for 3 months during the recruitment season.
* Ceasing fishing by scuba diving.
* Ceasing fishing during the reproductive season, except for fishing rods from the beach and fishing more than 12 nautical miles from the coast.
* Determining daily fishing limits for recreational fishermen.
* Increasing the permitted length for fishing cod species.
* Upgrading enforcement – this year fishing enforcement was transferred to INPA, via 4 designated teams. This process will be expressed through the standards that were signed by the government. The Ministry of Agriculture maintains the right to press charges.
* Protection of endangered species.

This year saw an update to the declaration of protected natural assets, including a number of endangered species in the Mediterranean Sea including cod species and bluefin tuna. Minister Elkin, who was requested to sign the declaration, initially supported the process, but following public pressure from the fishermen the minister backed down from his decision. Due to the circumstances, we initiated an internet campaign in an attempt to influence the minister’s decision, and to declare the dusky grouper and bluefin tuna protected species. Our call attracted several successful bloggers – the Perl brothers, who produced a video calling the public to send requests to Minister Elkin to declare the dusky grouper and bluefin tuna protected species. The video garnered 100,000 views and thousands of shares. However the last word has not been spoken. We will continue to act for their declaration as protected species.

**Monitoring and Enforcement**

We developed a hotline for reporting real time hazards in the Mediterranean Sea – the Sea Watch application.

Reports are submitted by the public using a GPS-based application. The application operates in partnership with treatment and enforcement bodies in the Mediterranean Sea. All reports are transferred immediately to the enforcement bodies, by SMS and an email that includes all of the details of the event.

**We Developed a Platform for Reporting on Sea Urchins in the Mediterranean Sea**

Sea urchins, which were common in the past on Israel’s beaches, have almost completely disappeared in recent years, probably due to warming of the oceans in recent decades and suppression by invasive species. Monitoring the changes in the size of the remaining sea urchins, and the structure of their populations, can provide an understanding of the disappearance process. The “Search for a Sea Urchin” project, in partnership with Israel Oceanographic and Limnological Research (IOLR), monitors this trend of disappearance, and as part of this project we call on divers, sea-lovers and the general public that visits the Mediterranean Sea – to document and report observations of sea urchins.

**Shikmona Sea Community**

During the last year, SPNI, together with INPA, joined forces with sea lovers and conservationists in the Haifa region to establish a local sea community, a source of local, citizen manpower that will work to raise public awareness of the marine reserve in Shikmona and help turn Shikmona into a flourishing marine reserve. More than 100 activists, mostly from Haifa, joined the project.

During the last year the activists have been participating in a fascinating training program that provides a ‘deep sea dive’ into the wonders of the Mediterranean Sea and the threats it faces. Leading professionals in the field of research and conservation of marine nature in Israel taught the community activists about marine ecology, archeology, fishing and enforcement, marine waste, marine reserves and citizen science, and took them on field trips to introduce them to nature in the reserve, to visit the Sea Turtle Rescue Center and more.

As well as acquiring professional knowledge, the community began working in the field: translocating protected sea daffodils from the Hubert Humphrey boardwalk works to the national park, monitoring algae on the rocks of the reserve in collaboration with IOLR and advancing educational activities.

On World Oceans Day, which was commemorated in June, many visitors participated in fascinating activities at Shikmona beach, Betzet beach and Hakshatot beach, meticulously organized by SPNI and activists from the sea community.

**We believe that declaration, enforcement and management of marine nature reserves constitute the optimal solution for nature conservation in the sea. Currently, only Rosh Hanikra Reserve is effectively protected. In order to protect marine nature, we will continue to work towards declaration of large reserves to facilitate protection of entire ecosystems and of large marine animals with extensive living areas.**

**Protecting Open Landscapes and Local Nature**

**We, at SPNI, act to conserve open landscapes and regularize ecological corridors in planning in Israel. Our main objective is conservation of a diversity of extensive, continuous, functioning ecosystems, while preventing extinction of habitats and species. Your support, which accompanies us continuously, provides us with the power to succeed.**

**The Environmental Hazards Law – an Incredible Achievement!**

A bill to prevent environmental hazards, initiated by SPNI following the ecological disaster in Nahal Ashalim, which was damaged by an acidic sewage leak in 2017, was approved by the Knesset. The bill was supported by 33 members of Knesset, with no opposition, and proposes to define damage to protected natural assets and damage to protected landscapes as ‘environmental hazards’. This allows the submission of civil law suits on damage to natural habitats and species of plants and animals, which are public property, in some instances, and to give law courts who deal with these complaints the authority to force the defendant to pay additional sums of money due to the environmental hazard he is responsible for if the damage is determined to be irreparable.

**No Hotels in Sassgon Valley!**

We end 2018 with great success for the campaign we are leading together with Adam Teva V’Din and Hevel Eilot residents, against construction of a hotel complex that would have irreversibly damaged the character of Timna Valley. Over many years, tens of thousands of citizens from around the country joined the call: Save Sassgon Valley. This call was a great success with a win-win solution for all sides! On one hand, the entrepreneur will get what he wants and will be able to build a hotel in the Park Timna region (the south entrance alternative) and on the other hand, Sassgon Valley will remain natural and primal.

**Strategic Plan for Open Landscapes**

This year we worked to promote a strategic plan for open landscapes with a central focus on conservation of ecological corridors at a national level.

Moreover, we celebrated a number of local successes that protected ecological corridors from unnecessary construction while finding suitable solutions for development without sustaining damage to nature: accepting our opposition in the Iron Industrial Zone, accepting our viewpoint with respect to expansion of Elad at the expense of a national ecological corridor, promoting protection of the ecological corridor in Modi’in, and protection of the Caesarea dunes ecological corridor via acceptance of our opposition to local development initiatives.

**We Protected Open Landscapes in the Negev**

We managed to block initiatives to establish a number of new settlements in the Negev and formed a broad coalition of significant stakeholders to strengthen the existing settlements instead of establishing new settlements, adding new content to Ben Gurion’s vision.

**We Opposed Extension of the National Committee for Planning and Construction (NCPC)**

After transferring the planning administration from the Ministry of the Interior to the Ministry of Finance, a situation arose in Israel where there was no organization looking after the public interest during planning processes. Within this vacuum we established the ‘Planning Guard’ – a coalition of civilian community organizations and professional, environmental planning and housing organizations that is working to form an independent and professional planning system, in which the voice of civil society is heard. The Planning Guard includes a broad spectrum of organizations with experience in different fields, allowing the Planning Guard to participate in NCPC meetings and activate a system of checks and balances. The objective of the NCPC (via government decision) is to approve as many large projects as possible that harm tens to hundreds of thousands of Israel’s citizens, while the latter does not have the tools and the knowledge to deal with them. In December 2017, we published the periodical monitoring report on the activities of the NCPC regarding preferred housing complexes, three years after approval of the NCPC. The report reveals that although the NCPC has approved 34 plans to date, for a total of 95 thousand residential units, in practice not even one residential unit has been built! The report also reveals that while the NCPC accepts 32% of government ministry objections, only 4% of public objections are accepted, and 84% of public objections are completely rejected. According to this report on the NCPC, which was appointed by the government as its main tool for dealing with the housing crisis, it turns out after three years to be a committee evading planning and democracy. The NCPC rapidly approves tens of thousands of housing units with the wave of a hand at the expense of tens of thousands of dunams of agricultural land and open landscapes on city outskirts. The great difficulty with the work of the NCPC, as revealed by the report, is the great need for residential units, and this is what dominates the work of the committee, while the overall planning of public institutions, solutions for transportation – both public and private – is only secondary, if at all. The NCPC promotes new construction on high-value open landscapes and on agricultural land, often in contrast to the position of local and regional municipalities. Similarly, the report presents the increasing opposition of the public to the work of the NCPC, from the direction of both local authorities and public corporations, who call for more correct and considerate planning, that sees all of the issues and does not ‘count’ only residential units.

In February 2018 the Internal Affairs and Environmental Protection Committee of the Knesset published a directive to extend the NCPC for another year, a directive that was signed by the Prime Minister and the Finance Minister. On Wednesday, 7th March, the committee held a discussion on the issue, with the participation of many members of Knesset, dozens of local authority heads and representatives of environmental and community organizations and residents. At the end of the discussion the head of the committee, Yoav Kish, decided to hold an additional discussion before reaching a final ruling. There is broad opposition to the work of the NCPC: the Minister for Environmental Protection, MK Ze’ev Elkin, announced his opposition to extending the NCPC and thus joined the local municipal heads and the different organizations.

More than 1200 letters were sent by the public to the Internal Affairs Committee with a moving call to members of Knesset to oppose extension of the NCPC’s work. Despite the opposition, in March 2018 the Internal Affairs and Environmental Protection Committee of the Knesset approved extension of the NCPC for another year, until 2019. We continue to work using the tools available to us to oppose the work of the NCPC.

**The Business and Nature Project**

This project, led by SPNI in partnership with leading companies, the Ministry for Environmental Protection and INPA, proposes a business tool for project management, a reporting protocol in the GRI format for biodiversity, and support for promoting organizational processes for assimilating regulations, guidelines and organizational culture for conserving biodiversity.

Within the framework of this project we have formed several partnerships with central infrastructure companies, quarries, agricultural companies and more, in Israel. To promote these business processes, we will examine the integration of an ecologist at central intersections for decision making in the planning and execution of projects, and to assimilate advanced protocols for reducing ecological risks from invasive species, light pollution, direct harm to wild animals and plants, as well as work regulations for ecological management of the lands accessible to SPNI.

Within the framework of these partnerships, the effects of companies on biodiversity are being mapped, and tools for improving these effects and their assimilation into organizational culture and internal regulations are being proposed. The core of the process is the joint work of the ecologist together with the businesses’ content experts.

The project helps the business sector and government companies in Israel prepare for managing risks associated with actions that harm biodiversity, and create new market opportunities, while preparing for upcoming regulation. Without systematic treatment of the biodiversity issue, it is doubtful whether businesses will continue to receive a public license and legitimacy to act – both in Israel and abroad.

Within the framework of this joint initiative with the Ministry for Environmental Protection and INPA, six Israeli companies will be granted 1,100 thousand NIS for assimilating biodiversity considerations in their activities. The winning companies – Mekorot, National Roads Company of Israel, Tara, Milopri, Timna Park and Israel Electric Corporation – will direct their grants to the need for preventing light pollution, improving sanitation in dairies, cultivation that supports biodiversity and implementing an ecological management plan for tourist attractions. The results of the projects will be presented in a conference that will take place in 2019.

We launched a new internet site for ecological risk management in the business sector. You are welcome to visit the site – BIZטבע.

**In the coming year we will continue acting for conservation of open landscapes, via statutory protection, effective management of the land and treatment of threatening processes. All this will be done transparently for the public, while raising public awareness and creating a partnership with the broad public for conservation of nature and the environment in Israel.**

**Renewable Energy**

**We work to promote policies to encourage exploitation of energy from renewable resources that are not harmful to nature and the environment. We are promoting a national plan for solar roofs, and supporting the integration of natural gas in electricity production in Israel in order to reduce air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.**

**Renewable Energy Report**

The report determines and recommends that the best solution for renewable energy is solar panels on roofs. According to the report, in 2030 about one-third of Israel’s electricity could be produced by this method.

As part of our activities to promote the use of renewable sources of energy we are studying and learning about the technologies and methods suitable for implementation in Israel. The main technologies currently promoted in Israel, for electricity production from renewable sources, are solar panels on the ground and wind turbines. However, each of these solutions carries environmental problems: solar panels on the ground require extensive areas of land, which may reach between 90 and 100 thousand dunams with the implementation of the government decision to achieve 17% production of renewable energy by 2030. Similarly, wind turbines bring great danger for flying animals in Israel, including many species of birds and bats, while the initial wind potential in Israel is not very great.

In contrast to these methods, the use of the existing roof resource, and its exploitation for constructing solar panels, seems to be the most suitable solution, and is aligned best with environmental thinking. The report proposes policy and a plan of action for the government to implement the solution. The report recommends principles for integrating production of electricity from renewable energy in the most optimal way for current and future generations, while conserving natural assets and Israel’s extraordinary and globally important biodiversity. We believe we must exploit the roof resource and work towards comprehensive production of solar energy in built-up areas, we must exploit the organic waste resource to produce electricity from biogas while maintaining the quality of the air, water and soil, we must erect wind turbines only in cases without significant risk for animals, with an emphasis on endangered species and flag species, and as long as they do not create a nuisance for residents. As mentioned, the potential for this is very limited and in any way the current quota for wind turbines should not be increased, and no further land should be allocated for solar energy.

**We Support the Government Plan for Solar Roofs**

A few weeks after our report was published, the Minister of Energy, Dr. Yuval Steinitz, announced a revolution and promotion of solar energy on roofs, a revolution that corresponds with the recommendations of the report; and we are happy with this announcement.

The economic benefits from constructing solar panels on roofs are many: savings in marking conduction routes, reduced air pollution, decreased living costs, reduced greenhouse gas emissions and more. In the light of these benefits, the Electricity Authority recommends that roof owners in Israel construct solar roofs and reduce their electricity costs or sell their electricity to the grid. Unfortunately, due to various reasons this field is developing very slowly and we call on the government to act to improve its development, but the announcement by the Minister of Energy raises optimism.

**Cancellation of the Plan to Establish a Wind Turbine Farm at Ein Hashofet**

After a hard battle, we were happy one month ago when the northern regional committee decided to reject the plan to establish wind turbines in Ramat Menashe. Our opposition to establishing a wind turbine farm, at Ein Hashofet, focused on the danger to the population of the lesser kestrel, that breeds in the region, and harm to other flying animals. Furthermore, we were concerned that approval of the plan would act as a slippery slope to approval of additional plans in the Ramat Menashe Biosphere Reserve. In our opinion, this region is not suitable for the establishment of a wind turbine farm, with respect to both the wind regime and the harm to natural assets unique to this region.

After a busy month in which we worked to raise public awareness of the future consequences of establishing a wind turbine farm in Ramat Menashe, and create opposition among the residents of the Ramat Menashe Biosphere Reserve, we witnessed the dramatic decision of the northern regional committee to reject the plan submitted by Energix to establish 9 turbines, each one 180 m tall.

**Next year we will continue helping to promote integration of renewable energy in Israel based on solar panels on roofs.**

**Conserving Urban Nature**

Together with you we are conserving urban nature, promoting balanced urban planning that considers urban nature assets and working towards conservation and maintenance of urban nature sites. Together with groups of residents and nature-conserving citizens we are promoting sustainable urban settlement.

To date, about 25 cities have conducted city-wide nature surveys and some have been assimilated in general or detailed master plans. Three municipalities have even drafted urban policy documents on the subject of urban nature: Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and Kfar Saba.

During the last year we promoted 15 new urban nature surveys reaching further and further afield to officials working on the issue of urban nature in government ministries and local authorities.

**Citizen Monitoring**

In recent years we have been using online report forms and calling on the broad public to participate in citizen science activities from any place, even via smartphones. Citizen science is a partnership between citizens and scientists.

We, at SPNI, bridge between the public and researchers on issues related to nature conservation and protection of biodiversity and open landscapes. We invite nature-lovers to be involved in citizen science – to report on predatory animals and help promote wildlife crossings, to monitor butterflies or count birds and allow us to monitor changes in populations, to report bird observations and help us map natural areas with sensitivity for conservation.

Many of the monitoring activities are conducted in the city. We conduct extensive citizen monitoring activities in our urban communities, which are found in six large cities: Haifa, Hadera, Tel Aviv, Modi’in, Jerusalem and Be’er Sheva. Within the framework of the urban community we meet a large number of people who love nature and conserve the environment. We run a training program for different groups of activists. Some of them conduct important monitoring activities and thus become intimately familiar with the urban nature right next to their homes.

Together with the Butterfly Lovers Association, which runs the national butterfly monitoring plan, we established groups of activists in Hadera and Modi’in to monitor butterflies. The groups received training, and the volunteers go out once a fortnight to monitor along a set route. The data help researchers obtain a current picture of the situation and stay on top of the situation.

We launched the reporting application ‘I Saw a Gazelle’ through which residents report to us each time they see a gazelle.

In Haifa there has been much interest in the salamanders in the city’s valleys. In late 2017, a report form dealing with salamanders in Haifa was launched; a group of nature lovers works in partnership with the community of Haifa and its surroundings and the Green Heart organization – volunteers set out on night surveys in the city’s valleys on rainy nights. The surveys recorded dozens of salamanders – a much larger population than we were aware of.

These data will help us work in a focused way to conserve nature in the city.

**Urban Nature Week**

In March 2017, at the peak of flowering, we went out together with 20,000 residents to celebrate urban nature during Urban Nature Week that to our delight has become a tradition. Within the framework of this week about 50 different and diverse events took place, at different urban nature sites, throughout the country. Together with you we celebrated the beauty of our land, learned about nature conservation issues and became familiar with the nature right near our homes. Urban Nature Week included many activities run by groups of active residents who work within the framework of our urban communities.

**Third Birthday for Gazelle Valley**

During the Pesach holiday, spring and nature events were held at Gazelle Valley Park in Jerusalem to celebrate the park’s third birthday. During these days, more than 16,000 people visited the part and participated in various cultural and educational activities open to the public. Gazelle Valley has become a spectacular nature site attracting great interest and is the pride of Jerusalem. How lucky we are that we fought for it!

**Ruti the Hyena from Modi’in Conquered the Internet, Entered Residents’ Hearts and Was Moved Away from Her Home**

During the last year the residents of Modi’in – Maccabim – Reut became familiar with Ruti the hyena who was observed wandering the city’s streets. Due to the bad reputation of hyenas, panic developed among the residents.

In order to reduce the anxiety level, and to try to explain how to deal with the issue, our Modi’in community produced an explanatory video. The video was distributed among the city’s residents via social networks in a joint effort of all the community’s members. The video reached more than 3,600 views! Monitoring of reports on these networks showed that the anxiety level decreased.

Following this success in the social networks, Ruti the hyena decided to join the virtual world and set up a Facebook blog in which she wrote about her experiences and shared her thoughts. The virtual character raises awareness of the issue of wild animals in residential areas and exposes many residents to the correct rules of behavior with respect to garbage and waste that may attract wild animals.

Ruti, the hyena from Modi’in, touched the hearts of many in Modi’in and throughout the country. This is a unique case of a hyena that made her home within a city and was not satisfied just with random searches for food.

Ruti the hyena’s individual welfare required her to be removed from the city, due to the many tangible risks for her: being run over, poisoning, intentional harm. When the efforts by INPA to remove her using accepted methods failed, and when it was determined, without a shadow of doubt that she had definitely made her home in the city itself, there was no choice but to move her to a completely different area, far enough away that she would not be able to return to the city.

In such a unique case of an animal making its home inside the city, removing it does not remove all of the factors that caused Ruti and other animals to come to the city in search of food: an abundance of leftover food and edible waste, accessible to wild animals, feeding corners for pets that are unsupervised and also attract wild animals, and more.

The city Modi’in, as well as many other cities around the country, is continually expanding into the open landscapes, which serve as the natural home for wild animals. With suitable planning, the interaction between city and nature may be highly desirable, for both humans and animals. However, without suitable planning, this phenomenon may be dangerous for many species of wild animals and become a nuisance and threat for the human residents of the city. Without correct treatment at sites of attraction for wild animals in cities and other human settlements, penetration of wild animals to city centers will simply increase.

In order to reduce the extent of this phenomenon while also protecting wild animals, we must prepare suitable infrastructures for storing and transferring waste, which are inaccessible to wild animals, and be strict about closing garbage bins and transferring waste to appropriately designed collection centers.

We are sad to have reached a situation in which there was a need to transfer Ruti to another location and hope that after a period of acclimation at the Yotvata Wildlife Reserve, which belongs to INPA, she will soon be released to the open natural landscapes and will live her life in peace, far from unnecessary dangers.

**Next year will commemorate a decade of urban nature and will continue to work towards conducting urban nature surveys and assimilating them into city master plans, and statutory protection of urban nature sites, their management by professionals and their maintenance by a strong, involved community**