**People and Community**

The Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel (SPNI) is a society of people. Our strength and power come from our joint work with you, a large community of people who love nature, are intrigued by nature and understand that life in Israel during a period of accelerated development, while necessary, must emphasize conservation of our high-quality, unique nature; a limited resource over which we are responsible.

We want to thank the hundreds of thousands of supporters who worked with us during 2018:

* About 37,000 homes in Israel are members of SPNI
* About 900,000 hikers hiked with us
* About 600 children participated in our summer camps
* About 35,000 school students participated in our environmental education programs
* About 20,000 hikers took part in our ‘Urban Nature Week’
* About 40,000 hikers took place in our ‘Winter Nature Conservation’ events
* About 100,000 internet users liked us on Facebook
* About 700 followed us on Instagram
* About 12,000 people have subscriptions to our newsletter

This year, too, we merited great support and joint work with our communities that brought significant achievements. One example of public support for nature conservation was the tens of thousands of hikers who came on Tu B’Shvat 2018 to our traditional event on the southern hills of Modi’in, to reinforce the notion that Modi’in also deserves nature close to home and that the southern hills area should be protected from construction and development, while advancing alternatives to urban development that won’t harm nature.

During February 2018 about 2,500 hikers came each weekend to familiarize themselves with the uniqueness of Hasharon Park near Hadera, making a clear statement that this area needs to be protected from construction and development.

During July 2018 many dozens of Jerusalem residents answered the call to demonstrate against construction on Rekhes Lavan, a plan that endangers the continued existence of the local springs. The demonstration that was not successful at this stage; however, it appears that the Jerusalem public will not give up easily and neither will we!

A daring group of about 60 activists from Haifa decided to take the coast’s future into their hands and joined the Rosh Carmel sea community, which was established at the initiative of SPNI’s Haifa community together with Israel Nature and Parks Authority (INPA); throughout the year the activists conducted activities on conservation of the beach and the sea in Shikmona Nature Reserve in Haifa.

The construction plans for the light rail in Tel Aviv – Yaffo did not take account of the impressive trees on Jerusalem Avenue; residents and members of the SPNI community heeded the call, and thanks to public pressure brought about change and adaptation of the construction plans and saved the trees from being cut down.

In Be’er Sheva, too, the public won’t give up on nature; hundreds of residents take part in caring for Lon Forest together with our community, holding a range of activities for the enjoyment of the public and for conservation of urban nature, proving its importance for the residents.

Thousands of teenagers took part in our hiking club activities throughout the country; these concerned young adults initiated a number of inspiring projects that influenced decision makers and the general public. They took on the battle to save the Jordan tributaries from drying up, and as well as promoting a petition on the internet they managed to publish a lengthy article on this issue in the Maariv newspaper.

We worked from the north to the south with the Arab community as well. This year all ages enjoyed a range of activities in collaboration with different institutions and the community. We ran educational programs for preschool and school children and we worked together with the communities to create awareness of nature and the environment.

Once again, this year we ran environmental education programs throughout the country, in schools and preschools. The children develop feelings of responsibility and belonging and become agents of change among adults in the “Children Leading Change” program. We guided educators through the assimilation process in the institutions they work in and with obtaining the approval of the Green School Standard.

We feel your support and partnership on a daily basis and hope that in the next year, 2019, we will enjoy a fertile and inspiring partnership for nature in Israel and for us.

Our work is spread out over the entire country: from our head offices at 2 Negev St in Tel Aviv – Yaffo, through urban communities in the large cities: Be’er Sheva, Modi’in, Jerusalem, Tela Aviv, Hadera and Haifa; field study centers in different towns: Kiryat Shmona, Ma’alot, Sachnin, Ein Al Assad, Hura, Ramle, Lod, and Eilat and our field schools: Hermon, Golan, Alon Tavor, Achziv, Hof Hacarmel, Ofra, Har Hanegev, Shikmim, Ein Gedi, Hatzeva and Eilat. Our afternoon hiking clubs are active in Tel Aviv, Modi’in, Jerusalem and Be’er Sheva.

Join us next year too! Together we will continue to act and lead the way to a better future, for us and for future generations! Here is a range of places where we can meet again next year:

**In our field schools** we work for and with hikers. Our team of guides leads many hikers within the framework of school trips and family trips. The shared moments in nature allow us to create a connection between humans and nature – a connection that we have been creating for more than sixty years.

**In our urban communities** we deal with the quality of life and the environment surrounding our homes, together with the residents. We strive to involve residents in planning, in creating coalitions with other parties, in working with decision makers at both national and local levels and in making cities better places to live in.

**In our field study centers** we work in peripheral communities and are an integral part of those communities, establishing strong, long-term connections with the local communities. We work to increase the residents’ involvement in protecting nature and their local environment.

**In environmental education** we work together with the education system throughout the country, in schools and in preschools. Together with us, the children become familiar with nature and their local environment, fall in love with them and become conservers of nature and the environment. The children develop feelings of responsibility and belonging and become agents of change among adults. We run the combined continuing education program for sustainability for teaching and educational staff, and guide educators through the assimilation process in the institutions they work in.

**In the Arab community** our activities are spread from the north to the south, and are designed for all of the Arabic speakers in Israel. We work in partnership with different institutions and with communities of all ages. We run educational programs for preschool and school children, continuing education programs for teaching staff in which we create an educational process in full partnership with the teachers. We are active in local communities and run unique activities for adults and for the elderly. We do all this to create awareness of nature and the environment within the Arab community.

**Protecting the Rivers**

We end 2018 with one of our most significant achievements in recent years: the government approved our plan to return the natural water flow in seven rivers in northern Israel, at a cost of over 80 million NIS.

For many years Israel has suffered a severe water shortage crisis, but in recent years large amounts of seawater have been desalinated, providing relief from this crisis that we have been stuck in. The seawater desalination system provides a window of opportunity to change the trend of destruction of Israel’s rivers.

SPNI proposes an achievable vision for river restoration based on the following principles: sustainable management of natural water resources, restoring natural spring flow, defining criteria for groundwater extraction, adopting an ecohydrological approach and changing the administrative structure responsible for river management. This challenge requires resources and an extended period of time, but it is certainly possible, if we can just manage to give this issue high priority.

About a decade ago we initiated a system-wide effort in the field of water and rivers. During those years, which were difficult years for the water economy, we promoted many professional aspects of river restoration, as well as extensive education activities as part of the “River Keepers” educational project. This effort led to one of our most significant achievements in recent years: approval of a plan to re-establish the natural flow of seven rivers in northern Israel, at a cost of over 80 million NIS.

The approved plan is based on a plan we initiated three years ago, named “Three Years Eight Rivers – Practical Steps in Returning the Water Flow to Israel’s Rivers”, in which we presented our vision and rationale for returning life to these rivers.

In this plan we presented the situation prevailing in the not-so-distant past, when it was still possible to enjoy the clear water flowering in the rivers along the coast and in the valleys. Unfortunately, the continuing water crisis in Israel led to critical damage to these rivers, which dried up and were polluted. We identified the change that occurred in the water economy with the establishment of desalination plants as an opportunity to return to nature a little of what we have taken from it over the years, and to promote a general plan for river restoration, with the aim of restoring their natural flow and life. This plan did indeed interest the staff in the Ministry of Energy and Minister Steinitz in the past; however, the conditions for promoting this plan in practice developed only in recent months, and in fact the opportunity arose in connection to the severe water crisis we find ourselves in.

We requested for the plan to be included in the recent national budget, and even produced a video calling on the Minister to promote the plan, which was shared widely on the internet; however, in the end it was not included in the budget.

Fortunately the campaign did not completely miss its target! In a meeting that took place in the middle of the year with the Minister of Energy, he told us that his vision includes restoring life to the rivers and the Sea of Galilee, and that he would ask for the plan to be included in a government decision that he will be promoting shortly. Thus began our pressure campaign to obtain the decision proposal, study it, integrate our plan into it, and mainly – to try to raise the funds for its promotion behind the scenes. After a number of weeks, while promoting a public campaign for the rivers intended to put pressure on the Minister to promote the plan, we found out that the decision proposal promoted by the Minister, which focuses on coping with drought, does indeed include a plan to return water to seven rivers – Betzet, Einan, Ga’aton, Na’aman, Kishon, Tzipori and Hadera – most of which were recommended by our plan, with a budget of over 80 million NIS, intended mainly to release agricultural control of spring water and release this natural water to the rivers.

**Educating the Next Generation of River Keepers**

For many years we have been working in partnership with the Ministry for Environmental Protection and regional drainage authorities to develop and lead the “River Keepers” educational program. Dozens of groups of children work in different rivers around the country. The aim of the program is to instill a feeling of belonging and affinity between the river community and the river; to connect the region’s residents to the natural resources and heritage around them; and to encourage environmental responsibility by combining the physical restoration plan with the educational program.

We support public activities by local residents and activists for the restoration and care of rivers and water sources, for example, the activity to restore Taninim River and the activity to restore Ein Sharona, led by the Western Galilee Field School.

**We will continue working to raise public awareness about spring and river restoration at both the national and local scale; to formulate agreements for catchment (ecohydrological) management of the rivers; to turn drainage authorities into catchment authorities; to reinstate the Ministry for Environmental Protection as the highest authority for river restoration – within the framework of the River Law, while allocating drainage authorities the role of dominant operational player and strengthening the environmental aspects of their activities – within the framework of the Drainage and Flood Control Law.**

**Marking the Trails**

The Israel Trails Committee under the SPNI works unceasingly to mark safe, interesting trails that protect nature.

There are about 10,000 km of marked hiking trails in Israel, including the Israel Trail – the longest hiking trail, which is about 1,000 km long and traverses the length of Israel along a route that offers a spectacular, safe and enjoyable hike, as well as enabling free movement throughout the year without the need to traverse military firing areas or areas that necessitate security escort.

Israel is a wonderful country for hiking in. Its unique location, as a bridge between continents, allows us to enjoy all worlds within a very short distance. We only need a short journey to reach the heart of the desert, swoon before the evergreen landscape of Mt. Carmel, listen to the bubbling water of the Jordan tributaries, touch snow on Mt. Hermon or dip in the Red Sea. Israel is undoubtedly beautiful and its nature manages to move even the most indifferent of us. In Israel, the hiking trail in nature is accessible and clear to the hiker. We are all familiar with the trail markings that seem as if they have always been there; three painted stripes – one white and two colored.

Many of us hike along our country’s trails, assisted by the markings, following the colors, and checking the trail descriptions or marked trail maps to figure out which color we need to follow when we reach a fork in the path. The trail shows us the way and ensures that we’ll stay on the path that is safe for walking. Those who hike with children are surely familiar with their questions about who made the markings. Sometimes this question stays open.

This year we launched a new format for the marked trail maps as well as an Israel Trail map folder that is of course also available in English! To purchase click here:

So who is responsible for our excellent trail marking?

The first hiking trail was marked in 1947 in the Judean Desert. In the early 1960s the Israel Trails Committee under the SPNI was established. The marking that was chosen to mark hiking trails in Israel is a ‘marking rectangle’ comprising three parallel strips. Since then, the committee’s staff are responsible for marking and maintaining trails that appear on 20 hiking maps and marked trail maps; up-to-date information about the trails is published via changes to the areas and new trails. The Trail Marking Committee was established at the initiative of SPNI. This is a public committee that brings together representatives of many bodies with the aim of planning, executing, marking and maintaining thousands of kilometers of hiking trails around the country. The committee invests great effort in maintaining, marking and renewing tens of thousands of trails and marked paths.

Until the year 2000 the trails were marked by volunteers, but since then the trail marking team has become more professional and its members must commit to their role for at least one year. The markers must be sociable people who love to hike, and are not afraid of hard physical work or of taking on responsibility. The requirements of this role may sound very basic but in practice this is a very complex role with great responsibility. The marking teams set out for a week of marking in the field. The team must spend time together, from Sunday to Thursday, without any separation. Thus it is obvious that trail markers do not spend much time at home. A very high level of concentration is required – the markers must mark the best, safest path, while considering both topography and protection of nature. They must also make sure to space the markings correctly in order to create a clear sequence of trail markings for hikers.

Every trail in Israel, and there are tens of thousands of kilometers of them, is re-marked every three to four years. Special emphasis is placed on checking the safety of the current route and making adjustments as needed. New trails are also marked of course; recently the emphasis has been on long trails and cycle trails.

Contact us to take part as volunteers in the trail marking project!

**The Israel Trail:**

The Israel Trail is undoubtedly the star of the marked trails. This is a continuous walking path “from Dan to Eilat”; it traverses a range of landscapes, passes near sites holy to the main religions and near Jewish, Muslim, Christian, Druze and other communities. The Israel Trail serves as the backbone for thousands of kilometers of trails that were marked in the past, connecting them into one system – while ensuring protection of the region’s nature and character.

The name and sign of the Israel Trail are registered trademarks of SPNI.

The trail begins at Beit Ussishkin in Kibbutz Dan and ends at the SPNI Field School in Eilat. It passes over mountains, through forests, cities, towns, villages, rivers, springs, near roads and nature reserves, historical sites and unique natural phenomena. The trail reveals values of nature, landscape, heritage, tradition and religion, multiculturalism and a spectacular and fascinating encounter with Israeli society. All sectors of Israeli society walk along the trail: school children, youth movements, soldiers, tourists, families and all lovers of the land and nature. The trail is marked by graduated stripes of white, blue and orange.

In 2015, to commemorate twenty years of the Israel Trail and one decade of Google’s activity in Israel, the two organizations initiated a joint project – documentation of the trail using cameras and uploading the trail to Google Maps. The photography of this trail is the longest ever undertaken, and is the first photography in the world of a hiking trail that traverses an entire country. The trail experience is available through Google Street View from any place in the country or around the world.

The Israel Trail has become a main route on which to encounter wonderful initiatives that characterize Israeli culture. One of the initiatives that has become an institution is the “Trail Angels” initiative. Trail Angels are citizens who usually live near the trail route and work on a voluntary basis. They help with rescue, burying water in problematic areas, providing a cup of coffee, helping transfer equipment and even offering a bed and a warm shower, or a grassy area to set up a tent on.

In 2019 we will continue working to make sure that the Israel Trail remains open and accessible and attracts a wide range of hikers from Israel and around the world.

You are welcome to watch this great video about the Trail Marking Committee produced by the Pearl brothers

**Protecting the Birds**

Israel’s location on an important migration route brings us a unique richness of birds. Our Ornithological Center staff work around the clock, researching and studying the land in order to protect Israel’s diversity of birds. The main focus of the Center is to protect habitats important for their existence. Time after time we lead public campaigns for the birds and together with you we have had quite a few successes.

**We protected the vultures in the Golan!**

Together with you we submitted 4,500 objections to the establishment of a wind turbine farm on Mt. Peres in order to protect the vultures from a death sentence.

Following the widespread public opposition we led, the wind turbine farm on Mt. Peres in the Golan Heights will be established only after preparation of an operating regime designed to achieve zero impact on vultures and Egyptian vultures, and after monitoring for at least a year to examine the ability of the operating regime to meet these targets and prevent harm to birds of prey.

Thanks to the widespread public opposition, the investigator’s report proposes to implement an operating regime, as part of the plan, in order to meet the target of zero impact on vultures and Egyptian vultures. We call on the National Infrastructure Committee (NIC) to set up compulsory mechanisms to ensure implementation of the operating regime, to indeed achieve zero impact on these species, and that the wind turbine farm will not lead to extinction of the vultures in the Golan. If this indeed happens in practice and zero impact on birds of prey is achieved, then in this specific case, in this particular farm a way will be found to use wind turbines to reduce emission of air pollutants and greenhouse gases, while protecting birds in this region.

**Counting Wild Birds in Private Yards**

Together with you, we counted thousands of birds this year. This activity took place, this year, for the 13th time in Israel, from 26/1/2018 to 10/2/2018. The counting was carried out by SPNI’s Israel Ornithological Center, The Israeli Center for Yardbirds and thousands of bird lovers who participated in this important project.

Using the data obtained from the annual bird count we can learn about changes and trends in the bird populations. Thus, for example, we learn about the spread of invasive birds in Israel (birds that were brought to Israel, escaped and reproduced naturally) such as the myna, the rose-ringed parakeet and the monk parakeet (link to the yardbirds poster), and study whether, and to what extent, these species affect native species. We compare known processes from studies conducted around the world (such as the dwindling house sparrow population in England) with processes occurring in Israel. Each year the number of reporters increases. As well as reports from amateur and professional birders, we were also happy to receive reports from educational institutions and the general public. The counters make a meaningful contribution to the development of citizen science in Israel and nature conservation. We work to increase the reliability of the reports in different ways – both via the technological system and via meticulous, manual sorting by a senior birder – to prevent reports of outstanding birds that are unexpected in the particular season of the year or in the environment where the count was conducted.

**How Many Reports?**

In 2018, 1,736 report forms were submitted – similar to the number of reports in 2017 – despite shortening the counting period from 22 to 16 days. 722 forms were from preschools and educational institutions, and comprise 41% of all reports. The reports were submitted by 870 different participants, including 405 preschools and educational institutions. This year saw increased participation by Arab-speaking educational institutions, comprising about 40% of all preschools and schools. From around the country we received reports on 71,200 individual birds from 105 different species.

And the bottom line – what did we find?

The hooded crow is the most common bird in Israel, as observed in recent years. The five birds that were observed the most times are also the most common birds in residential areas due to the high food availability and their ability to adapt to changing environments. All five species were also at the top of the list of common species last year, in more or less the same order, indicating on one hand the relative stability of the system and on the other hand the reliability of the data, due to the statistical power of multiple observations.

**Surveying and Conserving in Eilat and the Arava**

In February, the first survey of its kind was conducted in the south of Israel, and from now on we intend to conduct it annually. About half a million migratory birds pass through Israel during the spring. The surveyors are excited, almost as much as the birds; they cross fingers for them and wish them success in their exhausting journey. While monitoring the migratory birds the surveyors become their ‘road guards’, and when necessary – will be the first to send the warning signal.

**Lesser Kestrel Survey for 2018**

In 2018, monitoring of lesser kestrel breeding was conducted by a professional birder in collaboration with local residents, as part of an attempt to understand the potential of citizen science that maintains a partnership between citizens and scientists, at different stages of data collection and analysis.

In the next few years, we intend to expand the involvement of local residents and their contribution to research on the lesser kestrel population breeding in the communities of the Megiddo and Alona regional councils and the activities required to protect the population.

The results of the 2018 survey reveal that there has been no change in population size. In 2018, 286 nests were documented in comparison with 293 (±5) pairs during the years 2000-2014; however, the population is dynamic. Changes were recorded in the number of breeding pairs within settlements, with a significant decrease in the number of breeding pairs in some settlement and in a significant increase in others. These results indicate a metapopulation structure in Ramot Menashe, where individuals move and alternate with each other frequently among the different locations. In the next few years we will try to study this question in partnership with the local residents and educational frameworks.

**A ‘Nature Defense Force’ for the Birds**

As part of the Nature Defense Force initiative, a joint project between SPNI and the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) in collaboration with INPA, a number of very impressive projects were carried out to protect birds, including the project to rehabilitate the common swift population within the grounds of HaKirya and Sarona. The common swift is a small bird that lives in flocks and feeds on insects. In spends most of its life in flight and breeds in Israel in the spring, in wall crevices or under roof cornices. Modern buildings are not suitable for the nest shape required for the swift’s unique mode of flight. Therefore many swifts who come to cities do not find a suitable place to breed. As part of this project, the soldiers installed unique nesting boxes constructed from ammunition cases, within the grounds of HaKirya in Tel Aviv. These boxes allow the swift to leave the nest opening in a way that is tailored to its mode of flight.

Within the framework of the project to protect birds of prey in the Nachshonim region, soldiers created breeding areas for the lesser kestrel; an educational explanatory activity including observations and bird ringing takes place here to raise awareness and sensitivity of soldiers in the IDF towards conservation of nature and birds.

In the last twenty years we have witnessed a decrease of about 90% in the number of sandgrouses in the Negev. One of the reasons for this sharp decline is polluted wastewater that many of the sandgrouses drink regularly. As part of the project to save the sandgrouse population in the Shivta region, soldiers work to improve the state of the sandgrouse population by providing the sandgrouses with clean water as well as raising awareness about protecting them in the unit’s firing range.

**The Migration Champions Break Records**

The 2018 Migration Champions Competition of SPNI’s Ornithological Center and the largest ornithological organization in the world, BIRDLIFE, took place in March. This is the largest birding competition in the world, in which 200 professional and amateur birders from Israel and around the world compete with each other to see who can identify the most species of birds within a given area (in the Negev, Arava and Eilat), within 24 hours.

In first place was an international team of young birders (comprising an English birder, a birder from Zimbabwe and two birders from South Africa), with 186 species, a new competition record.

In second place was the “Small Debts” group, comprising Israeli young adults, with 183 species, and in third place, a group of Israelis and Palestinians headed by Noam Weiss, a senior birder at SPNI, with 181 species.

All of the money raised for the competition, the highest amount ever, about 100 thousand dollars, will be dedicated to the campaign against illegal hunting in Serbia and Croatia, the Adriatic immigration route.

**Birding Activities**

SPNI’s Ornithological Center continues educating the young generation of birders. As in previous years, we held birding activities this year for children and teenagers. The activities take place in different regions, under the guidance of adult birders with experience in both ornithology and nature in general. During vacations, young birders from around the country gather together and set out to watch spectacular birds! Haven’t joined us yet? You’re welcome to join in!

**Collaboration with Salt of the Earth**

This collaboration between SPNI and Salt of the Earth included a campaign on both television and digital media.

The salt pools of Salt of the Earth at Atlit and Eilat are used as a site of rest and refuge for water birds during their migration – this is why the Ornithological Center has worked together with Salt of the Earth over the years on projects related to the salt pools.

Therefore, Salt of the Earth chose to include SPNI in a campaign produced to emphasize the contribution of the salt pools to the water birds.

**Next year we will continue working to improve the state of birds in Israel with an emphasis on endangered species, by promoting active management to protect endangered species, preventing establishment of wind turbines, mapping key areas for birds, publicizing the ‘Red Book’ and raising public awareness.**

**Education and Hiking**

Over 65 years ago, we established SPNI out of a love of nature. Since then, we lead thousands of children, families and adults daily along our country’s trails, aiming to expose them to the magic of nature.

We believe that real change comes from the strong connection and feeling of responsibility. Nature does not belong to anyone, we are part of nature. Living far from nature has made it foreign and disconnected to us. We believe that familiarity with nature and direct contact with it will make us a more moral society, one that protects nature and the environment.

We have focused on hiking for many years; with time we have studied, gained experience, become more professional and guided the development of hiking in Israel. The field of educational hiking is constantly changing and developing. We invest great effort in developing our content and instruction, tailoring our guiding programs, conducting continuing education courses for our guides and more. For many years we have led the field of hiking in Israel and are the leading source of content in this field.

**Educational Treks and Annual School Trips**

More and more secondary schools are joining us for a different kind of annual school trip. Within the framework of our activities, through our daughter company, ‘Revealing the Land’, we lead hundreds of thousands of school children and teachers on educational treks that add value and meaning to the annual school trip, for both the children and the teaching staff.

The educational trek is designed to assimilate educational values, arouse awareness, knowledge and involvement in the fields of nature, society, and knowledge of the land, and serve as a starting point for a continuing ethical, educational process at school. During this process, we create a partnership with the school’s teaching staff and children when planning and executing the activity.

The educational power of our educational treks is significant and has proven itself in different and diverse sectors of the population. This year we ran our educational treks as part of our activities to strengthen teenagers. Many of the program participants experienced, for the first time, an excursion to nature, preparation for an extended period of time outside of home, a social experience outside of school, wonder at the landscapes and new topics, dialog and a new kind of in-depth learning.

Elementary schools also chose to spend their annual school trips with SPNI and ‘Revealing the Land’. Our annual school trip programs are tailored to the core programs of the Ministry of Education. We specialize in building an optimal experience for the participants; an experience in which the children do not just observe and listen but become active partners. We promote a world of advanced instruction in which the guide not only presents the information to the children but also uses advanced guiding tools. When planning the educational process we place emphasis on creating involvement, a strong learning experience and personal connection for the participant. As a nature conservation organization, we place emphasis on awareness of issues related to nature conservation and environment in Israel, in the belief that a strong, personal experience during the trip leads to active citizenship and environmental activism.

**Field Schools**

In the early 1960s we dreamed a dream: to establish a ‘field school’ – a center of learning, nature investigation and guidance. In 1963 we established the Ein Gedi Field School, the first in Israel, and currently we have 12 field schools spread around the country from Dan to Eilat.

Our field schools are located in different regions near unique nature. SPNI’s guides in the field schools, both young and adult, are connected to the land and its happenings and accompany hikers among the nature trails and landscapes of the region. Nine of our field schools also offer accommodation. In the last year 250,000 visitors chose to sleep in our field schools, including school children, summer camp participants, tourists, organized groups and individual families who chose to spend their family holiday as close to nature as possible with professional guidance from our team of guides.

The field schools with accommodation include Hermon, Golan, Alon Tavor, Meiron, Achziv, Ein Gedi, Mitzpe Ramon, Hatzeva and Eilat; call Teleteva to reserve your place: 03-6388688

[Link](https://www.natureisrael.org/FieldSchools):

**Environmental Education**

We believe that real change and motivation for activism to protect nature can be achieved only through an extended educational process that arouses wonder and love. We run our environmental education program in many schools and preschools throughout the country.

In 2018 about 35,000 children from different areas and backgrounds participated in our environmental education activities. In our program, children learn about biodiversity, personal conduct in the field, the conservation vs. development dilemma, sustainability and more. The programs take place as part of both formal and informal educational frameworks, in the large cities – in the SPNI communities – and in the country’s periphery.

Once again, this year we enjoyed fruitful collaboration with local authorities, the Ministry for Environmental Protection, the Ministry of Education and school staff.

**Training Guides**

For dozens of year we have been training guides to become familiar with the land, love and know Israel’s nature, lead Ministry of Education hikes, and correctly use nature and the land as a very meaningful educational tool when working with children, teenagers and adults. In 2018 we also ran a rich and interesting training program for tour guides. Our program of courses, continuing education programs and workshops is based on a unique combination of decades of knowledge and experience with continuing familiarity with the land.

**BioCheker**

We meet more and more elementary school children who chose to expand their knowledge on nature and biology. These children come to our field schools as part of their “science voyages” that aim towards in-depth scientific investigation at the peak of a learning process within the framework of this study track.

Our science voyages are run by nature professionals and experts in the field. The voyages place emphasis on the personal research and learning process in a supportive scientific environment in nature. The children enjoy a ‘lab outside the lab’ experience. Many participants report that the science voyage was the highlight of their learning process.

**Summer Camps and Day Camps**

During the summer and other vacation periods we run day camps for younger children and summer camps for teenagers. Our field schools open their gates to thousands of children and teenagers who come to experience, learn and enjoy, and connect to nature. In the day camps, the children achieve close acquaintance with animals, investigate their environment and spend time with new friends. The day camps are led by our professional guiding staff, the guiding staff of the field schools. Many children choose to return to our day camps, year after year. This year too, our day camps and summer camps hosted tens of thousands of children and teenagers.

**Eretz Ahavati – Adult Hikes**

Hiking with SPNI is a lifelong experience. Within the framework of ‘Eretz Ahavati’ (My Beloved Country) we run series of high-quality hikes for adults with the best guides. This year about 42,000 hikers participated in Eretz Ahavati programs.

For information and registration to Eretz Ahavati programs:

**Green Hikes**

As part of our leisure hikes we run a series of high-quality hikes. Each weekend hundreds of Israelis go out into nature, guided by the best guides.

This year we were delighted that more companies and organizations chose join us on a team-building experience along Israel’s trails. During these activities, the employees enjoy quality time and a connection to nature, to themselves and to the staff they work with. More and more companies are choosing to join us on leisure activities and thus support nature conservation in Israel.

Next year, too, we will continue working to educate towards hiking, loving the land and protecting nature and the environment in Israel. We invite you to continue hiking with us, join our activities, tell your relatives and invite them to join in as well.