




# START-UP NATURE

One small country.  
A global responsibility.

The Society for the  
Protection of Nature in Israel





A large flock of Great White Pelicans is gathered in a wetland area. Many birds are in flight, showing their white bodies and black wings. They are surrounded by water and some dry vegetation. In the background, there are industrial structures, including a tall metal tower and a yellow crane-like structure. The scene is set against a backdrop of green hills and a clear sky.

Europe's entire population of 50,000 pelicans relies on Israel's wetlands to sustain themselves on their annual migration. (Pictured here: Great White Pelican.)

Photo credit: Thomas Krumenacker

**HUMANKIND IS  
FACING ONE OF  
ITS GREATEST  
CHALLENGES.**

**The price of  
progress.**



# ONE SMALL NATION IS STEPPING UP WITH A GLOBAL SOLUTION.

Israel is located in one of the regions most important to biodiversity in the world, according to the UN. As a small, densely-populated country, natural spaces are being pushed back. This reality reflects a much greater issue:

**The number one threat to biodiversity is human development.**

The world's population has doubled in just 40 years, and the toll on nature is apparent all across the globe. This collision is magnified in Israel, a small country known for its innovation and rapid growth.

**Sustainable progress  
has seemed unrealistic.**

**Until now.**

## WE STAND AT A CROSSROADS.

Did you know that Israel lies at the junction of a major migratory flyway, funneling hundreds of millions of birds from across Europe, Asia and Africa twice every year?

Despite its small size, Israel is critical to these birds' survival. Without its unique habitats, these birds would not complete their grueling journeys across the desert belt of North Africa and the Arabian Peninsula.

You're probably thinking, "That's interesting." **Actually, it is absolutely critical.**

*"We are exploiting nature far more rapidly than it can renew itself. If we don't change course, up to one million known species could disappear by 2050, with dire consequences for planetary health."*

-THE NATURE CONSERVANCY

The biodiversity of three entire continents relies on these half a billion birds and their successful migration through Israel. They are integral to the ecosystems that sustain our civilization: from pollinating crops, to regulating air and water quality and climate, to protecting us from natural hazards, erosion and disease.

**If Israel's wetland habitats disappear and the migrations fail, the consequences to the country, and to the Earth, will be devastating.**





Israel's wetlands provide vital refueling sites at the edge of the desert belt of Africa for one of the world's largest and most important flyways.

*Migrating Eurasian  
Cranes leaving Israel  
for the next leg of  
their journey can fly  
more than 800 km  
(497 miles) in one day.*

Photo credit: Thomas  
Krumenacker

**Rapid growth need not come at such a steep price.**


## **IT'S TIME WE TAKE ACTION.**

We are actively reclaiming former commercial fish ponds throughout northern and central Israel and rewilding them into wetland sanctuaries that will protect a globally critical migration fly route forever.

The Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel (SPNI) is combining the country's innovative spirit and decades of conservation success to not only secure the flyway for these hundreds of millions

of birds, but open this natural treasure to the public like never before, and create a revolutionary, replicable model for nature restoration and sustainable development everywhere.





This network of world-class wildlife sanctuaries will be complete with visitors' centers, hides, accessible trails and personal encounters with over 300 species of birds for more than 150,000 local and international visitors each year.

These spaces will serve as integral parts of the local economy and lifestyle, ensuring that they aren't being protected for now, but instead are embraced as a permanent fixture in Israel's landscape and in the lives of its people.

We're working with some of the top conservation scientists and NGOs in the world to make sure that this plan works, that it can be replicated, and that it has the global impact it needs to shape the future of our planet.

**We need visionaries to step up for our children and their children.**

**To ensure  
the success of  
Start-Up Nature.**

**To ensure  
short-term gains  
don't win over  
long-term losses.**

**To keep this  
natural treasure  
safe, for good.**

**We need you.**

# MEET SPNI. YOUR PARTNER IN INNOVATIVE CONSERVATION.

For more than 60 years, SPNI has been Israel's most influential conservation organization, shaping the face of Israel for future generations. SPNI focuses on embracing nature in the modern world and cultivating a responsible, sustainable relationship between both.

## SCIENCE

SPNI's innovative thinking generates science-based solutions that benefit business shareholders, local communities and nature.

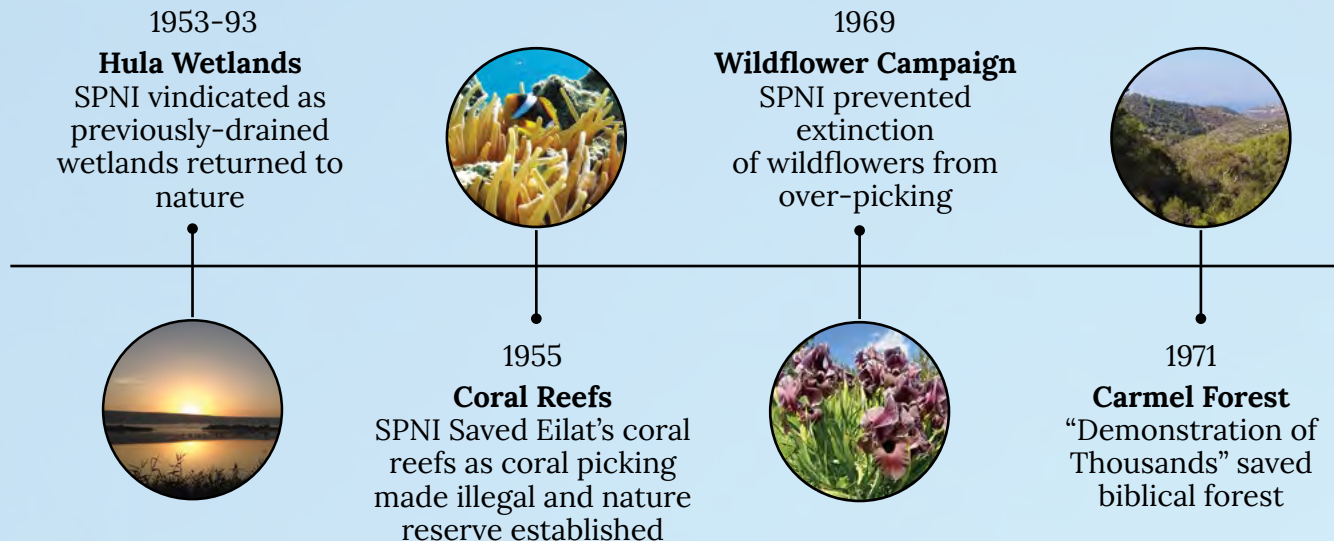
## ACTION

SPNI partners with business leaders, community members and policy-makers on critical national conservation efforts.

## HEART

SPNI brings Israel and its people closer to nature through up-close education and public engagement programs and sites.

## SPNI'S HISTORIC VICTORIES







**Start-Up Nature** is the brainchild of SPNI's Director of Nature Conservation and Environmental Protection, Dan Alon, the visionary behind the restored Hula Lake Park. The site serves as a second home to millions of migratory birds and is Northern Israel's

leading tourist destination, generating up to \$27M with over 400,000 visitors annually.

The Hula Lake Park took the first step toward securing the international flyway, and Dan Alon and the SPNI team are drawing on his experience and research to finish the job.



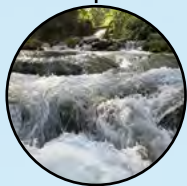
*The Eastern Imperial Eagle is globally threatened. Less than 2000 breeding pairs remain. The wetlands of Israel are of global importance to their survival.*

Photo credit: Thomas Krumenacker

1984

### **Land of the Rivers**

Saved the Banias by preventing redirection of tributaries



1995

### **Israel National Trail**

Blazed 620 mile trail across Israel and manages 96,000km of Israel's hiking trails

2004

### **Coastal Law**

Initiated law that Israel's untouched beaches remain accessible and free



2008

### **Jerusalem Forest**

Public campaign that saved Jerusalem's green lung

2015

### **Gazelle Valley**

Israel's first urban wildlife park established



# WHAT YOU WILL MAKE POSSIBLE

## Rewilding fish farms into wetland wildlife sanctuaries.

The first move has been made. Seeing an opportunity in agricultural areas slated for redevelopment, SPNI launched Start-Up Nature, a campaign for a strategic network of world-class wetland wildlife sanctuaries and ecotourism locations throughout the country. With the first two sites procured, the rewilding has already begun. These destinations have been designed by leading ecologists and landscape architects to provide critical resources to millions of migratory birds, educate and inspire a love for the environment, benefit the local economy, and secure these sites for nature—permanently.

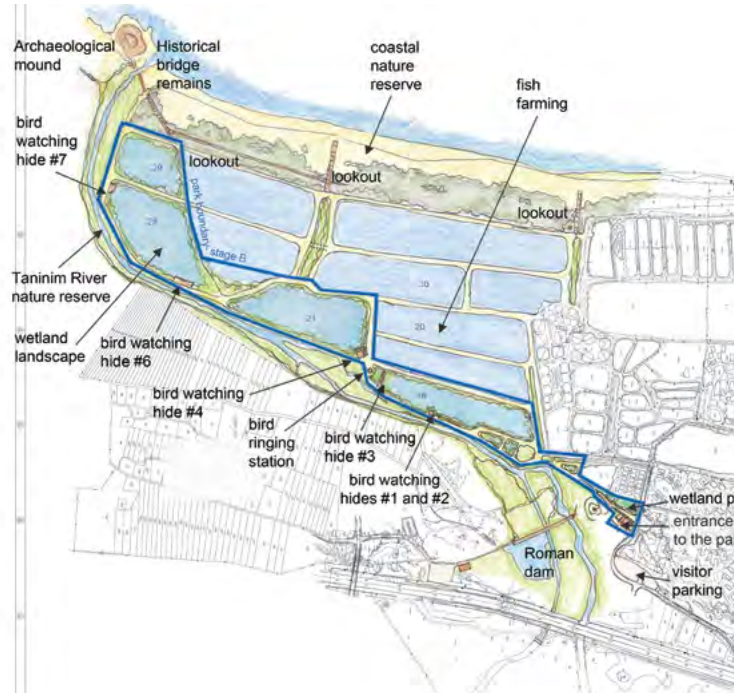


Restored habitats, managed for biodiversity, to support millions of wintering and migrating birds



State-of-the-art visitors' centers, accessible nature trails, bird blinds, educational resources, and an exploratory sensory trail for children

Breathtaking personal encounters with a natural treasure for the Israeli public and international tourists



Invaluable research and data into bird migration and habits, wetland ecosystems and conservation and restoration science

The first two sites for this endeavor are repurposed fish farms located in Kibbutz Kfar Ruppim in the Jordan Valley and Kibbutz Maagan Michael on the Mediterranean coast. Together, these sites cover over 700,000 square meters (173 acres) of land and will be managed for biodiversity, protecting local and international wildlife including millions of waterbirds, raptors and songbirds and rare, endangered otters, as well as stunning local flora and wildflowers. These natural environments will be experienced like never before.



# WHAT CAN YOU IMPACT?

## 1 ISRAEL

By revitalizing local communities and businesses, and strengthening the national economy by drawing more than 150,000 annual visitors and generating over 15M NIS for the region alone, effectively replacing the income previously generated by the fish farms. The project has already garnered the support of the Israeli government, regional councils and local agencies, and is a unique, unifying opportunity to propel Israel's conservation efforts on a global scale, drawing people of all backgrounds, ethnicities and beliefs together in experiences and research for the protection of our planet.

### **Israeli partners in collaboration with Start-Up Nature**

Open Landscape Institute  
Israel Nature and Parks Authority  
Ministry of Tourism  
Carmel Coast Regional Council  
Emek Hamaayanot Regional Council  
South Jordan Drainage Authority  
Carmel Coast Drainage Authority



*Pictured here:  
the European  
Honey-Buzzard*

## 2 GLOBAL MIGRATION

By securing critical wetland habitats, one of the world's largest flyways and the migration of hundreds of millions of birds, all critical agents of biodiversity and climate change mitigation across three major continents.

### **Sample of bird populations visiting Kfar Ruppin & Maagan Michael**

#### **Common Species:**

Black Stork - 25,000  
Great White Pelican - 35,000  
Great Egret - 50,000  
Little Stint - 50,000  
Willow Warbler - 200,000  
Yellow Wagtail - 300,000  
Barn Swallow - 1M  
Reed Warbler - 1M

#### **Rare Species**

Isabelline Shrike - 3-5 every winter  
Greater Spotted Eagle - 30-50 every winter  
Pallas's Gull - 300 every winter  
Black Francolin - resident  
Dead-Sea Sparrow - resident





# 3 CONSERVATION

By establishing an actionable model for sustainable habitat preservation in densely populated areas and promoting a deep love and responsibility towards nature and the environment through education and unique encounters for hundreds of thousands of annual visitors.

Many conservation initiatives design solutions without local buy-in. Start-Up Nature was innovatively designed to not only restore priority habitats but to also provide significant economic value to the local communities to cultivate their long-term partnership and support.

## Research Partners in Collaboration with Start-Up Nature

Bird Life International  
The International Union  
for Conservation of  
Nature(IUCN)  
Cornell Lab of Ornithology  
Hebrew University  
Tel Aviv University  
Haifa University



Our wetlands  
are crucial for  
endangered wildlife  
like Israel's Common  
Otter (Lutra).  
Fewer than 100 are  
estimated to be left  
in the wild.

*"We must act to halt and reverse the unsustainable use of nature or risk the future we want and have.... Fortunately, the evidence also shows that we know how to protect and partially restore our vital natural assets."*

—SIR ROBERT WATSON,  
LEADING BRITISH SCIENTIST

300

species of birds  
will visit the first  
two sites alone

69

are included on the  
EU's "Red List" of  
threatened species

18

are included  
on Israel's  
"Red List"

8

are under  
threat of global  
extinction



# THE SOLUTION IS HERE.

With your help, we can  
turn it into our legacy.

*Three species of kingfishers, from Africa, Asia and Europe, including this Common Kingfisher, rely on Israel's wetlands.*

Photo credit:  
Gad Shmila





**In Stage I, we raised \$4 million toward our \$15 million goal.** The initial lease, rewilding, and visitor infrastructure have been funded. Start-Up Nature sites are underway.

**In Stage II of the campaign—your phase of the plan—we aim to raise \$11 million.** These funds will permanently endow the first two sites of Start-Up Nature’s revolutionary conservation model.

#### **Initial Partners**

Open Landscape Fund  
Ministry of Tourism  
Ministry of Finance  
The Ministry for the Development  
of the Periphery, the Negev and  
the Galilee  
Ministry of Jerusalem and Heritage  
The Goldberg Group, Toronto  
Kibbutz Kfar Ruppin  
Kibbutz Maagan Michael

## **THESE FUNDS WILL SUSTAIN:**

### **The Future of the Flyway**

The establishment of these wetland habitats—the rewilding of the agricultural lands—will be achieved through the long-term leasing of these areas from the kibbutzim, as they cannot be purchased under Israeli law.

### **Israel as a Leader in Conservation**

Ongoing monitoring and management of the biodiversity of each site, as well as collaborations with leading international research institutes, will ensure that Israel’s conservation efforts have a global impact. The research and replicable models will contribute to ecosystem restoration worldwide.

### **Personal Encounters and World-Class Destinations**

Maintaining the trails, hides, and visitor infrastructure will ensure the highest quality experiences for an estimated 150,000 visitors per year, including the Israeli public, youth, tourists and birders from across the globe. These ecotourism destinations will promote a love for the environment while strengthening the local and national economy with an estimated \$4.5M every year.

**We call upon you to join top scientists, global conservation leaders, innovators, and community leaders to Start-Up Nature.**

## CONTACT

### SOCIETY FOR THE PROTECTION OF NATURE IN ISRAEL

2 HaNegev Street  
Tel Aviv, Israel 6618602

🌐 [www.startupnature.org](http://www.startupnature.org)  
☎ +972 (0) 3 638 8648  
✉ [international@spni.org.il](mailto:international@spni.org.il)

Yossi ben Artzi, *Chair*  
Iris Hann, *CEO*  
Dan Alon, *Director of Nature Conservation  
and Environmental Protection*

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### NATURE ISRAEL™ THE AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR THE PROTECTION OF NATURE IN ISRAEL

28 Arrandale Avenue,  
Great Neck, NY 11024

☎ 1 (800) 411-0966  
✉ [aspni@aol.com](mailto:aspni@aol.com)

Jonathan Silverstein, *Chair*  
Robin Gordon, *Executive Director*

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### THE CANADIAN SOCIETY FOR THE PROTECTION OF NATURE IN ISRAEL

25 Imperial St., Suite 200  
Toronto, Ontario M5P 1B9

☎ 1 (416) 917-6648  
✉ [hello@natureisrael.ca](mailto:hello@natureisrael.ca)

COVER: Hundreds of millions of birds fly over Kfar Ruppin in the Jordan Valley each year on their amazing migrations. (Pictured here: Black Stork, Little Egret, Black-winged Stilt.)

Photo credit: Thomas Krumenacker

BACK COVER: The return of heron species like this Little Egret is a sign of a healthy wetland.

Photo credit: Thomas Krumenacker



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