



# START-UP NATURE

One small country. A global responsibility.



The Society for the  
Protection of Nature  
in Israel

## Executive Summary

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The number one threat to biodiversity is human development. Start-Up Nature is setting out to mend this rift by establishing wildlife sanctuaries in densely-populated areas, supporting both the ecosystem and the local economy simultaneously. Israel is a critical stop on a global flyway, and its wetlands support the biodiversity of three continents. With Start-Up Nature's groundbreaking model, Israel is positioned to revolutionize conservation everywhere.

Outlined and detailed in the following proposal are our requests for your consideration. The following proposal describes:

- The need for and ecological impact of the Start-Up Nature project
- Start-Up Nature's advantages to the local economy
- The current status of the Start-Up Nature project
- Budget information
- Current partnerships
- Naming opportunities for additional partners

A quick overview of the project development and funding opportunities includes the following:

- \$4 Million in Stage 1 funding secured from government resources
- Lease has been signed with Kibbutz Kfar Ruppin, construction has begun and reservoirs have been flooded
- Significant progress has been made toward expanding from 300 to 1,000 dunam in Kfar Ruppin for the Start-Up Nature project
- Lease has been signed with Kibbutz Maagan Michael, construction has begun, to be completed by the end of 2022
- Endowment funding will secure operations in these sites into perpetuity and serve as a model for an expanded strategic rewilding network in Israel
- Additional support will fund direct operations of the sites in their first three years, during which the endowment will be raised, as well as expanded infrastructures and features
- Unique dedication and naming opportunities are spread throughout the two wetland sites
- The \$11-million Start-Up Nature Campaign will be the first step in a replicable and large-scale \$45-million network across Israel of rewilding projects for wetland habitats.



## An Urgent Need. A Permanent Solution.

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Across the globe, nature is struggling. Human development leaves habitats destroyed, causing immense damage to ecosystems everywhere. For centuries, Israel's wetlands have served as a vital rest stop for half a billion birds who migrate across Europe, Asia and Africa twice a year. According to the UN, Israel is located in one of the regions most important to biodiversity in the world. Despite its small size, Israel is critical to these birds' survival. Without Israel's unique habitats, these birds would not complete their grueling journeys across the desert belt of North Africa and the Arabian Peninsula. In recent decades, most of these areas in Israel, as well as wetlands in surrounding areas such as Turkey and Jordan, have been lost to development, and Earth is suffering as a result.

The biodiversity of three 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 and controlling pests, to ultimately regulating air and water quality and climate and protecting us from natural hazards, erosion, and disease. These habitats must be restored, for the sake of nature, and our future.

And yet as a small country with some of the highest population density in the world, Israel cannot simply allocate large swathes of land as green space.

The Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel's Start-Up Nature project puts Israeli creative thinking to work to preserve the flyway. The innovative spirit that has led Israel to develop so rapidly is also the means of reconciling human industry and the natural world.

SPNI is launching an \$11 million endowment capital campaign to permanently secure and maintain two key locations on the flyway – a series of essential wetland habitats. These sites have the potential for replication in other sites in Israel in the near future, and provide a model which other land-strapped countries can follow.

**SPNI's Start-Up Nature will secure the world's largest flyway and reinforce Israel's standing as a leading innovator in global conservation.**

The leading conservation organization in Israel today, SPNI has been dedicated to protecting and preserving Israel's natural resources, environment, wildlife, and landscapes since 1953. Start-Up Nature draws on decades of experience, research, and partnerships with leading international conservation NGOs, research institutes, universities, and government agencies including BirdLife International, the International Union for Conservation of Nature, and the World Wildlife Fund.



Start-Up Nature is the brainchild of SPNI's Director of Nature Conservation and Environmental Protection, Dan Alon. He is the visionary who came up with, planned, and developed the Hula Lake Park, now a second home to millions of migratory birds and Northern Israel's leading tourist destination.

The following outlines the Start-Up Nature project, along with our request for support and endowment to ensure the long-term success of Start-Up Nature.

## Start-Up Nature: One Small Country. A Global Responsibility.

### **Rewilding**

Twice a year, around 500 million birds migrate between Africa, Europe, and Asia. In order to complete their journey, they need landing places to rest and refuel. And a telephone wire is not enough. Their rest stops must meet hundreds of species of birds' needs for water and food, which requires a complex ecosystem including water, bugs, animals, and plant life.

SPNI's Start-Up Nature project addresses the problem of how to secure these ecosystems within areas of human development. We identified a number of fish farming ponds on Kibbutz Kfar Ruppin in the Jordan Valley and Kibbutz Maagan Michael on the Mediterranean coast which had been abandoned for a number of years and awaited redevelopment for other industrial purposes. We entered into partnerships with the kibbutzim to lease the fishponds and surrounding land for three years and return them to their natural state. Over the course of those three years, we are raising funds for an \$11M endowment that will ensure the nature preserves remain secure from human development in perpetuity.

To recreate the birds' natural habitat, SPNI carefully flooded the areas of the fishponds with water from local natural sources and replanted the vegetation necessary to regenerate the wetlands ecosystems of each area. The rewilded habitat quickly attracted repopulation by the invertebrates, reptiles, amphibians, and small mammals that are integral to the ecosystems.

The results were even better than we anticipated. Within a few short months following rewilding, hundreds of thousands of birds arrived to rest and refuel along their migration routes. 80 new species have been spotted in the habitats, including endangered species and others of conservation concern, such as Ferruginous Duck, African Swamphen, Greater Spotted Eagle, Purple Heron, Turtle Dove, Roller, and Dead Sea Sparrow. Using monitoring data, we are using the two sites to develop evidence-based best practices for replicable models of habitat management, for use worldwide.

## **Tourism**

For Start-Up Nature, the birds and their ecosystems are always top priority. The sites exist first and foremost to protect them and nurture them so they can continue doing their good work keeping the planet healthy and thriving. In order to preserve the integrity of the habitat, SPNI avoids invasive human structures and activities, even when they offer the potential for revenue. The \$11M endowment will ensure that the sites stay strictly for the birds in perpetuity.

At the same time, the bird sanctuaries will serve as educational centers, out of the conviction that when people learn about nature, they fall in love and act to protect it. The sites will include safe walking trails, visitors' centers placed at a secure distance from the birds, and carefully designed blinds where birders can observe without being observed. We will offer guided tours and educational visits, and the sites will also serve as research centers for Israeli and international researchers.

In addition, without compromising its mission, Start-Up Nature will bring economic advantages to the areas around the sites and to SPNI. In the Kfar Ruppin site specifically, we are currently making progress toward extending the original plans of 300 dunam to 1,000 dunam, with the habitat surrounding the kibbutz on all sides. This development will be a game changer for Kfar Ruppin, turning it into a "climate change kibbutz" in the middle of nature. Kibbutz officials are excited about the opportunity, and we expect to secure the approvals of the local Drainage Authorities and the Israel Nature and Parks Authority by Summer 2022.

An expected 150,000 annual visitors will support local businesses, artisans, and accommodation, generating an estimated \$4.5M in tourism revenue to the regions of the Kfar Ruppin and Maagan Michael sites. SPNI will generate revenue through services such as guided tours to schools and other groups.

The Start-Up Nature vision is one that keeps native wildlife and migrating birds at the center of its priorities always. We pursue and celebrate opportunities for education and ecotourism, but only when they are in line with that mission.

**This framework that always puts wildlife before revenue is thus built on a model of 10% revenue and 90% philanthropic support. That is why the endowment campaign is crucial.**

## Project Status

### Stage I

- \$4M funding secured from government resources, The Goldberg Group, and Open Landscape Fund to secure lease of sites from Kfar Ruppim and Maagan Michael kibbutzim for 3 years
- Sites designed by leading ecologists and landscape architects
- Kfar Ruppim: flooding and revegetation complete for 5 pools, covering 300 dunam; all construction in the building plans complete; steps being taken to expand the site to additional pools and grounds to cover 1000 dunam and create a "climate change kibbutz"; bird blinds, walking trails in process
- Maagan Michael: construction begun, to be completed by the end of 2022; bridges, tracks, infrastructures in process

### Stage II

Stage II of the project involves two simultaneous fundraising components:

- A) By 2025, raise \$11M endowment to secure these critical stops along the flyway in perpetuity.

The Start-Up Nature endowment will be managed by the Altshuler Shaham Investment House, one of Israel's largest and most respected investment management enterprises. Donations to the campaign will be handled as restricted only for the purposes of leasing and managing land in Israel for conservation purposes. Altshuler Shaham is guiding SPNI through the process of setting up the endowment, managing investments and returns, and instituting policies and restrictions on invading the principal for future needs.

The endowment's 4% annual return will meet the Kfar Ruppim and Maagan Michael sites' annual operations needs of \$440,000.

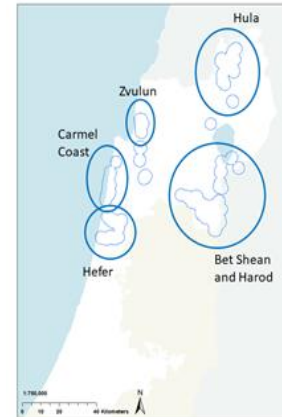
- B) Raise \$1,320,000 to cover the operating and development costs of the two sites during the three years until the endowment is secured.

## What's Next?

Start-Up Nature is the first step in a broader vision of a large-scale rewilding network in Israel. SPNI has already identified sites for rewilding in five key regions for bird migration across Israel.

The projected cost to rewild the additional three locations is \$34M, which brings the goal of the full scope of the potential project to \$45M.

The charts on the following pages illustrate our stages of fundraising for Start-Up Nature, broader visions for expansion beyond the Start-Up Nature campaign goal of \$11 million, and how these pieces fit together.



## Budget Information

<b>Start-Up Nature: Stages of Project and Fundraising Development</b>					
<b>Stage of Project</b>	<b>Individual Sites</b>	<b>Annual Need to Raise per Acre</b>	<b>Annual Need to Raise</b>	<b>Need to Raise for Initial 3-Year Setup</b>	<b>Cost for Endowment/ Perpetuity (4%)</b>
<b>Phase 1, Stage 1: Kfar Ruppin &amp; Maagan Michael, Start-Up Nature Initial Setup – First 3 Years</b>	Kfar Ruppin (50 acres)		<b>\$4,000,000 raised*</b>		
	& Maagan Michael (75 acres)	<b>\$3,200</b>	<b>\$400,00</b>	<b>\$1,200,000**</b>	
<b>Phase 1, Stage 2: Kfar Ruppin &amp; Maagan Michael Start-Up Nature Operations from Year 4 and On, via Endowment for Perpetuity</b>			<b>\$440,000</b>		<b>\$11 million</b> <i>(4% annual withdrawal from endowment of \$440,000 for annual management of sites)</i>
<b>Phase 2: Expansion of Kfar Ruppin, Establishment of Expanded 5-Site Network</b>		<b>\$2,473</b>	<b>\$1,360,200</b>	<b>\$4,080,000**</b>	<b>\$34 million</b> <i>(4% annual withdrawal from endowment of \$1,360,200 for annual management of sites)</i>
	Kfar Ruppin Expansion (75 acres)		\$185,500	\$556,500	
	Maayan Tzvi (125 acres)		\$309,100	\$927,300	
	Gan Shmuel (75 acres)		\$185,500	\$556,500	
	Zevulun Valley (75 acres)		\$185,500	\$556,500	
	Hula Valley (75 acres)		\$185,500	\$556,500	
	Beit Shean Valley (125 acres)		\$309,100	\$927,300	
<b>Full Network of Wetland Sites</b>					<b>\$45 million</b>

\* \$4,000,000 successfully raised from the Israeli government and public-sector institutions, as well as our partners, the Goldberg Group (Toronto). These funds enabled the initial lease, rewilding, and visitor infrastructure in our flagship sites, thus launching the Start-Up Nature project.

\*\* In addition to opportunities to fund the Start-Up Nature Endowment to ensure these wetland habitats exist in perpetuity, partners can fund direct operations of the sites in their first three years, during which the endowment will be raised, as well as expanded infrastructures and features



### Summary of Funding Opportunities

<b>Start-Up Nature Endowment Campaign</b>	<i>\$11 million endowment to secure Kfar Ruppin and Maagan Michael sites into the future, beyond the initial 3-year setup period</i>
<b>Associated giving opportunities to Start-Up Nature Vision</b>	<i>\$1.32 million direct operations costs for first two sites in initial 3-year setup period</i>
	<i>\$4.1 million direct setup and operations costs for expanded wetlands network in their initial 3-year startup periods</i>
	<i>\$34 million endowment for expanded network of sites</i>
	<i>Individual naming and sponsorship opportunities at each site at a wide range of gift levels - \$100,000-\$6,000,000</i>
<b>Full Vision of Start-Up Nature Endowment for Perpetuity</b>	<i>\$45 million</i>

Start-Up Nature - Annual Budget: Kfar Ruppin & Maagan Michael		
EXPENSES	Kfar Ruppin	Maagan Michael
<b>Personnel Expenses</b>		
Park Rangers	\$50,600	\$75,400
Educational Guides	\$55,040	\$82,060
Tour Guides	\$7,440	\$10,660
Project Manager	\$25,440	\$37,660
<b>Subtotal Personnel Expenses</b>	<b>\$138,520</b>	<b>\$205,780</b>
<b>Site Expenses</b>		
Lease of Land	\$38,200	\$56,800
Water	\$32,960	\$48,440
Site Development and Maintenance	\$20,600	\$29,900
Ranger Vehicles	\$10,920	\$16,880
Educational Equipment and Supplies	\$21,600	\$31,800
<b>Subtotal Site Expenses</b>	<b>\$124,280</b>	<b>\$183,820</b>
<b>Administrative Expenses</b>		
Insurance	\$1,840	\$2,760
Administration	\$1,240	\$1,860
<b>Subtotal Administrative Expenses</b>	<b>\$3,080</b>	<b>\$4,620</b>
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES PER SITE</b>	<b>\$265,880</b>	<b>\$394,220</b>
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>		<b>\$660,100</b>
<b>INCOME</b>		
Partial In-Kind Donation of Land		\$72,000
Partial In-Kind Donation of Water		\$78,000
Revenue from Tourism		\$70,100
Private Donations		\$440,000
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>		<b>\$660,100</b>

## Evaluation

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Together with our partners, we are developing robust evaluation mechanisms to continue ensuring the economic viability of the project, test the links between management activities and biodiversity, and evaluate the effectiveness of monitoring.

Evaluation of the habitats in Kfar Ruppin and Maagan Michael consists of various methods for measuring current levels of biodiversity and carbon storage in the sites, and comparing this data to that which was collected prior to the construction of the Start-Up Nature sites. These methods include twice-a-month monitoring, during which appointed birdwatchers conduct a "point count," a system in which they count the birds that pass a specific point within a specific period; online cameras are live in the habitat for the purpose of searching for otters; and we currently use a specialized device for measuring carbon storage. In the very near future we will be working with the Israel Geology Institute in order to employ methods on top of our current measurements that are even more precise.

## Partnerships

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### **Research & Conservation:**

University of Haifa  
Hebrew University  
Tel Aviv University  
Cornell Lab of Ornithology  
Open Land Institute  
BirdLife International  
Israel Geology Institute

### **Government & Municipalities:**

Israel Nature and Parks Authority  
Ministry of Tourism  
South Jordan Drainage Authority  
Carmel Coast Drainage Authority  
Carmel Coast Regional Council  
Emek Hamaayanot Regional Council  
Kibbutz Kfar Ruppin  
Kibbutz Maagan Michael  
Ministry of Jerusalem and Heritage  
Water Authority

Ministry for the Development of the Periphery, the Negev, and the Galilee

### **Funders:**

Open Landscape Fund  
The Goldberg Group (Toronto)

## Naming Opportunities

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**Your partnership in Start-Up Nature will ensure the permanence and long-term success of these critical sanctuaries, and your ever-present support will be recognized by all visitors to the sites for generations to come.**

<b>Start-Up Nature Naming Opportunities*</b>	
<b>Kfar Ruppin</b>	
Kfar Ruppin Birding Center	\$6,000,000
Riverside Wetland	\$2,500,000
Bee-Eater Trail	\$1,000,000
Bee-Eater Ridge	\$100,000
Osprey Pool	\$1,000,000
Stork Pool	\$1,000,000
Purple Heron Pond	\$1,000,000
Egret Pond	\$500,000
Kingfisher Pond	\$500,000
Purple Heron Hide	\$250,000
Kingfisher Hide	\$150,000
Little Owl Meadow	\$100,000
Bunting Pool	\$250,000
Jordan Valley Birding Center	\$1,500,000
<b>Maagan Michael</b>	
Maagan Michael Birding Center	\$6,000,000
Sandpiper Lagoon	\$1,500,000
Pelican Lagoon	\$1,500,000
Tern Island Lagoon	\$750,000
Gull Lagoon	\$750,000
Research Center	\$500,000
Maagan Michael Gateway	\$1,500,000
Sandpiper Hide	\$400,000
Education Center	\$1,250,000
Sea Turtle Lookout	\$500,000
Warbler Pool	\$150,000
<i>* Each Naming Opportunity is Available as One Unit Only</i>	



Start-Up Nature will secure the world's largest flyway and establish a global model for conservation in highly developed areas. Your partnership will propel Israel onto the stage of global conservation and help Israel uphold humanity's responsibility to develop *with* nature.

**To achieve lasting change, we need you.**

**CONTACT:**

SOCIETY FOR THE  
PROTECTION OF  
NATURE IN ISRAEL  
2 HaNegev Street  
Tel Aviv, Israel  
6618602  
[www.natureisrael.org](http://www.natureisrael.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, SPNI

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  
Shawn Sweeney - Vice  
Chair  
Robin Gordon,  
Executive Director

THE CANADIAN  
SOCIETY FOR THE  
PROTECTION OF  
NATURE IN ISRAEL  
25 Imperial St., Suite  
200  
Toronto, Ontario M5P  
1B9  
1 (416) 917-6648  
[info@cspni.ca](mailto:info@cspni.ca)  
Carl Mandel, Chair  
Avi Sadiv, Executive  
Director