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### New - Special Styled Lesser Kestrel T Shirts of Birds Know No Boundaries (8-XXL)

I would like to purchase Special Styled Lesser Kestrel T Shirts - \$ 15 each (including postage)

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I would like to purchase Special Styled Lesser Kestrel T Shirts with an **F-15 drawing** (see picture on page 5) - \$ 15 each (including postage)

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Orders and Donations should be made payable to the following - designated for **Bird Activities**. Please mail to:

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**Mr. John Levy**  
UK SPNI  
25 Lyndale Avenue  
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## The migration of Olive-tree Warblers at the Jerusalem Bird Observatory, the Knesset, Jerusalem



The Olive-tree Warbler (*Hippolais olivetorum*) is a rare spring migrant and an even scarcer autumn migrant through Israel. In recent years it has also been discovered to breed in small numbers in the Western Galilee.

At the Jerusalem Bird Observatory (JBO) we have discovered a substantial population that passes though the JBO in late April-May. During the spring of 2004, 76 Olive-tree warblers were ringed at the JBO making it probably the best site in Israel for this elusive species. Seeing the warblers (alongside 3 other Hippolais species) is easily done by visiting the JBO and its surroundings, all situated at the heart of Jerusalem, next to the Knesset, Israel's Parliament.

### For further information please contact:

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### We would like to thank all our friends:



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**Mark Gelfand**  
**Abraham Bachri**  
**Robert, David, Joshua Arnow**

# A Bird's Eye View of the Holy Land

Newsletter From Israel | No. 4 | fall 2004



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A flock of thousands of Honey Buzzards migrating over Israel. The new incoming Jewish Year will mark the end of a big wave of Honey Buzzards, which fly over Israel every fall. (Photo by: Hadoram Shirihai)



Israel Ornithological Center



The International Center  
for the Study of Bird  
Migration, Latrun



Tel Aviv University  
Department of Zoology



Dear Friends,

This newsletter is dedicated to three main events that will take place in the upcoming months: British Bird Fair, Autumn Migration, and a Celebration of a successful conclusion of two of our regional projects.

This is the seventh year in a row that the International Center for the Study of Bird Migration (ICSBM) and the Israel Ornithological Center (IOC) will partake in the Bird Fair in Rutland Water, England - an impressive event that draws 25,000 novice and professional birders from around the world. Each year we set up a special booth where we present an overview of our activities and main achievements.

The fall migration is beginning these days in Israel, and we are eagerly looking forward to the millions of birds that will cover the skies of Israel including hundreds of thousands of White Storks and raptors, and tens of thousands of pelicans. Around 540 different species of birds can be observed within this small strip of land - Israel. During this period, we are planning to host events to increase public awareness among Israelis. Among the general public, these events usually draw a large number of students and nature lovers from all across Israel wanting to experience first hand one of the most exciting natural phenomena in the world.

These days mark the end of funding for two of our important projects:

"Migrating Birds Know No Boundaries" has been running for six years, sponsored by USAID-MERC. This internet-based project created a variety of ornithological activities, from research to education, agriculture and eco-tourism in close cooperation with Palestine Wildlife Society and The Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature - Jordan. The second project, "For Birds & People in the Jordan Valley," supported by the European Union Commission with a fruitful cooperation with the above-mentioned organizations, is a multinational program that worked regionally on projects ranging from research, conservation, education and eco tourism.

On the 16-17th of September 2004, we will celebrate the Jewish New Year (Rosh HaShana) - a time of optimism and rejuvenation. These dates correspond to the end of migration season for White Storks and Honey Buzzards, and mark the beginning of the large flocks of Levant Sparrowhawks - that last year broke an international record - about 80,000 birds flew over Israel within two weeks (a few more reasons to come and visit Israel this time of the year!).

We take this opportunity to wish you all a happy, successful New Year, a year of prosperity, peace and cooperation.

Warmly,

Dan Alon, Director  
The Israel Ornithological Center

Dr. Yossi Leshem, Director  
The International Center for the Study of  
Bird Migration at Latrun

## A word from SPNI's Executive Director

As always, the SPNI has invested a great deal of effort in planning its summer camps this year, and especially in bringing the children closer to the fascinating world of ornithology. In each of the SPNI's summer camps the children are being taught about birds and their unique natural history.

We believe that the bond between ornithology and education is invaluable and helps us enlist our future generations to become environmentally aware and proactive. It is here that SPNI invests precious time and efforts.

I would like to personally thank you for your support of our bird conservation activities. In the name of all of us here at the SPNI, may I wish you all a happy New Year.

Sincerely yours,

Rami Lerner, Executive Director  
The Society for the Protection of  
Nature in Israel



Visit our website: [www.birds.org.il](http://www.birds.org.il)

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**Israeli schoolchildren in a bird club enjoy telescopes and binoculars, donated by Swarovski Optic (photo by: Yossi Leshem)**



## Swarovski Optic Helps to Promote Israeli - Palestinian Cooperation

**M**r. Gerhard and Mr. Daniel Swarovski of "Swarovski", met Dr. Yossi Leshem, Dan Alon and Imad Al Atrash, founder and Director of the Palestine Wildlife Society at the Bird Fair in England last summer. They learned about the regional cooperation between Israelis and the Palestinians, a rare phenomenon, especially in these very trying days of conflicts in the Middle East.



**Mr. Daniel Swarovski presents Mr. Dan Alon, the Israeli representative and Mr. Sammi Bakla, the Palestinian representative the first telescope at last year's Bird Fair, England 2003.**



**Left to right: Ms. Philippa Powolny, Mr. Mohammed Yousef Leader of RSCN Jordanian project of USAID-MERC "Migrating Birds Know no Boundaries", Mr. Gerhard Swarovski, Mr. Atrash Imad, Director WildLife Palestine and Dr. Yossi Leshem, Israel in an act of cooperation and joining forces between Austria and the Middle East.**

Swarovski is the world's leading international Crystal Company that manufactures, amongst other products, top-of-the-line telescopes and binoculars that serve many professional and amateur birders throughout the world. After hearing about the great friendship and cooperation between the Israelis and Palestinians, Gerhard and Daniel Swarovski have decided to donate 16 telescopes and tripods, as well as 4 binoculars that are used in the organizations' research and educational activities. Mr Gerhard and Daniel Swarovski presented their generous donation at a beautiful ceremony held at the Bird Fair.

We hope that at our annual meeting with the Swarovski team at this years' Bird Fair, we will be able to promote together another joint activity.



## Rose-coloured Starling

**T**he Rose-coloured Starling (*Sturnus roseus*) is considered a rare migratory bird in Israel. In the past, prior to modern agricultural methods, the country was occasionally flooded with flocks of locust. The Rose-coloured Starling alters its course of migration according to these flocks and thus would feed off them in large numbers here in Israel.

The Rose-coloured Starling is rare today. Male Rose-coloured Starlings are very beautiful: they have a pink body with head, wings and neck colored iridescent black, purple metallic shade on the head coupled with a green shine on its wings. During this last spring, this species was spotted in a few places in Israel, and Eyal Bartov, nature photographer, managed to spot three on his Mullberry Tree at his home garden.



The Rose-coloured Starling on a Mullberry Tree at Moshav Sde' Yitzhak, located at the coast plain. (Photo by: Eyal Bartov)



## Short-toed Eagle



**O**ne cannot overlook the staggering, almost hypnotizing, look that the Short-toed Eagle (*Circaetus gallicus*) has. This is the most common eagle in Israel. Indeed, Israel represents a kind of heaven to Short-toed Eagles, which return to nest in Israel during February. The Short-toed Eagle feeds mostly on the large variety of snakes active during summer time. By feeding mostly on snakes and other reptiles, the Short-toed Eagle is less affected by various pesticides that affect other diurnal raptors, which forage on rodents and other mammals.

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This Short-toed Eagle was spotted on a pine tree in the Galilee, during a survey of soaring birds. (Photo by: Hadoram Shirihai).

>>>  
Two Kestrel chicks  
before fledging from  
their nest at Gilat  
Satellite Networks Ltd.  
(Photo by: Shay Mori)



## On-line Internet Broadcast from a Kestrel's Nest

The two ornithological centers initiated an educational activity in two schools in Tel Aviv this year. Within the framework of the program, the children learned about the Kestrel, which commonly nests in the city and acts as a biological pest controller. This successful educational endeavor was sponsored by the Israel Electricity Company and by the generous donation of Robert Arnow and his two sons David and Joshua.

The children learned during an entire trimester about Kestrels and their ecology within the city, made trips to observe nesting Kestrels and explored the Zoological Gardens at the Tel Aviv University.

The program culminated in a festive event, where the children reported about their progress and demonstrated their activities, which included building nesting boxes for Kestrels. Needing to be installed very high

on buildings, the nesting boxes were positioned with the help of a special lift, courtesy of the Israel Electricity Company.

Within the framework of this project, a special digital camera was installed in a big satellite communication company, "Gilat Satellite Networks Ltd.", located in Petah Tikva (east of Tel Aviv). The camera was installed on a windowsill of one of the company's offices.

The rumor about this nest quickly spread, and within only one month, our website [www.birds.org.il](http://www.birds.org.il) listed about 60,000 entries to watch the kestrel family, almost causing the Tel Aviv University server to crash!



Israel Electricity Company special lift installs nesting box for Kestrels in the school in Jaffa (Photo by: Yossi Leshem).



Schoolchildren proudly present their custom-made Kestrels T-Shirts that they received at the end of the school year. (Photo by: Yossi Leshem)

# Educational Program on Bird Migration, Space and Communication Between Jewish Schools on 3 Continents



**T**he title of the website, "Migrating Birds know No Boundaries" is not incidental. It marks the flight of birds across continents and states using the Internet - based communication network, [www.birds.org.il](http://www.birds.org.il) which links school children from all over the world, and the potential for additional environmental regional and global cooperation.

This excellent program has provided the basis for a number of programs and encourages the involvement of outside institutions and programs. For example, as part of a joint initiative by the International Center for the Study of Bird Migration at Latrun (ICSBM), the National Museum of Science, Technology and Space, Technion, Haifa and the Davidson Institute of Science Education at the Weizmann Institute, a pilot program on the subject of birds, environment, space, science and technology was launched in 2004 with the participation of Jewish schools in three continents: United States, Israel and Russia.

The program includes, among others, a unique Israeli school (Shevach Moffet), in which more than 90% of the

students are Russian immigrants, as well as educational institutions in Russia (the Jerusalem School in St. Petersburg and the Native Enrichment Club in St. Petersburg). All educational institutions use the ICSBM's Internet site, [www.birds.org.il](http://www.birds.org.il), to learn Hebrew and to use the educational material on the site. Part of the materials have been translated into Russian. The pilot project, which was targeted for ninth grade students this year, challenged the children to answer nine investigative questions from different fields such as biology, technology, culture and art. To increase the children's motivation, a prize-bearing painting competition was also launched, culminating with displaying 50 pictures exhibited in a special ceremony that took place at the ICSBM's facilities at Latrun.

The event was held on July 7, 2004 with the participation of the Minister of Science and Technology, Mr. Modi Sandberg, Mr. Ilan Shalgi, Chairman of the Educational Committee of the Knesset and Mr. Mark Gelfand, a high-tech entrepreneur, who sponsored this project. About 350 schoolchildren from ten different schools in Israel attended the event, as well as the teacher Shai Kahat, coupled with three exceptional students from the Jewish school in St. Petersburg who came especially to partake in this unique event.

We plan to expand the program next year to additional schools: to at least ten more schools in Russia, USA and Canada, and to 10 additional schools throughout Israel.



**The Minister of Science and Technology, Mr. Modi Sandberg with Russian students who came to Israel especially for the ICSBM's event at Latrun (Photo by: Gal Frank).**



**The painting that won first prize at the inter-continental competition: "Storks Migrate over Jerusalem", by the young Ms. Nestia Klipova, 16, student at the "Jerusalem" school in St. Petersburg, Russia.**



**Mr. Mark Gelfand from Boston, who sponsored the project, at Latrun site. Mark was offered the first T-shirts of an F-15 (Falcon) Flying along side the real Falcon. Such T-shirts were given to all the children who participated in the Program (Photo by: Gal Frank).**



## "Flyways" - a magnificent new musical composition about the Great Rift Valley



Alfiya & Timur Kuanyshevas, founders of "Holy Sounds" Foundation.



**P**aul Winter, the well-renowned American musician and composer, is known worldwide for his magnificent compositions that blend natural sounds and include duets with birds, whales and wolves. He has won 4 Grammy Awards.

Paul is currently writing a new composition called "Flyways". Inspired by the beautiful phenomenon of bird migration, the main theme in Flyways describes bird migration throughout the Great Rift Valley (GRV), which extends all the way from Turkey to Mozambique, and incorporates ethnic music from 12 different countries located along the GRV, with the voices of migrating birds.

At the International Convention, organized by BirdLife International, held on March 2004 in Durban, South Africa, Dr. Yossi Leshem and Dan Alon initiated Mr. Winter's invitation to the convention. Mr. Winter gave a special live performance with his soprano saxophone at the opening ceremony, and managed to move hundreds of participants from 99 countries in his duet with wolf howls. Even the local press in South Africa wrote the following morning that the roof over the local Convention Center nearly collapsed by the intense calls of the audience!

Paul Winter's visit to the convention was generously sponsored by the Timur & Alfiya Kuanyshevas. This special Muslim couple, has established a unique international foundation called: "Holy Sounds," whose main goal is to create a bond between the major religions in the world: Christianity, Islam, and Judaism through the use of music. The Kuanyshevas also visited our region and met with Dr. Yossi Leshem and Mr. Omri Meron, Coordinating Manager of "Holy Sounds".

Mr. & Mrs. Kuanyshevas were so thrilled to learn of the innovative idea expressed by "Flyways", that they decided to give a generous donation in order to promote the completion of the composition. An additional foundation from California has joined in and will help us promote the idea. Nonetheless, we are still looking for additional partners that will help us to perform the composition every year in a different country that is situated along the GRV - and by so doing send a global message of bird conservation, peace and cooperation between nations and people.



Paul Winter with friends at the BirdLife International Convention, Durban, South Africa, March 2004: (left to right) Achim Steiner, General Director IUCN, Dr. Gerhard Bertram, Chairman BirdLife, Dr. Aldo Berruti, Director BirdLife South Africa, Paul Winter, (unidentified person), Mr. Jabulani Banda Director of BirdLife Soweto, and Dr. Mike Rands Executive Director BirdLife.

## Collared Pratincoles Return



A Collared Pratincole feeding its chick with a beetle, at the Hula Valley. (Photo by: Eyal Bartov).

**T**he Collared Pratincole (*Glareola pratincola*) was until the 1950 a common summer breeder in Israel. Pratincoles nested in the fields and damp areas located in the north and center of Israel. During the second half of the previous century, pratincoles nearly disappeared from Israel's landscapes due to insecticides, intensive field processing and loss of natural habitats. Indeed, the Red Book of Threatened Vertebrate Species in Israel lists pratincoles as an endangered species in Israel.

In recent years we are witnessing changes: pratincoles are gradually making a come back in the Hula Valley. The positive changes the valley has undergone over the past twelve years, decreased use of pesticides, and an increased awareness of concern for this species by local farmers, has contributed to the pratincole's return to the valley.

This past nesting season has been a huge success for this species. This year pratincoles nested in five different colonies including at least 50 pairs as opposed to previous years with only 15-20 pairs at one location. Another big surprise this year was a return of breeding pratincoles to the Beit Shean Valley, where each year migrating pratincoles are observed but have not been found nesting in decades. This year, our survey located a small nesting colony of 9-12 pairs. The results of this year's breeding survey point to the importance for conducting regular annual monitoring and management activities. We hope this will be a continuing upward trend.

# The Lesser Kestrel in Musrara, Jerusalem

Anyone who has followed the Israel Ornithological Center's (IOC) activities knows that the Lesser Kestrel is a sort of flag that for the past seven years has been the center of diverse activities that produced great results. One of the characteristics, which makes the Lesser Kestrel such a good symbol, is that it is an "urban bird". For many years the Musrara neighborhood in Jerusalem has been known as one of the most important nesting sites of the Lesser Kestrel, particularly in Jerusalem and generally in Israel.

Musrara is also the first neighborhood where the IOC conducted activities to rehabilitate the Lesser Kestrel population, which included a comprehensive study as well as activities with the youth and the community. This is the first year the IOC has succeeded to engage the Jerusalem Foundation to participate in the Lesser Kestrel project in Musrara. The purpose of this project, funded by the Jerusalem Foundation, is to turn the Lesser Kestrel from a nice, but passive neighbor, into the neighborhood's flagship.

Last year the Lesser Kestrel Cafe House was established, as was reported in one of the previous newsletters. The Lesser Kestrel House operated vigorously this year, and hundreds visited the house during the short nesting season of the Lesser Kestrel. During the end of July we held the Lesser Kestrel event in the neighborhood. The event was attended by 600 visitors, which enjoyed a variety of activities, all for the Lesser Kestrel. The event was especially moving because of the high attendance of the neighborhood's residents, and it seems that a love story has grown between the neighborhood and the Lesser Kestrel. As part of this project, we are now establishing an after-school course for the neighborhood's children and we are planning many additional activities in the neighborhood.



Barbara Young, Baroness of Old Scone Chief Executive, Environment Agency, Former Chairperson of English Nature & Executive Director of RSPB is watching the Lesser Kestrel at The Lesser Kestrel's Cafe House (below left) at Musrara, Jerusalem, using a Swarovski telescope and binoculars (photo by: Yossi Leshem).



Residents of Ne've Tzedek learn about the role of the Barn Owl as biological pest controller with the help of 5 chicks of Barn Owls brought from the Zoological Gardens of Tel-Aviv University.

# Barn Owls and Kestrels in Ne've Tzedek, Tel Aviv

In addition to the above event in Musrara, the International Center for the Study of Bird Migration (ICSBM), in cooperation of the neighborhood's residents, led by Mr. Eli Cohen, held an exciting event in Ne've Tzedek, Tel Aviv - one of Tel Aviv's old neighborhoods that lies right next to Tel Aviv's beach. The event was designed to encourage the neighborhoods' residents to build nesting boxes for Kestrels and Barn Owls. By nesting in Ne've Tzedek, these birds, acting as pest controllers, will solve the problems of the residents with rodents. In that way, Tel Aviv Municipality will stop spreading poison and other pesticides in the neighborhood. Over 800 people attended the event, heard lectures about barn owls and Kestrels and of their invaluable contribution to the environment and listened to a performance of various artists. No doubt that a good atmosphere was created towards promoting the idea.