

SAVING LIVES & PRESERVING NATURE

KKL-JNF's Agamon Wildlife and Rehabilitation Center





A Message from KKL-JNF Chief Ornithologist

Dear Readers,

As Chief Ornithologist for the Keren Kayemeth Lelsrael-Jewish National Fund (KKL-JNF), it is my solemn duty and deepest passion

to protect Israel's incredible avian and wildlife diversity. I'm also proud to be part of the Agamon Wildlife Rehabilitation Center (AWRC) team, collaborating with skilled veterinary staff and dedicated researchers to protect, conserve, and rehabilitate injured wildlife from across northern Israel. From the snow-capped peaks of the Golan Heights to the lush, verdant forests and shimmering wetlands of the Galilee, this area is a true oasis for thousands of precious species - many of which can hardly be found on our fragile, endangered planet. The north is a global biodiversity hotspot, supporting rare, majestic raptors, endangered, graceful gazelles, and some of the most important, irreplaceable staging grounds for transcontinental bird migrations.

Yet, in 2024, the serene tranquility of these priceless habitats have been ruthlessly shattered by the persistent, unrelenting conflict that has embroiled the north of Israel. On October 7, 2023, the constant ever-present threat of Hezbollah rockets

and mortar fire forced our dedicated conservation teams to evacuate their homes and suspend their critical, life-saving fieldwork, leaving our vulnerable species exposed and at grave risk. Despite facing daunting and seemingly insurmountable challenges, the steadfast spirit of the AWRC team shone through, proving their resilience and commitment. We continue our vital work wherever and however we can, supplementing our cherished field operations with cutting-edge satellite monitoring, remote sensing, and other innovative techniques. We are more determined than ever to find new, creative ways to safeguard these truly priceless ecosystems.

In the pages that follow, you will read in a nutshell about our ongoing, courageous efforts to save birds and animals that were harmed during this awful war. It is our fervent, heartfelt hope that by sharing these poignant stories, we can not only inspire steadfast support for our vital, life-giving mission but also catalyze a broader, vibrant movement to protect the natural, irreplaceable heritage of Israel.

Yaron Charka

Chief Ornithologist, KKL-JNF



Acclimatization enclosures used by the AWRC. | Bonnie Scheinman, KKL-JNF Photo Archive

The Agamon Wildlife Rehabilitation Center (AWRC)

The Agamon Wildlife Rehabilitation Center (AWRC) was established in December 2019 through a collaboration between KKL-JNF and Tel-Hai Academic College. Located within KKL-JNF's Hula Lake Park, the center features an emergency clinic, a nursery, and state-of-the-art rehabilitation enclosures to support the recovery of wildlife.

The AWRC is dedicated to rehabilitating injured and orphaned wildlife, providing them with the ideal environment for a successful return to the wild. Since its founding, the center has

treated over 1,000 animals from 130 species and successfully rehabilitated and released hundreds back into their natural habitats.

Additional goals:

- » Provide immediate medical care to injured local wildlife.
- » Conduct and lead academic research focused on nature conservation and wildlife rehabilitation.
- » Offer educational programs to engage the local community in wildlife protection and environmental conservation

From Rescue to Release: The Acclimatization Process

Wildlife acclimation is the process of gradually reintroducing animals into their natural environment after they have been treated and cared for following their removal from the wild due to injury or illness.

Many wild animals in northern Israel suffer injuries caused by human activity or natural events. Once rescued, they are brought to KKL-JNF's AWRC, where they receive specialized veterinary care tailored to their individual needs.

Acclimatization is a vital part of the recovery process. In Israel's diverse landscapes, animals must re-adjust to their natural environment and regain essential survival skills, such as hunting, avoiding predators, navigating their habitat, and interacting with their species.



Treating a wounded long-legged buzzard in one of the acclimatization enclosures | Photo: © Zion Ozeri

The acclimatization process at AWRC takes place in unique facilities specifically designed for this purpose. These enclosures, located in an isolated area of the Hula Lake Park with minimal human activity, closely replicate the animals' natural environment, allowing them to gradually relearn survival skills in a controlled yet realistic setting.

Once the acclimatization period is complete, a final assessment is made to determine the animal's readiness for release. After their return to the wild, the team conducts post-release monitoring to track their survival and ensure a successful reintegration into their natural habitat.

Testing the long-legged buzzard's flight capabilities | Photo: © Zion Ozeri



Animal Rescue Tales: How AWRC has saved animals during the war (2023-2024)

White Barn Owl

On October 2024, a white barn owl was brought to the AWRC after being found in a house that had caught fire. The owl arrived dehydrated and underweight and was immediately admitted to the primary clinic for supportive care.

The owl's condition stabilized relatively quickly, and it was moved to one of the acclimatization enclosures, allowing it to experience natural surroundings. After a week, the team determined the owl was ready for release, and it flew back into the wild.



Red Fox

A dehydrated red fox, discovered inside a barrel was rescued by soldiers who promptly contacted the regional ranger. The fox was then transported to the AWRC, where it received life-saving treatment.

"An adult male fox with severe dehydration, unable to stand, was brought in for treatment" said Mai, head caregiver at

the AWRC. "After taking his vitals, I realized he was suffering from heatstroke and began gradually cooling him down while trying to access a vein to administer fluids. Thankfully, his vitals improved within the first hour. I breathed a sigh of relief, knowing that this incident could have ended very differently without the soldiers' vigilance."



Tortoise

An adult mediterranean spur thighed tortoise was brought to the AWRC from Kela Alon, a community located on the northern slopes of the Golan Heights. It was found in a fire-damaged area caused by rockets from Lebanon.

The tortoise arrived with burns on its shell and legs and was covered in soot. It received burn treatment, fluids, antibiotics to prevent infections, and painkillers, then was transferred to the Israeli Wildlife Hospital in Ramat Gan for further care

Golden Jackal

A young and wounded golden jackal was found near Kibbutz Bar'am, about half a kilometer (0.3 miles) from the Lebanese border, in an area affected by a forest fire caused by rocket strikes.



The jackal suffered burns on its paws that prevented it from walking properly. It was also exhausted and dehydrated. The team used specialized materials, including silver ion bandages to reduce swelling, medical honey ointment, and tilapia fish skin, proven to aid in skin recovery.

Once it regained strength and its paw burns healed, the team released him back to the wild.

Meet the Team

The KKL-JNF Agamon Wildlife Rehabilitation Center is comprised of a highly skilled staff that includes animal caregivers, veterinarians, research coordinators, volunteer coordinator, administrative manager, community education program coordinator, and national service volunteers.

Dr. Rona Nadler Valency, is the director and head veterinarian at the AWRC and a lecturer at Tel Hai Academic Collage. She has also volunteered and worked in wildlife medicine on projects in South Africa, Kenya (Colobus Trust and lion conservation) and Israel's Safari Wildlife Hospital, Ramat Gan.



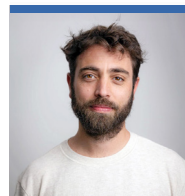
Mai Avrahami
Head Caregiver



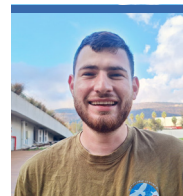
Yuli van der Meer
Volunteer Coordinator
and Administrative
Manager



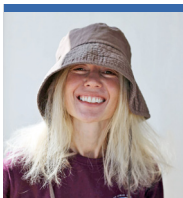
Rona Nadler Valency
Director & head Veterinarian



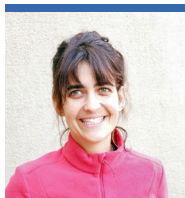
Emmanuel Lourie
Head of Science



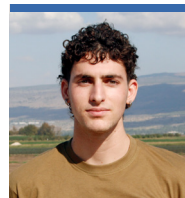
Tomer Zimand
Caregiver and Community
Education Program
Coordinator



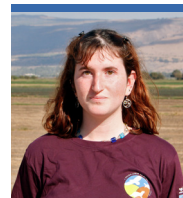
Amira Breslow
Caregiver



Noa Yitzhak
Veterinarian



Nevo Ring
National Service
Volunteer



Noga Zok
National Service
Volunteer



Help Us Rescue & Rehabilitate Israel's Precious Wildlife

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