

ISCB

NEWSLETTER

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Society for Conservation Biology

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MOOCs – Massive Open
Online Courses

Dear members of the Israeli Chapter of the Society for Conservation Biology,

It has been a while since our previous newsletter, and during this period a lot of conservation science has been conducted in Israel. As a testament to this we have set up a new section in the ISCB website dedicated to publications regarding conservation science from Israel – with over a hundred such publications since our previous newsletter (<http://www.israeliconservation.com/publications.html>).

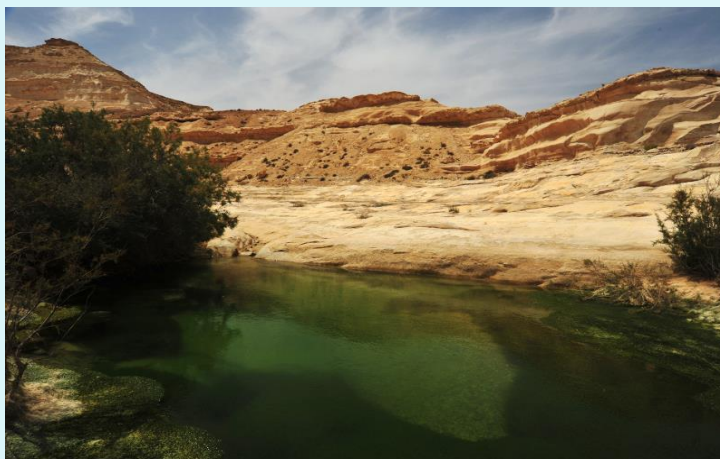
Below you can find our newsletter's editor (Amir Lewin) interview with Dr. Monika Böhm (who was a keynote speaker at the 2nd ICCS) dedicated to her thoughts and vision on conservation science and practice across her varied career. Mr. Ron Efrat – a PhD student at Ben-Gurion University – discusses how his research helps promote raptor conservation.

If you have yet to see our notifications, the [3rd Israeli Conference for Conservation Science \(ICCS\)](#), will take place at the [Steinhardt Museum of Natural History](#), Tel-Aviv University during late October. It is promising to be a truly inspiring event attended by world renowned conservationists. Make sure you submit an abstract to this conference - <http://www.israeliconservation.com/abstract-submission.html>.

Lastly, if you are planning to attend the [European Congress for Conservation Biology](#) in Prague next month, we plan to have an impromptu ISCB meeting there.

See you all in October at the ICCS, if not sooner.

Uri Roll



Conversations with Conservationists: Meeting Monika Böhm

By Amir Lewin



Monika Böhm is the Coordinator for Freshwater Conservation at the [Global Center for Species Survival](#) at Indianapolis Zoo, and chairs both the [IUCN Species Survival Commission](#) Butterfly and Moth Specialist Group and the Terrestrial and Freshwater Invertebrate Red List Authority. Over my meetings with conservationists, I have found that the most accomplished are often the most approachable. Some of them are unique. Monika Böhm is both. She introduces herself to most as “Monni”, and to her friends as “Monni-Kaboom”. Recently in Midreshet Ben-Gurion for a workshop dedicated to the [past, present, and future of reptile diversity](#), I sat down with Monni overlooking the Zin Valley to discuss some of her projects and experiences in conservation.

What is your favourite type of landscape?

It is usually where I find myself at the time. I don’t specialize in a specific species anymore and I’m always dabbling with all sorts of groups from butterflies and dung beetles to molluscs. I feel the same way about nature. There are so many amazing places on this planet. I find beauty and interest infused in everything. That being said, where we were just now on the cliff facing the Zin Valley, that ranks pretty high. As a child we would travel around Northern Europe and its boreal forests, which imprinted upon me as my sense of nature. I had only a cartoon notion of deserts – as homogeneous, empty, sandy landscapes. It wasn’t until finally travelling to several deserts around the world that I discovered their beauty and diversity.

What brings you to Israel and its deserts this time?

Previously, I worked at the [Zoological Society of London \(ZSL\)](#) monitoring changes in species assemblages over time in order to inform conservation policy and establish targets for biodiversity. Through this work, I met many different expert groups including on reptiles. I started working with Shai (Meiri) and Uri (Roll) initially on the [Global Assessment of Reptiles](#) as part of my project on the Sampled Red List Index of Reptiles, and so began a mutual exchange of data collection and methodology. Since then it has become quite a productive collaboration, and when you find good people you try to work with them as often as possible, which has brought me back to Israel – as well as the promise of good food and fun trips.

What are your general and academic impressions of Israel?

I’m fascinated by the amount of history in such a small area, and the natural history too. I’m impressed also by the standard of student and post-doctoral work produced here. Shai’s research on the macroecology of reptiles is second to none. Few are as dedicated and as productive in the field. Since leaving the ZSL for the Global Center for Species Survival, I have less focus on academic work, but my

continued collaborations here (and several others) afford me the opportunity to continue to be exposed to and engaged in stimulating academic research.

What is the role then of a scientist in conservation?

For starters, we are all conservationists; scientists and general public alike. Science is fundamental for providing context for what we observe in our changing world. My work, for example, was relatively applied. I specialized in constructing and sampling biodiversity indicators using various methodologies in order to provide reporting mechanisms for established biodiversity targets. This is an example of where science is absolutely crucial. Additionally, different types of expertise is needed, increasingly so with regard to data science. These are experts in computer science who might lack detailed knowledge about biology (which is not really requisite to conservation), but are needed to crunch vast sets of large spatial data that might have been compiled for different taxa and for future predicted threats (e.g., from land-use and climate change). This is how we can predict future extinction risks to inform real-world policies. Most importantly, social science is vital for conservation. I call conservation “people management”, because what and why we choose to conserve is ultimately a human decision. Our role as conservationists is to figure out how to change peoples’ behaviour by engaging and empowering them for the kinds of outcomes we desire – on nature conservation, species protection, plastic-use reduction, water use.

Are you an optimistic conservationist or a pessimist?

It depends on the day. Sometimes I feel quite pessimistic. My past work on biodiversity indicators to assess how species are faring over time mostly showed declining graphs of species status and abundance. So quite often my job was to essentially repackage doom and gloom insights such as these, which can be quite depressing. Primarily, my research is done in front of a computer compiling numbers. However, I am continually inspired by people collecting data out in the field facing insurmountable barriers – in countries with many restrictions, political challenges, difficult field conditions. These are people who persist tracking that rare butterfly or that overlooked invertebrate or those elusive frogs despite all the odds, which to me is extremely motivating. That is why after more than a decade of publishing papers on how things suck, I want to focus on assisting the people who want to make the world better for nature and subsequently humans also. As the Coordinator for the Global Center for Species Survival (I know, that’s a big title, no pressure there) at Indianapolis Zoo, I collaborate with the Species Survival Commission and their specialists groups to secure funding for conservation projects, tools to support and foster this work, and importantly on diversifying their membership globally. We need to involve conservationists from around the world in order to actually do conservation where it is required and in ways that work! Often these places with the least representation have the highest biodiversity, and therefore we’re investing in building capacity in these regions to do such things as Red List assessments and other conservation planning workshops to put action on the ground. This work, with people from around the world on the frontlines of conservation, provides me with reason for optimism.

The one thing you’re most proud of?

One of the things that I’m most proud of is one of the earliest things I produced as a post-doc that gave rise to a lot of subsequent research – the publication of our [sampled Red List Index assessment for Reptiles](#). Under the supervision of Ben Collen based in ZSL in the Institute of Zoology, we wanted to figure out a sampled approach to the Red List Index that might preempt the necessity of assessing entire species groups to inform conservation policy, because many species might simply disappear by the time

we have results from such arduous work. Ultimately, after a lot of painstaking work, we were successful (along with many collaborators) in completing a sampled assessment for reptiles (other species groups were to follow, of course), and this was one of the first times that reptiles, previously an overlooked group, received the attention they deserved in the media. Since then, I have felt compelled to move on to less high profile species, which has guided me towards many interesting, weird and wonderful projects that evaluate a wide range of different species groups and their status, like [hydrothermal vent endemic molluscs](#).

Any words of wisdom or encouragement for young conservationists?

Like anything, I would say go and do it. Build your CV by volunteering with your local organizations. Seek out opportunities to work with conservationists. If you're in university, you can do a project with them, work as an intern. A lot of people want to research charismatic mammals, which is a competitive field to get into, but conservation is more than just studying tigers or elephants; there are lots of other things you can do in the field, which are valuable and important. Like communications (if that's your thing) – writing, speaking to people, outreach, engaging communities and politicians (something scientists often do poorly) to convey your message. As I mentioned earlier, there is lots of technology now in conservation that requires people with knowledge and expertise to analyze big data or build conservation technology (think camera traps, tags, etc.). We are all conservationists.



Conversations with Israeli Conservationists: Ron Efrat's Bird's-eye View

By Ron Efrat

I study survival and behavioural differences between captive-bred and wild-hatched Egyptian and Griffon vultures (*Neophron percnopterus* and *Gyps fulvus*) – two critically endangered species in Israel. By doing so, I investigate how experiences of these birds through different life stages impact their fitness, and consequently, their conservation status. I use different methods, but mainly I analyze data acquired from GPS transmitters, attached to the birds before their release from captivity (either as chicks in the wild before their first flight or at different ages as free flying birds).



Photo by Adi Ashkenazi

Studying captive-bred animals' behaviour and survival is a privilege that allows me to be at the forefront of conservation, and at the same time to obtain data from a large-scale experiment in which animals are manipulated by raising them in captivity before their release into the wild. I try to make the best of two worlds by contributing to the conservation of endangered species, and contributing to our broader scientific understanding of the ecology and behaviour of these animals. For these reasons, since the first day of my PhD (under the supervision of Oded Berger-Tal), I work very closely with the conservationists responsible for captive-breeding and reintroduction of raptors in Israel.

Captive breeding requires a lot of work, led by experts. For Israeli raptors, this work is done by the Israel Nature and Parks Authority (INPA) led by the avian ecologist, Ohad Hatzofe and the Raptor Captive-Breeding Manager, Ygal Miller. The work is conducted mainly at the Hai-Bar Carmel Nature Reserve, which has become a second home to me despite its distance from my geographic home and campus in Sde Boker. During the first few months of my studies, Oded and I met with Ohad, Ygal and the raptor breeding staff, Avishai Baron and Sappir Simchi. We presented ideas we had for my research, and heard from them about the questions they think we could help to answer. This initiated a collaboration, which led us to new insights directly related to raptor reintroductions, including: pre-release effects on Griffon vulture's post-release survival, survival differences between captive-bred and wild-hatched birds, and effects of captive-breeding on the post-release behaviour of Egyptian vultures.



Today, I have become deeply involved with the conservation of vultures in Israel. I try to utilize all the knowledge I have accumulated over the past years to consult the INPA regarding the conservation of vultures and other raptors in Israel, as well as to aid conservation efforts of vultures world-wide. I hope to continue strengthening my involvement with the conservation of these magnificent species, and to be able to add my scientific perspective to vulture conservation related decision-making processes.

Ron Efrat is a PhD student in [The Conservation Behavior Research Lab](#) of the Ben-Gurion University of the Negev's Sde-Boker Campus.



18-20th October, 2022

The 3rd Israeli Conference for Conservation
Science

Species, Ecosystems, and People

Steinhardt Museum of Natural History, Tel-Aviv University

Abstract submission is now [open!](#)

Keynote speakers:

[Prof. Mark Burgman](#)

Centre for Environmental Policy, Imperial College London, UK

[Prof. Sean R. Connolly](#)

Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute, Panama City, Panama

[Dr. Sylvaine Giakoumi](#)

Stazione Zoologica Anton Dohrn, Napoli, Italy

[Prof. Wayne M. Getz](#)

University of California, Berkeley, Berkeley, CA, USA



Society for Conservation Biology

Other conferences:

- [6th European Congress of Conservation Biology](#). Prague – 22-26 August, 2022
- Student Conference in Conservation Science, Europe – Balatonvilágos, Hungary 14-17 September, 2022
- Student Conference in Conservation Science, India – Bengaluru, India 19-22 September, 2022
- Student Conference in Conservation Science, New York - New York, USA 3-7 October, 2022
- [1st European FedA Conference – Biodiversity and Human Well-Being: Europe's Role in Shaping our Future](#). Online 9-11 November, 2022
- [8th International Drylands, Deserts & Desertification Conference](#). Midreshet Ben-Gurion – 27 November-1 December, 2022
- Ecological Society of Australia and SCB Oceania joint meeting. Wollongong, Australia – 28 November-2 December, 2022
- Student Conference in Conservation Science, Cambridge- Cambridge, UK – 28-30 March, 2023

Other announcements:

- [David H. Smith Conservation Research Fellowship Program](#) – 16 September, 2022 deadline
- [Liber Ero Conservation Research Fellowship Program](#) – 1 November, 2022 deadline
- More student resources can be found in the [SCB website](#)

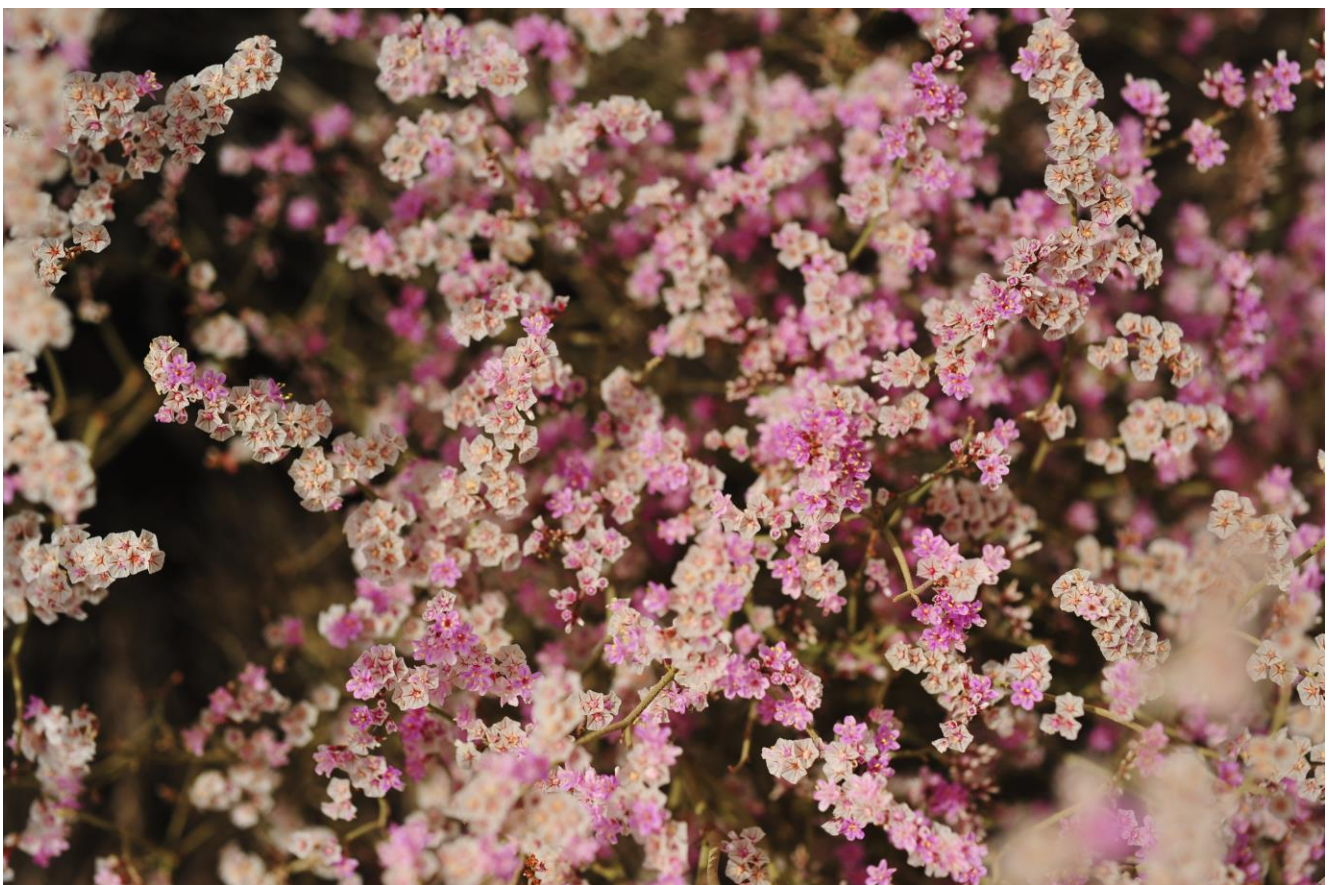
Israeli publications in conservation science:

- [Visit our website for a full list of publications](#)

MOOCs – Massive Open Online Courses

- Climate Change: The Science (The University of British Columbia via edX)
Starts: self-paced
Ends: 7 weeks long, 2-5 hours a week
(<https://www.classcentral.com/course/edx-climate-change-the-science-4001>)
- Climatic Action: Solutions for a Changing Planet (SDG Academy via edX)
Starts: self-paced
Ends: 10 weeks long, 2-4 hours a week
(<https://www.classcentral.com/course/edx-climate-action-solutions-for-a-changing-planet-9747>)
- Environmental Challenges: Justice in Natural Resource Management (University of Leeds via FutureLearn)
Starts: self-paced
Ends: 2 weeks long
(<https://www.classcentral.com/course/environmental-challenges-justice-6373>)
- Environmental Challenges: Rights and Values in Ecosystem Services (University of Leeds via FutureLearn)
Starts: self-paced
Ends: 2 weeks long
(<https://www.classcentral.com/course/environmental-challenges-rights-values-6374>)
- IUCN Red List of Ecosystems: The Global Standard for Assessing Risks to Ecosystems (Deakin University via FutureLearn)
Starts: self-paced
Ends: 2 weeks long, 4 hours a week
(<https://www.classcentral.com/course/global-standard-for-assessing-risks-to-ecosystems-19360>)
- Life Below Water: Conservation, Current Issues, Possible Solutions (University of the Sunshine Coast via FutureLearn)
Starts: self-paced
Ends: 4 weeks long, 3 hours a week
(<https://www.classcentral.com/course/life-below-water-biodiversity-ecology-human-impac-61641>)
- Planet Earth: Understanding and Protecting our Environment (University of Leeds via FutureLearn)
Starts: self-paced
Ends: 2 weeks long, 3 hours a week
(<https://www.classcentral.com/course/planet-earth-66470>)

- Tourism and Climate Change (Wageningen University via edX)
Starts: self-paced
Ends: 5 weeks long, 2-4 hours a week
(<https://www.classcentral.com/course/edx-tourism-and-climate-change-19159>)
- Valuing Nature: Should We Put a Price on Ecosystems? (University of Exeter via FutureLearn)
Starts: self-paced
Ends: 2 weeks long, 3 hours a week
(<https://www.classcentral.com/course/valuing-nature-should-we-put-a-price-on-ecosystem-10579>)
- Climate Change: The Science and Global Impact (SDG Academy via edX)
Starts: Sep 2nd 2022 (self-paced also possible)
Ends: 8 weeks long, 2-4 hours a week
(<https://www.classcentral.com/course/edx-climate-change-the-science-and-global-impact-13863>)
- Sustainable Soil Management: Soil for life (Wageningen University via edX)
Starts: Sep 6th 2022 (self-paced also possible)
Ends: 7 weeks long, 8-10 hours a week
(<https://www.classcentral.com/course/edx-sustainable-soil-management-soil-for-life-5866>)



[The Israeli Chapter of the Society for Conservation Biology \(ISCB\)](#) is a professional non-profit organization that aims to promote the science of conservation. It is affiliated with the [SCB](#) and is managed in accordance with its goals and guidelines. Members of the ISCB are practitioners, academics, and all other individuals interested in the multi-disciplinary field of conservation.



ISCB Board Members

Dr. Uri Roll (President);
Dr. R.G. Bina Perl (Secretary);
Amir Lewin (Communications Director);
Yafit Brenner (Treasurer)

If you would like to share your thoughts and comments with us, and contribute to the ISCB or to our future newsletters, then we would be happy to hear from you. Please send us your conservation news and research updates.

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