

Summary of the 27th International Ornithological Congress (IOC) Vancouver, Canada, August 20th - 26th 2018

Prof. Yossi Leshem (Israel), Gen. (Ret.) Mansour Abu Rashid (Jordan), Prof. Alex Roulin (Switzerland)



IOC opening march with 200 birds paraded by Vancouver birding organizations



23/8/2018: Prof. Alex Roulin (Switzerland), Prof. Yossi Leshem (Israel) and Gen. (Ret.) Mansour Abu Rashid (Jordan) during their lecture on the Middle East, with convenor Dr. Richard Cannings, a Canadian Member of Parliament



678 bird species in danger of extinction globally were painted by 96 artists, and presented in a 100 feet (33 meter) long mural, aimed at raising awareness to nature conservation, initiated by the organization Artists for Conservation



Steven Price, President of Birds Study Canada, presents the Dead Sea book to author Margaret Atwood at Canada Evening, attended by about 2,000 people

1. Presentation summarizing the IOC and our event: <https://bit.ly/2CaQdDO>
2. Artists for Nature movie (Yuval Dax): <https://youtu.be/pK6XsVwik7U>
3. Opening movie for our event (Yuval Dax): <https://youtu.be/VfV0rgoAAyc>
4. Movie of our lecture (Jocelyn Demers):
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1D11qRKNWc4o4JjW5mCRlyRse8ztHnkw2/view?usp=sharing>
5. Booklet produced for our event: <https://youtu.be/pK6XsVwik7U>



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Background

The International Ornithological Congresses have been held continuously (besides during both World Wars) every four years since 1884 in Vienna (!), every time in a different country, and is considered one of the most veteran scientific conferences in the world. The previous congress was held in Tokyo and the next will be held in Melbourne, Australia, in 2022.

The congress was attended by over 1,500 scientists from around the world, with nine 1-hour plenary lectures by the best lecturers worldwide as well as hundreds of lectures, symposia, round table discussions, and more, during six days in parallel sessions in Vancouver's modern congress center. One of the days was devoted to birdwatching tours.

This year's IOC initiated a new tradition – the holding of an enormous birding festival for the general public (with an estimated 30,000 visitors!), with countless booths of artists led by the organization Artists for Conservation, of birding and nature conservation organizations, of research equipment (e.g. GPS transmitters) on an enormous area on one of the congress center floors. In addition, scientific posters on boards and digital screens were exhibited on this floor. We were also allotted a booth to present our work, including the sale of our new book about the Dead Sea and 11 selected artworks from it and the exhibition that hung in the Israeli Parliament (Knesset) for a month earlier this year, and our regional cooperation in the Middle East. The booth was manned during the entire congress by a rotation of two volunteers organized by Jim Wright and Prof. Robert (Bob) Elner, President of the 2018 IOC Organizing Society and Convener. We would like to take this opportunity to thank them for their significant and wholehearted assistance, always with a smile!



Our booth for selling the Dead Sea book and presenting the regional activities in the Middle East; in the front the Canadian volunteers with artwork from the Dead Sea exhibition also exhibited in the Israeli Parliament (Knesset)

Prof. Bob Elner invited the authors of this report to hold an evening for the participants of the scientific congress and the general public, as one of the three central lectures held in the evenings, on the topic "Birds as Peacemakers: The Middle East Test Case".

Since our new book "Bringing the Dead Sea to Life - Art and Nature at the Lowest Place on Earth" was published just before the IOC, we decided to launch the book in the framework of the congress. The book includes 170 artworks of the Dead Sea in Israel and Jordan, from the Artists for Nature seminar held in March 2017. Our lecture and the launching of the book were awarded a prominent place in the congress program, and also advertised at our booth, on the congress website and congress center corridors (together with the two additional lectures by Purnima Barman from India on "Birds of a Feather: The Reciprocal Benefits of Protecting Biodiversity" and the well-known author Jennifer Ackerman on "The Genius of Birds").

See the congress website: <http://www.iocongress2018.com/birds-for-peace>.



Dead Sea book covers



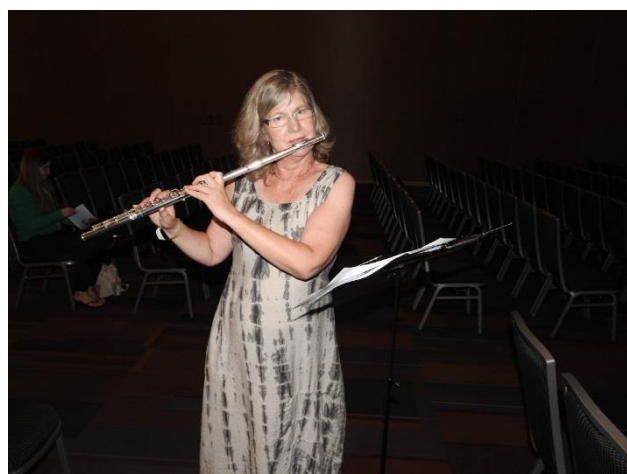
The signs along the congress corridors for our event, together with author Jennifer Ackerman (right) and Purnima Barman (center)

On Tuesday August 22nd the congress hosted "Canada Evening", and the central lecture was delivered by the famous Canadian author, Margaret Atwood. Among the tens of prizes she has been awarded, one was Tel Aviv University's prestigious Dan David award, within whose framework Yossi took Ms. Atwood, an enthusiastic birdwatcher, on a two-day birdwatching trip to see some of Israel's birds.

Our lecture was attended by an audience of over 800 from the scientific congress and birding communities, and it was convened by the Canadian MP, Dr. Richard (Dick) Cannings, who is also an enthusiastic ornithologist and the author of 15 bird books.



Yossi Leshem and Margaret Atwood before her lecture



Flutist from the Tempest Flute Ensemble playing at the opening of our event, together with another 10 flutists spread around the hall

Our event opened with the launching of the book, together with a movie about the Dead Sea Artists for Nature seminar and a second movie produced especially for the congress (both produced by Yuval Dax, see links in presentation), an 11-minute musical excerpt composed specifically for the congress, with 11 flutists from the Tempest Flute Ensemble. Our new book was presented to the IOC President, Prof. Lucia Severinghaus, and to Beth, Prof. Elner's wife, for the patience she showed during her husband's intensive preparations at such a professional level in organizing the congress. Beth was most moved by this gesture.

Each of the three lecturers – Prof. Yossi Leshem, Prof. Alex Roulin and Gen. (Ret.) Mansour Abu Rashid – talked for 20 minutes about the various aspects of the regional cooperation in the Middle East, and time was also dedicated to questions from the audience. The event was received with enormous interest, applause and a standing ovation, the audience was very moved by the topic, and following the lecture we received lots of positive feedbacks.



Dr. Richard Cannings, Canadian Member of Parliament, who has written 15 books, convened the event



IOC President, Prof. Lucia Severinghaus, receiving the Dead Sea book with a dedication to her

The IOC was attended by nine representatives from Israel: doctoral student Daniel Berkowic, Dr. Eran Levin, Dr. Roi Dor, Prof. Ran Nathan, Dr. Eshel Ofir, Prof. Yossi Leshem, doctoral student Irit Aloni, Dr. Ittai Berger and doctoral student Tali Magori. The congress presented an excellent opportunity to listen to fascinating lectures, learn about new discoveries in ornithological research, build new working ties with additional researchers, and renew ties with old acquaintances in the scientific world.

Our lecture and the topic of birds as peacemakers was met with great interest and many came to personally express their excitement at the hope our lecture raised for the future, and during the congress and before we gave interviews, and were exposed to the following bodies:

1. Jocelyn Demers – interview with the three of us for a documentary about the IOC
2. Jocelyn Demers – 5-minute video documenting the event (see link in presentation)
3. Moshe Gilad – "Ha'aretz" newspaper, article about the book (in the future)
4. Sever Plotzker – "Yediot Ahronot" newspaper, article (in the future)
5. Prof. David Bird – 10-minute interview for a report in YouTube about the IOC
6. Dr. Lesley Evans Ogden – article in Audubon or another magazine about the three of us (in the future)
7. Yaron Enosh – Friday, August 31st on Israel's Reshet B radio station, an interview with Yossi about the IOC (just before the Sabbath)
8. IOC website – before the congress
9. IOC website – daily reports from the congress, we were feature a number of times
10. Deborah Jones – article in the Guardian in Canada (in the future)

Another two topics that arose from the congress from among a wide variety of topics:

The connection with Prof. Woo Shin Lee from South Korea

Prof. Lee is a senior figure in South Korea and he was most impressed by our use of birds as peacemakers.

North and South Korea are separated by a natural area (BPZ) of extremely high ecological importance for cranes and additional migrating birds.

Prof. Lee, together with Prof. Dominique G. Homberger from Louisiana State University and the newly-elected President of the IOC and IOU, raised the idea to establish an international work group on the topic of birds as peacemakers, to be initiated in conflict regions, such as:

- North-South Korea
- Middle East
- Cyprus – Turkish and Greek sectors
- Balkan region
- India, Pakistan... and more

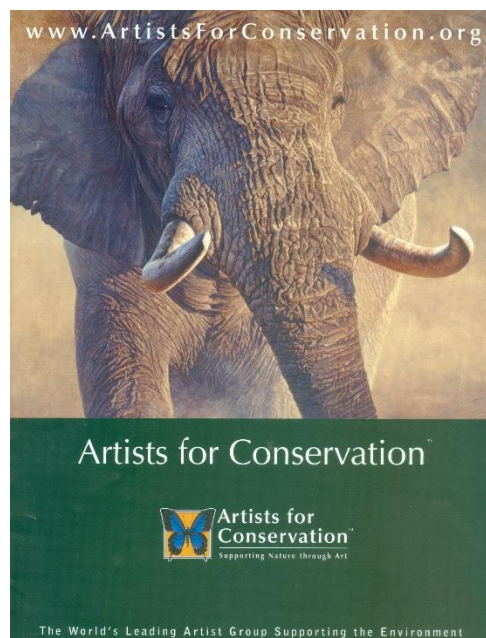
The topic needs detailed preparation for submitting to the IOU and other international bodies later this year.

Artists for Conservation

A very active organization initiating the use of nature artwork around the world to contribute towards nature conservation (<http://www.artistsforconservation.org>).

Artists for Conservation organized booths at the birding festival of artists and sculptors who presented their work and could be seen at work, organized many art and music events, all this led by their most active President, Jeffrey Whiting.

Leading up to the congress, they produced a book of the best artwork exhibited and a calendar.



Artists for Conservation booth

But their most amazing exhibit was a 100 feet (33 meter) long mural presenting 678 bird species in danger of global extinction painted by 96 artists, each painting 15 x 15 cm. The aim of this exhibition was to raise awareness to the plight of birds.

Copies of these paintings in a wood frame were sold for \$100 each, as a donation towards protecting birds.

Yossi held work meetings with the organization's President, Jeffrey Whiting, who agreed to send the mural for exhibiting in Israel and to initiate cooperation with the Hoopoe Foundation. Also to bring artists from around the world to paint research topics in nature conservation and hold events connected to the exhibition at the Steinhardt Museum of Natural History, after discussion with Prof. Tamar Dayan, Head of the museum, and Alon Sapan, Director of the museum.





678 artworks of birds in global danger of extinction were presented along 33 meters, and in the future it will be exhibited in Israel

