

The Ramat Hanadiv Project: Integrated Research, Planning, Education and Management in an Open Space Landscape

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Background

Ramat Hanadiv, located in the southern part of Mount Carmel, is an area of more than 4,000 dunams (1,000 acres) of open space landscape. At the center of the area, there is a beautiful cultivated garden containing the graves of the late Baron Edmond de Rothschild and his wife.

The area enjoys a dramatic visual combination of mountain and sea, a variety of soil and rock formations, interesting vegetation and wildlife populations, and archeological remnants. The natural vegetation is a suppressed Mediterranean scrub formation (Hebrew: *horesh*) with many annuals and perennial flowers. In the last few decades, some plantings were made of pine and cypress trees. As in many other places in Israel, the reforestation of this area was completed without regard to the native vegetation and the natural environment or to ecological considerations.

In 1983, the Rothschild Foundation requested the advice of the Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel (SPNI) on how best to manage the open spaces of Ramat Hanadiv. A set of principles was agreed upon, aimed at developing an environmentally sound management plan for the area. The character of the area, its owners' desires, and the collaboration with the SPNI, provided a rare opportunity for the implementation of an open space landscape management plan based upon conservation and on educational and environmental planning concepts and principles. Since then, the project has been carried out through fruitful collaboration between the Rothschild Foundation and the SPNI.

Objectives and Principle Concepts of the Project

- **Broadening the protection of natural open space**

The project is adding land, not designated as protected, to the limited network of protected areas in Israel for conservation, recreation, and free public use

- **Reviving and rehabilitating destroyed natural habitats, wildlife, and archeological remains.**

This has been achieved by keeping the existing natural components undisturbed, by rehabilitation and reintroduction of suppressed and locally or nationally extinct plant and wildlife population, and by restoration of archeological remains.

- **Environmentally sound determination of planning and management policy.**

The management plan of this area is based on its natural potential and its natural systems and processes. In order to achieve this objective, the planning process consisted of several stages in appropriate sequence:

1. Landscape and nature survey and evaluation aimed at obtaining the area's inventory and determining its ecological sensitivity.
2. Preliminary planning, determination of guidelines, and initial plans that require no further research.
3. Ecological and archeological research to obtain further knowledge about the area's natural potential and historic remains as a basis for the direction of further planning and management policies and the monitoring of their implementation.
4. Further detailed planning based on the above stages.
5. Implementation.
6. Monitoring.
7. Updating the management plan accordingly.

- **Research and surveys** - Ecological and archeological studies were conducted to provide the information needed for the management plan, and for scientific and educational purposes.
- **Educational and public awareness** - Fostering knowledge and partnership through hiking, learning activities such as wildlife observations, archeological excavations, and assisting in management and maintenance of the area. The area is open for public use with self-guiding trails; written material and information and guidance services are provided.
- **Integrated comprehensive approach** - The different objectives are being considered in an integrated and related way, rather than separately.
- **The area and the project serve as a "laboratory"** and a model for implementing, testing, and monitoring perceptions and methods for protecting, planning, and managing natural open space in Israel. Lessons learned and experience gained help in other such areas.

Accomplishment of Activities to Date

Survey and research:

Completed: Nature and landscape survey. Geological survey. Pedological survey. Climatology research. Archeological excavation at the site of Mansur-el-Aqab and Ein-Tzur. Population and distribution of fauna species, including gazelles, birds, wild bores, and small mammals. Geobotanical research. Management experiments on Mediterranean scrub formation (*horesh*), including fire prevention through controlled cattle grazing.

Wildlife reintroduction:

1) **Lanner falcon.** 62 young falcons were successfully released to nature in the site and in the Galilee since 1991. First successful nesting was discovered this year on the nearby power station's chimney.

2) **Griffon vulture.** 45 vultures were released since 1994, contributing a great deal to the highly endangered vulture population in Israel and the region.

3) **Roe deer.** 8 deer were reintroduced to the region; 7 of them live safely in the project site, and a newborn kid was observed in the project area.

Walking trails system:

A self-guiding trail system was completed, with a self-guiding leaflet produced for each trail.

Diluting and reshaping man-made plantation:

The plan to dilute and reshape the man-made plantation was launched in order to adapt it to ecological principles and to the natural landscape character of the area.

Education and public activity:

Much of the development work and some of the survey work were done by SPNI nature youth clubs. Several youth clubs from nearby settlements have adopted the project on a permanent basis. Many families and groups have begun to use the trails and services for hikes and outings. The nearby SPNI field Study Center has conducted study courses and seminars in the area, based on the research conducted in the area.

Summary

The relatively convenient conditions for work, derived from the common goals and high degree of understanding among the people and factors involved, have contributed to the success of the project to date. The planned sequential, staged nature of the project and the nature of the interdisciplinary working team were useful in preventing some errors and in advancing the project in accordance with its stated goals and principles.

Slight differences in personal approaches and styles and the large size of the team have led to some delays in the decision-making process. Delays also derive from the multipurpose nature of the project itself and from the fact that the integration of purposes is a major goal of the entire project. However, the importance of the sequential nature of the work, which is based on the preliminary compilation of data and knowledge, and its adaptation to relevant factors and objectives far outweighs the length of time required to complete the operation. This accounts, for example, for the deliberate preference, due to educational objectives, for youth as working crews - rather than using only professional crews.

Lessons and conclusions

a. Taking opportunities for broadening the protection of open space.

This project exemplifies the possibility of adding spaces - not necessarily designated as protected, *a priori* - to the limited network of protected open space landscapes in practice. In Israel and in other countries, many open space landscapes exist which are not designated for protection. Awareness and concentrated effort may help save these additional open spaces from destruction by means of wise guidance of the land use, for the mutual benefit of the land owners and nature and landscape conservation and the public welfare.

b. Establishment of coalitions and partnerships on behalf of open space protection.

In a complex situation, with multiple needs and limited open space, it is impossible to achieve the aims of nature and landscape conservation solely through the absolute allocation of protected areas within the framework of the law. In order to achieve these aims, it is necessary to find suitable partners and to establish coalitions of interested parties ready to join the collective effort, each for his own individual reasons. This project exemplifies the possibilities of success when work is undertaken jointly with the owners of the land, researchers, professionals in the management of flora and fauna, and the interested public.

c. Principles of natural area's quality.

The results of the activities undertaken within the framework of the project thus far strengthen and prove the concept that open spaces contain more important values than originally known. The project area was not at first thought to be of special value in terms of nature conservation. However, as research and field study advanced, biological, archeological and landscape values were discovered which previously had not been known. Today, this area, which had been almost devoid of public interest, has been transformed into a very desirable location for purposes of both study and recreation by the public.

d. The Contribution of NGO's to nature and landscape conservation.

The project constitutes an example of activities by a non-governmental organization (NGO) or ordinary citizens on behalf of the protection of open space which governmental bodies are not free or organizationally able to deal with. Government bodies may find it difficult to deal with these open spaces because of their efforts on behalf of better-known or more attractive areas, and at times, because of their institutionalized approach which may hamper protection of spaces which they do not legally and practically control. These factors may at times obstruct contacts and hinder cooperation with the owners of the land and other interested, non-governmental, parties.

e. Model project.

The Ramat Hanadiv project constitutes a model for open space landscape management from the aspects of conception, principles of activity, means of implementation, and scope of research. From this perspective, it is possible to relate to Ramat Hanadiv as a practical laboratory for the management of open areas. Lessons learned may well be implemented in other areas of Israel and in other countries as well. The existence of such models has a major importance for the development of approaches for the examination and advances the protection of additional open spaces. In Israel, this conception is already finding further expression.