

Identifying Biodiversity Hotspots in Israel

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Israel is characterized by a high-level of biodiversity, but is also among the most densely populated countries. Therefore, many small and fragmented biodiversity hotspots are at risk of extinction following anthropogenic activities.

The project, initiated by OLI, is conducted jointly with the Israel Nature and Parks Authority & the Ministry of Environmental Protection, and supported by the Open Land Protection Fund, focuses on identifying sites with significant levels of biodiversity that are under human threat. It targets small size sites (up to 1 km²) which are not protected as nature reserves. About 400 sites were identified so far throughout the country. Our aim is to draw the attention of planning authorities and land-managers to these sensitive sites and enable their protection. We developed a systematic methodology for evaluating the ecologic valence of these sites as well as the level of anthropogenic threats. It enables clear and efficient prioritization, so that the most vulnerable sites can be protected first. Geographic locations and information collected for each site were uploaded onto a GIS with a dynamic internet interface, which enables public access, editing and contribution of additional data. For a selection of sites, a detailed program for monitoring and preservation was prepared.