

## WEEKEND

## New life in an old lake

Sixty years after Lake Hula was drained, destroying much of its wildlife, it is seeing a revival

Zafir Rinat

Almost six decades have passed since one of Israel's largest natural wonders, Lake Hula, was drained in order to create more arable land. The wildlife in and around this freshwater lake, located in the northern part of the country, did not completely disappear, however, and a number of species managed to survive in the area's remaining water sources. These species have gotten a boost in the last two years thanks to rehabilitation efforts carried out in the Hula Nature Reserve, the first nature reserve established in the country. In the reserve, which encompasses a small remnant of the original body of water, 10 out of the 14 species of fish known to have formerly inhabited the lake have been successfully restored.

For many years, efforts to protect wildlife in the reserve faced a tough hurdle: the poor quality of water that came from fish ponds in the vicinity that drained into the reserve, carrying with it new species of fish that threatened the existing ones. In recent years, the dependence on fish ponds as a source of water for the reserve has diminished, and fresh and natural water now flows into the lake, having been diverted from sources such as the nearby Einan Stream.

"For the fish, the renewal of the natural flow of water at a constant temperature has had a huge ecological impact," notes Yifat Artzi, an ecologist who works for the Israel Nature and Parks Authority. "The stream has returned to its role of providing a thermal refuge, especially for Saint Peter's fish (tilapia), which suffer from low temperatures during the winter."

Nature received further assistance from the INPA, whose efforts included creating lagoons in which indigenous fish populations could thrive and culling wildlife that preyed on their young offspring. For example, certain types of water turtles and catfish were removed from the nature reserve, leading to an increase in the number of younger, smaller fish. In addition, water from nearby



The Hula Nature Reserve. "This area has now become the otter capital of Israel," says ecologist Yifat Artzi.

Zilumaya

springs that had formerly flowed into the lake was diverted back into what remained of it.

Another important step was taken last year: Some 400 dunams (100 acres) of the northern part of the reserve were flooded, enabling fish from the Jordan River to reach the reserve for the first time in many years. This area is not to be confused with the Hula Lake Park, which lies north of the reserve. That was flooded some 20 years ago and is now home to different varieties of flora and fauna – in particular, many species of migrating birds.

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"The fish have come from the tributaries and channels that connect the reserve to the Jordan River, or from other nearby sources," Artzi explains, adding that in addition to the return of the Galilee tilapia,

which had been under serious threat of extinction, the Nemacheilus panthera is now thriving for the first time in 20 years in the reserve. Other forms of wildlife that feed off the fish are also benefiting from this process of recovery. These include otters, one of the country's rarer mammal species. "This area has now become the otter capital of Israel," she says.

The successful rehabilitation of the Hula Nature Reserve further increases the longing for the historic lake – not only for its scenery, but for wildlife that included several species of fish endemic to this part of the world that became extinct after it was drained. One can only hope they will be rediscovered in some pool or spring, as happened in the case of the Hula painted frog, which was thought to have died out until its rediscovery a few years ago.

## KIDS

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began: "For example, he would stand there in the kitchen and start talking about drugs, killing, stabbings, suicide, things he knows terrify me. Essentially, it was an invitation to a duel. I had to avoid taking part in it. At first, I had to say something brief to him about how I felt about what he was saying. Like – I'm not willing to listen to this kind of talk. And then, if he didn't stop, to get up and leave, and not allow him to force me into hearing things that were unacceptable to me. I had to continually make my boundaries and my values clear. I had to identify how I felt in the situation and respond in empowering language that was not accusatory or aggressive, and to speak clearly, concisely and to the point."

Sharon's husband, Guy, who had previously traveled a lot as part of his job, helped effect change by making himself a more significant presence at home, and thus disrupting the destructive symbiosis between mother and son. "Seeing his parents united rather than seeing his mother collapsing under the burden alone gave Yonatan more confidence and calmed him down," says Sharon.

How long did it take until you saw a change?

"A year after the start of the therapy, we were at the toughest moment. There was a total disconnect. He hated

with an intensity I couldn't have imagined. The therapist explained to me that he was angry because I broke a 'contract.' The contract was that I was a totally devoted mother who totally negated herself. But I decided that I wasn't ready to sacrifice my life. At first he was angry, but over the past three months, we've built up trust again."

Now, she says, Yonatan heeds her authority, maintains good communication and their relationship even contains humor and cooperation. "Sometimes he has a tendency to try to bring back the excessive closeness, and I have to remember that I'm the responsible adult and maintain the separateness. From a situation of disregard and of imposition of his will, we've progressed to one of reciprocity and consideration. He now has chores to do at home. He understands that he has duties too and he respects me."

What happens when he does something that goes against the rules of the house?

"[There must be] restraint and a long memory. That means – not to react on the spot. The conversation takes place later, after tempers have cooled. It's hard work that demands that you conquer anger, stop being invariably right, climb down from the 'tree' of perfect motherhood. I had to go through a deep emotional process. It's not behind me entirely, but this past summer was the happiest of my life. In 15 years of parenthood, I never enjoyed the children as much, and him especially."

## LOST

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for having reminded her of the fact that she'd been deceived. "The problem is I can't delete the app: It's as if it's built into the hardware of the phone. You know the ones you can't delete? The most I was able to do was disable it."

"Oh, so you still have it. Can I see?" "Sure," she said, and pulled the phone out of her coat pocket. She showed me the Shahid.

"The phone looks brand new."

"You see? It was as if he opened a new box, all wrapped up in cellophane, and put on a whole ceremony for me."

"But it isn't Shahid." "What do you mean, not Shahid?" she protested. "Read it."

"I'm reading it," I told her. "It's Shahad. You can see that in the Arabic it is written Shahad, not Shahid."

"And there's a difference between the two?"

"Yes," I replied, asking Dorit's permission to activate the Shahid app, so I could show her that it's software for viewing Arabic-language films and TV shows. "Shahad is Arabic for 'to view.'"

"Shahad?" she asked, as I typed the word into Google. "You mean like they used to say 'Eazizi almushahadin' ('Dear viewers') on the Israeli Arabic-language TV channel?"

"Exactly," I replied. "You see, it's written here that Samsung has signed a collaboration agreement with the MBC network. It's a sort of Arabic Netflix, called Shahad [Samsung actually does call it Shahid]."

"No way!" "Way!"

Nitzan Shenar, 41, from Netanya, and Oleg Morozov, 32, from Ramat Gan; arriving from Nicosia, Cyprus

Hello, can I ask what is that R2-D2-esque thing you have on your hand?

Nitzan: Yes, it's a camera. A VR camera. Virtual reality, that is.

How much does it cost? One like this costs \$60,000. It has eight lenses that photograph in all directions, 360 degrees, and it's stereoscopic, which makes it possible to see depth.

What were you doing with it in Cyprus? We were forced to go film the Miss Fashion TV contest.

Being forced to film a beauty contest doesn't sound so awful.

It's just that I haven't shot video for a long time. But the videographer couldn't go and I had to fill in for him. That's how I started out in VR years ago. I would film the weddings of oligarchs; back then, there weren't even proper cameras yet. On my own, I'd mount a few GoPro cameras together on a pole.

What are you doing now? I'm chief technology officer and partner in a company called Inception VR, which was set up by four partners, including myself. Just three weeks ago we raised \$15 million from all sorts of sources, the leading one being RTL Group. We produce content for virtual reality that's used by means of cell phones and VR headsets.

What does that mean? If you were in a room, you would be able to see what is happening on the ceiling if you were using our software; you could see what is happening on the ceiling of the space you're in, as if it is surrounding you. Or, take for example what we were doing this week: We were filming the contest held by Fashion TV, which happens to be one of our partners. There are models on the catwalk and swimsuits, but also a more personal, more intimate angle. We focused on three young participants and told their story – their fears, concerns, hopes.

Their hopes for world peace? How intimate can this get?

Very. This is a sort of medium that causes the viewer to feel that he is there. It is a sensation of presence, a unique sort of closeness. And in my opinion, that's the new thing this media brings to the game. Someone just talking on TV is one thing, but a person who watches our content will feel as if he is there in Cyprus on the beach. And if I put on the headset and look around in all directions, and there is no one else behind or next to

## Departures | Arrivals



me – I am sitting there on the beach in front of the contestant, and feel as if she is talking to me.

There's no one there? How do you interview her? Where are you?

Nitzan: Usually in video photography there will be a director, a videographer and a lighting technician behind the camera. Here, there can't be anyone; we hook up the camera and operate it from a distance with a laptop, so no one sees us in the frame. To interview the woman, you use a wireless mic.

Oleg: It's also possible to sit in front of her when you are videoring and deal with it later using post-production tricks. By erasing a certain area within the picture.

Nitzan: After the shoot, the raw material also goes through 'stitching,' a process that combines what you filmed with all of the lenses together into a single, complete panoramic image.

Do you need different skills to work with a 360-degree camera?

Oleg: There are no close-ups, for one. There is a different conception of the space.

Nitzan: Think of that well-known scene in "Seinfeld," when Kramer walks into the doorway. The whole punch line is that the camera focuses on the door and then it opens, out of the blue. But let's say that the scene is shot in 360. The camera cannot be fixed on the door. You're in Seinfeld's apartment, and it may be that Kramer walks in when the

door happens to be behind you. You'll have missed the joke. When you don't necessarily know in which direction the user will be looking at a certain moment in time – the storytelling changes. ... There are editing tricks. You can create movement and interest by using a dolly. You have to know how to create movement in a frame correctly, otherwise it will make the users nauseous.

Oleg: People haven't yet gotten used to the format.

Nitzan: But according to the data, the tolerance is constantly on the rise. From an average viewing of five minutes, we've gone up to 14. I can sit through two hours of VR, but I'm a veteran.

So right now the contents last a short amount of time.

Nitzan: Yeah, but I think we'll get to half an hour or more and that there will also be narrative films. And there are lots of games and porn. Pornography is the locomotive that is pulling this industry ahead. People want to see it in 360 degrees. You can also watch concerts, and visit apartments that haven't yet been built.

Oleg: VR enables me to get to places around the world that I cannot visit, see landscapes or even exhibitions in a museum.

Nitzan: We've just received exclusive rights for VR to the works of Salvador Dali. You can simply enter one of his paintings and watch the time as it drips down [on the melting clocks].

## Liat Elkayam, Photos by Tomer Appelbaum



Shira Kreitenberg, 31, Oded Kreitenberg, 31, from Lod; flying to Zanzibar

Hello, can I ask why Zanzibar?

Shira: There are really beautiful reefs there. When we were looking for a place to go on honeymoon that had scuba diving, Oded saw an ad in the synagogue newspaper, "Who wants to fly to Zanzibar for eight days with kosher food?"

You do? Shira: Yes do.

Mazel tov. Oded: We got married, we moved into a new apartment and began new jobs, all of it in the past two months.

You've been busy. Incidentally, what do you mean by a synagogue newspaper?

Oded: It's a sort of bulletin that includes Torah-related lessons and articles and news items, and it also allows people to place advertisements aimed at the religious public. It's a genre.

How was the wedding? Shira: Fantastic.

Oded: We were surprised that it was so nice, because we thought we'd suffer through every moment of it.

Why did you think you would be suffering?

Shira: Because we hate to be the center of attention, hate to dance and hate to

dress up in fancy clothes. And it seems to me that all of that basically sums up the entire idea of a wedding.

Sounds like a secular Israeli wedding.

Oded: With slight differences. For instance, there were different dancing circles, one with men and women dancing separately and one that was mixed, for the nonreligious friends. We've been getting more flexible, and now this has become an accepted practice.

How long have you been together?

Oded: One year between the time we met and the wedding. I proposed to her after six or seven months.

Is that a lot or a little?

Oded: The norm at our ages is that within three months from the time of the first date you've already gotten engaged.

Shira: My grandparents warned me that if I didn't get married soon they wouldn't be around, which didn't make things any easier.

Oded: Most of my friends were married when they were 23 or 24.

Shira: We're considered pretty old. We live in a society in which from a certain age schools are separate for boys and girls, and all that is left for us is mainly blind dates.

Going on dates isn't fun?

Shira: It becomes an experience of going on another date and another date and another date, and you reach a state of despair. It isn't fun thinking that maybe something isn't right with you, and that's why you're not finding someone. Maybe

it's because of something you wore or because you didn't wear heels, or because you've got something or other wrong with you.

Oded: I had less harsh experiences with dates, but I always knew it was complicated. I have a lot of female friends with difficult stories to tell.

Shira: At some point you just go on a date with someone normal, and you say to yourself: Just because he's normal maybe we should keep on going out.

How did you meet?

Oded: In the most boring way possible. Shira: My girlfriend nagged him for six months until he was available and said okay, and then she called me and said: "I am giving your telephone number to someone." She didn't even offer any details about him.

Oded: This is a common method of meeting people in our world – that of the religious Zionist.

I'm never quite sure what that means exactly, "religious Zionist."

Oded: It really is hard to define; you can say that we are Jerusalemites.

So what was different about your first date?

Shira: He told me at the end of it that he really had fun, which boys don't usually do. And we spoke about suicide and we laughed.

Laughed?

Shira: I'm an educational psychologist and I'd just come back from a conference on the subject of suicide, and he is into black humor.

Uh-huh...

Shira: He was happy that someone was listening to it and laughing.

Oded: I have a WhatsApp group of old friends in which we have a contest trying to figure out who will commit suicide first. The group is particularly active just before the Jewish holidays.

Shira: And we talked, I think, about "Amélie."

Oded: I think that was only on the next date.

Audrey Tautou?

Oded: Yeah, that's our favorite movie. That's how I proposed to Shira. I bought a garden gnome and photographed it in all sorts of familiar places that we'd been to in Jerusalem – her room, her grandparents' house. We went to dinner at the same café where we'd gone on our first date. There was supposed to be a movie evening there.

Shira: I was sitting with my back to the screen and I heard the music from "Amélie" and turned around and saw the gnome. I didn't realize right away that these were places I knew. Only when the gnome got to my grandparents' house did I get it.

Oded: It was a bit frustrating, but also very amusing.

Shira: Now the gnome is in our bookcase.