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Outreach and Education

Oral

**Birds as a tool for place-making and place-making as a tool for raising awareness and empathy for birds – the story of the choosing of the "Bird of Eilat".**

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Eilat is probably as peripheral as it can get. Statistics claim that people don't stay here long and people say that we lack any sense of local identity; but everybody here knows about the importance of Eilat for the birds.

To make things better, we conducted a place-making project aimed to define "who we are". We collected Eilaty characters from interviews, and chose 10 flagship species of birds to represent these characters. The Sunbird was the energetic tiny that originated in Eilat but did it bigtime across the country, the Little Green Bee-eater – the most beautiful bird in town who also acts like one, and the Brown Booby – a tropical storm at sea that no one can ignore.

We were given a day in all 13 schools of Eilat, a local radio daily show, a communal event at our bird observatory and even caught people in the streets asking them to identify themselves with one of the Eilaty birds. The outcome was people learning birds and advocate for them. The mayor was pushing hard for our only endemic – the White-eyed Gull – our local patriot, the maintenance staff of the bird observatory was for the impressive Steppe Eagle and the field school campaigned the Flamingo – the ping glassed ever optimistic bird.

15,769 out of the 50,000 inhabitants voted. The media, public opinion leaders and the people of Eilat talked only about birds, identifying with them and sympathizing them.

We made our birds a solid component in our identity as Eilaties.