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Israel Veterinary Medical Association

P.O.Box 22, Raanana 4310001, Israel
Tel: 09-7419929 • Fax: 09-7431778
E-mail: ivma@zahav.net.il

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Email: oren.print@gmail.com

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Front Cover: **HOPOE** (*Urupaeops*)

The bird is brown and yellow in color with black and white wings. Its legs are short with relatively large wings. The bill is narrow and thin. The male and female birds look alike. The Hoopoe has a consolidated tassel feather on its head which it can spread at will. The females nest in holes, spaces and crates, generally close to the ground. To protect her nest, the female secretes a repugnant substance from the Uropygial gland, which smells of decaying meat. The secretion is thought to help deter predators as well as parasites. The Hoopoe is found in Europe, Asia and Africa. In Israel there is a stable population of Hoopoes, mainly in the coastal area but there has been a tendency for the birds to spread inland due to the increase in cultivated fields and lawns. The bird feeds on insect larvae which are extracted from the soil with the aid of its long beak. The Hoopoe call is typically a trisyllabic oop-ooop-ooop, which gives rise to its English and scientific names. The Hoopoe is mentioned in the Bible as being impure (Leviticus: 11) and the G'mara refers to it as the bird that brings dill worms for cutting the Temple stones. The bird is also mentioned in the Koran regarding King Solomon and the queen of Sheba (Sura 27). In medieval times, mystical attributes were ascribed to the Hoopoe. In May 2008, in conjunction with the country's 60th anniversary and following a national survey of 155,000 citizens, the Hoopoe was chosen as the national bird of Israel, outpolling the Eagle, lesser kestrel, barn owl, sunbirds, warblers, bulbul, finch, and the white breasted kingfisher. Mr. Moshe Technai, generously provided the pictures for the covers.