

Other collaborative projects under development

The partnership is developing other collaborative projects in the Americas and Asia

In **the Americas**, the development of a Western Hemisphere migratory bird conservation concept is looking specifically at IBAs, migratory flyways and associated bird species relevant to Rio Tinto businesses and their local communities. The developing programme aims to strategically address species' needs for site safeguard on both breeding and non-breeding grounds, by building on existing levels of engagement within the Rio Tinto-BirdLife partnership.

The integration of Rio Tinto businesses into Western Hemisphere migratory bird conservation seeks to apply a strategic global business approach to flyway conservation with local applications and relevance. This will be achieved by:

- Targeting priority sites for migratory species;
- Engaging with and involving local communities;
- Strengthening local capacity through scientific and technical education;
- Understanding the implications of climate change and adaptation issues for particular species and their habitats; and
- Contributing to a Net Positive Impact on biodiversity consistent with Rio Tinto's Biodiversity Strategy, and identifying opportunities for alignment with Rio Tinto's Water Strategy.

A concept to link sites along species flyways has already been developed at some institutional levels within some countries and regions, and the idea will be to develop a programme with Rio Tinto that integrates and builds on these initiatives, by bringing additional support for objectives that are common to both Rio Tinto and BirdLife organisations. For example, rather than develop a programme that will be limited in scope through isolation, it will be important to be aware of, work alongside and, where possible, collaborate with a range of initiatives, such as the Boreal Songbird Network (Canada), the Boreal Forest Initiative (USA), the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Initiative, the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network, the Ramsar High Andean Wetland Strategy and the Partners in Flight programme, among others.

In 2008, the Rio Tinto-BirdLife Programme and Rio Tinto's Kennecott Utah Copper Corporation are supporting National Audubon's publication of IBAs and Bird Habitat Conservation Areas in Utah. This is seen as an initial component of a Western Hemisphere project that will extend to a linked programme of migratory bird conservation at selected sites supporting migratory species in Canada, the USA, Mexico and South America.

In **Mongolia**, BirdLife Asia and the Wildlife Science and Conservation Center, were commissioned by the World Bank to undertake a strategic overview of the potential impacts of three key development sectors (mining, infrastructure and tourism) on



Greater Yellowlegs is just one of the many migratory birds that will benefit from the Western Hemisphere Flyways Initiative



Khustain Nuruu National Park, one of 70 IBAs in Mongolia

important areas of natural habitat, including IBAs. The World Bank regards IBAs as critical natural habitats, because they are recognised as being “critical for rare, vulnerable, migratory, or endangered species”. The Rio Tinto-BirdLife International Programme played a key role in undertaking this work, which was completed in July 2008, and included an initial strategic assessment of Mongolia’s most important natural habitats and their vulnerability to mining and associated development.

A key focus area for the Rio Tinto-BirdLife partnership emerged in the South Gobi region of the country, where Rio Tinto and Ivanhoe Mines are together seeking to develop a major copper-gold mine, known as the Oyu Tolgoi Project. The future development of this mine, as well as that of existing expanding coal mines in the region, would require improved infrastructural development linking mines to markets in neighbouring China. These potential road and rail links could impact the ecosystem of the South Gobi region, which provides critical natural habitat for Asiatic Wild Ass (Khulan), Black-tailed (Goitred) Gazelle, Saker Falcon and Houbara Bustard: all Globally Threatened species. Road links in the region serving existing coal mines are already having an impact on this remote region. Extant road links and new proposals pass through the Galba Gobi IBA that is important for the two Globally Threatened bird species highlighted above. The IBA also serves as an important corridor linking two Special Protected Areas in the south Gobi, considered critical for nomadic Asiatic Wild Ass and Black-tailed Gazelle populations.

The Rio Tinto-BirdLife Programme is in the process of engaging with the Oyu Tolgoi Project and the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), to assist in baseline data collection and biodiversity action planning for the area likely to be affected by such development.

Erdensant IBA, Mongolia – an important breeding site for Cinereous Vulture

