PARTNERS FOR SUSTAINABILITY
What BirdLife is doing for people and the planet
There is a growing consensus that we cannot continue to treat the loss of biodiversity as an issue separate from the core concerns of society. We will be much more likely to achieve objectives such as reducing poverty and improving the health, wealth and security of present and future generations if we give biodiversity and ecosystem services the priority they deserve.

But the target of significantly reducing the rate of biodiversity loss by 2010 has already been missed, and most of the global targets for the reduction of poverty by 2015 are also unlikely to be met. Further massive losses of biodiversity are increasingly likely, with inevitable consequences for human wellbeing, unless we act to address the underlying causes.

These are big challenges, and there are no simple solutions. BirdLife International has an impressive track record of working locally, nationally and globally to create the environmental conditions for sustainable development. Working with communities, government, and across sectors in some of the world’s biologically most important places, BirdLife Partners are demonstrating that it is possible to bring about the changes required for living sustainably on our planet Earth.

Peter Schei, Chair of BirdLife Council
Former Chair of WEHAB, Chair of SBSTTA and Head of Norwegian delegations to CITES, the Bern Convention, CBD, Ramsar and negotiations of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

■ Biodiversity is absolutely central to the provision of the goods and services on which our lives and livelihoods depend. The variety of living things provides us with food, water and fuel, supports processes such as nutrient cycling and soil formation which underpin agricultural production, and helps to regulate our climate and the water cycle. Enjoyment of the natural world also contributes to people’s physical and mental health, and to the world’s cultural diversity.

■ We live in a time of rapid environmental change. Development has brought benefits for many, but progress has been distributed unequally, and has brought about unprecedented changes in the Earth’s climate, biodiversity and ecosystem services.

■ These changes will affect everyone. The poor and vulnerable, who depend most directly on the environment, are often the first to feel the consequences of biodiversity loss and environmental degradation. But ultimately the destruction of natural resources and ecosystem services will threaten us all.

■ Achieving sustainable development will require massive changes in behaviour, life style and values. We are being forced to reconsider our patterns of consumption, and to think again about what constitutes and contributes to human well-being. Efforts to arrest and reverse the trends in the Earth’s climate, biodiversity and ecosystem services cannot be isolated from the challenges of poverty reduction, human rights, intra- and inter-generational equity, and the linkages between them.

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The BirdLife Partnership’s vision is of ‘a world rich in biodiversity, with people and nature living in harmony, equitably and sustainably’. By focusing on birds and the sites and habitats they depend on, BirdLife is able both to conserve and restore biodiversity, and to improve the quality of the lives of the people who share those sites. Birds provide an important focus for discussions on environment and development because they are found almost everywhere in the world, they make an important economic contribution (for example, food, pest control and pollination), they have cultural significance, and they perform a vital role as indicators of the health of the environment.

As a global network present in over 100 countries, and with a structure which provides continuity of purpose from grassroots to international levels, BirdLife is in a unique position to address many of the challenges the world faces.

This report includes many examples of the BirdLife Partnership’s work with communities, businesses and governments around the world, to illustrate how we are helping to create the civil society networks, the inter-sectoral partnerships, and the social and economic models that will enable humankind to make the transition to a sustainable future.

To help achieve this, BirdLife is working to:

■ Nurture and network grassroots groups (page 6).
■ Ensure that conservation contributes to social justice, equity and respect for human rights (page 7).
■ Develop strategies for effective local-to-local communication (page 7).
■ Grow global civil society networks positioned to understand and respond in locally appropriate and globally connected ways (page 7).
■ Convey the concerns of communities to powerful institutions and corporations (page 8).
■ Help citizens and community-based organisations to engage effectively with local governments and municipalities, national politicians and businesses on planning and evaluation of proposed developments (page 8).
■ Integrate and promote the material and non-material values of biodiversity as components of human welfare, human responsibility and culture (page 8).
2: Stronger partnerships between civil society, government and business, to ensure coordinated, coherent action on a common agenda

Decisions and policies of businesses and national governments, and of the inter-governmental bodies created to help manage the global commons (the high seas, the atmosphere), have huge implications for life on Earth. Business’s over-riding emphasis on sustainable economic growth needs to be balanced with more attention to the other dimensions of sustainability (social-cultural and environmental values). To bring about the necessary change, BirdLife is working with other sectors to seek ways of creating wealth and employment that protect and enhance the living resource base on which all economic development depends.

To help achieve this, BirdLife is working to:
- Engage with businesses, to work together towards achieving Net Positive Impact on biodiversity at their operations (page 10).
- Support market-based mechanisms, including eco-labelling, as policy instruments through which to help change market behaviour and encourage good environmental stewardship in the production of goods and services (page 11).
- Implement frameworks (‘safeguards’) which support government and business in the transition to sustainability (page 12).
- Integrate biodiversity into the sectoral policies and practice of national governments (page 12).
- Promote concerns through international institutions addressing the ‘global commons’ (such as the Convention on Biological Diversity and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change), and through regional and sector-specific forums whose decisions affect the environment (such as the International Development Bank, and Regional Fisheries Management Organisations). Connect international governance (UN agencies) with grassroots environmental concerns (page 13).

3: A new model for social and economic development that fits within the Earth’s capacity to produce materials and absorb waste

The Earth’s ecosystems have an astonishing capacity to supply us with renewable resources, and absorb and process the waste we produce. However, there are limits to this ‘natural capital’, and we are exceeding them; nearly two-thirds of ecosystem services are in decline worldwide. BirdLife is working to promote models of development that recognise the limits of the biosphere and the full value of ecosystems and the goods and services they provide.

To help achieve this, BirdLife is working to ensure that:
- Economic calculations of governments, business and international bodies take proper account of biodiversity and ecosystem services (page 14).
- Biodiversity is mainstreamed into policy and practice (page 15).
- Biodiversity conservation and environmental services are integrated into strategies for sustainable livelihoods and poverty reduction (page 15).
- International aid supports the management and protection of natural ecosystems, and recognises their economic and cultural value (page 15).
- Local knowledge and community engagement are applied to build the resilience of natural and societal systems, and deliver locally appropriate solutions to adapting to the challenges of climate change (page 16).
- The global economic system fits within the Earth’s capacity for absorption of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases (page 16).
- Environmental management policies support functioning, healthy ecosystems for the benefit of people and biodiversity (page 17).
- Biodiversity conservation and ecosystem health are integrated with wider concerns about human wellbeing, human health, and quality of life (page 18).
- Schools provide education on the environment and sustainable development (page 18).
INTRODUCTION

“There can be no peace without equitable development; and there can be no development without sustainable management of the environment in a democratic and peaceful space”

Nobel Peace Laureate Wangari Maathai

Biodiversity—the variety of life on Earth, embodied in the multiplicity of ecosystems and species, their processes, interactions and genetic variation—is fundamental to every aspect of human life and development. It provides us with food and fuel, shelter, clothing and livelihoods, regulates our climate and water flows, and supports processes such as nutrient cycling and soil formation to maintain the productivity of lands, seas and wetlands. Enjoyment of the natural world in all its diversity also adds greatly to our physical and mental health, and our cultural and spiritual wellbeing.

But the world is rapidly losing its biodiversity. This has been brought about by humankind’s conversion and consumption of the world’s resources, especially in the last 150 years. Mainstream economic thinking still treats these resources as limitless, as if the world were an inexhaustible source of raw materials, and a bottomless sink for our waste.

We are using up the Earth’s resources faster than they can be replenished; nearly two-thirds of ecosystem services are in decline worldwide, and current and projected species extinction rates are estimated to be 1,000 to 10,000 times the natural background rate. (www.birdlife.org/action/science/sowb/state/12)

Development has brought benefits for many, through improved health, nutrition, comfort and quality of life. But progress has been distributed unequally, and has brought unprecedented environmental change. Opportunities for sustainable livelihoods and the security and resilience provided by healthy, biodiverse ecosystems are disappearing, as forests and wetlands are converted for the production of globally tradable commodities. Irreversible losses of biodiversity are traded for short-term gains in income, only a fraction of which may trickle down to their intended recipients.

Tackling adverse environmental trends will require massive changes in our patterns of consumption, and our understanding of what constitutes human well-being. New perspectives on the global economy must inform our models of development, such as that provided by The economics of ecosystems and biodiversity (TEEB), a joint initiative by governments, economists and international institutions which recognises that biodiversity is “the basis for life and prosperity for the whole of mankind”.

To be successful, these models must also add to the rights and freedoms of the most vulnerable communities, providing opportunities to flourish that respect the diversity of human cultures, within ecological limits.
BirdLife International is a global Partnership of conservation organisations that strives to conserve birds, their habitats and global biodiversity, working with people towards sustainability in the use of natural resources.

BirdLife is represented at a national level in over 110 countries. BirdLife Partners are often the leading conservation Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) in their countries, providing data and advice to their governments to support decision-making on issues such as biodiversity conservation, protected area planning and management, and climate change adaptation.

More than 60 Partners are in low-income countries, where conservation must operate within a sociopolitical climate in which poverty reduction and meeting basic needs are the highest priorities.

The BirdLife Partnership has identified more than 10,000 Important Bird Areas (IBAs) around the world. These are key sites for the conservation of birds and other biodiversity, and are often small enough to be conserved in their entirety. Many of our conservation and development projects happen at local level, at thousands of these IBAs, using a combination of globally recognised science and best practice, and local knowledge. In addition to their members and other supporters, many national Partners have a growing network of community-based organisations (Local Conservation Groups) which look after their local IBAs.

We also collaborate with other civil society and grassroots organisations in projects that link biodiversity conservation with development.

At regional and global level, we engage with international conventions, multinational companies and international finance mechanisms.

By linking our local level actions to our global strategy and programme, the BirdLife Partnership makes a substantial, measurable and recognised contribution to achieving national, regional and global development targets such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), particularly MDG 7 (‘Ensure environmental sustainability’).

“Environmental sustainability is the foundation on which strategies for achieving all the other MDGs must be built, because environmental degradation is causally linked to problems of poverty, hunger, gender inequality and health.”

Investing in Development: A Practical Plan to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals
EMPOWERING CIVIL SOCIETY

Protecting the environment is a fundamental pillar of sustainable development. But just as vital is the involvement of civil society, and public access to information.

Environmental tools in EC development cooperation: BirdLife International, FERN, WWF

The transition to sustainability must be driven by social change. The scale and scope of the change needs to be supported by an empowered grassroots movement which fully understands our dependence on the services that nature provides. This movement will be made up of community-based organisations of many different kinds.

Since the late 1990s, BirdLife International has been nurturing and networking grassroots groups at key sites for biodiversity conservation (Important Bird Areas, IBAs).

Although they have different names in different parts of the world, collectively these organisations are known as Local Conservation Groups (LCGs).

LCGs build on local experience and enthusiasm. Membership is typically drawn from the communities surrounding the site, but may also include local authority representatives, business people and other stakeholders.

Over 80% of Fiji’s forests are owned by clans called mataqalis, for whom they are the main source of livelihood. But half Fiji’s forests have already been lost to agriculture and logging. On the Fijian island of Vanua Levu, in the Natewa Tunuloa IBA, several mataqalis have declined offers from timber companies, instead deciding to work with BirdLife to protect their forests. An LCG has been established, and the mataqalis have agreed to manage over 6,000 ha of land sustainably for ten years. BirdLife aims to strengthen the LCG to become a sustainable community-based organisation. (www.birdlife.org/action/science/sites/pacific_ibas/fiji/)

LCGs are very diverse, and there is no formal model or structure. Even within national networks, there can be marked differences between groups, according to each community’s traditional ways of making decisions, and managing and allocating natural resources.

Names often combine the dominant livelihood of the group with the site: for example, the Fishing and Agricultural Farmers Association at Shenge in Sierra Leone, the Arabuko-Sokoke Forest Guides Association in Kenya, the Carden Coalition for Responsible Planning in Canada, and the Curry Upland Farmers Cooperative in the Philippines.

Local Conservation Groups build on local experience and enthusiasm (Gola Forest, Sierra Leone)
BirdLife’s work with local groups also ensures that **conservation contributes to social justice, equity and respect for human rights**. LCG development often focuses on the situation of the most marginalised members of the communities, for example, by formalising land rights for indigenous people, and ensuring that women or members of low status groups are able to participate and be represented.

*In Cameroon, the LCG for the Ngovayang Forest has helped empower Bagyeli and Bakola hunter-gatherers by providing them with information on their legal rights. The Cameroon Biodiversity Conservation Society (BirdLife Partner) organised workshops to explain forest law and land tenure systems to them, and the importance of meeting citizenship requirements as a route to claiming their rights to harvest and market forest products. As a result, more than 350 Bagyeli and Bakola people now have national identity cards. ([www.birdlife.org/regional/africa/pdfs/19th_ebulletin_March_2009.pdf](http://www.birdlife.org/regional/africa/pdfs/19th_ebulletin_March_2009.pdf))*

While the diversity among LCGs is a strength, their value is enhanced by being part of national networks. By **developing strategies for effective local-to-local communication**, these networks enable knowledge and best practice to be shared with other groups, and local experience and understanding to inform the BirdLife Partner’s work at a national level.

*The Kijabe Environment Volunteers (KENVO) is an LCG working for the conservation of the Kikuyu Escarpment forest Important Bird Area (IBA) in Kenya. At the local level, KENVO has worked with a number of local community groups and the Forest Department to rehabilitate the degraded forest. KENVO has partnered with Nature Kenya (BirdLife Partner), the Kenya Forest Working Group and other Kenyan NGOs to advocate for better management of the forest, and played a key role in influencing the adoption of a more inclusive national Forest Act that empowers local communities to participate in forest management. ([www.birdlife.org/news/news/2008/11/kenvo_award](http://www.birdlife.org/news/news/2008/11/kenvo_award))*

The structure of the BirdLife Partnership enables the benefits of this experience to be shared across national boundaries and on different continents, and to influence BirdLife’s activities at regional and global levels. This strengthens BirdLife as a **global network positioned to understand and respond in locally appropriate and globally connected ways**.

*In 2006, staff from the Society for the Protection of Nature in Lebanon (SPNL, BirdLife Partner) visited Jordan as guests of the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature (RSCN, BirdLife in Jordan), to learn about local community initiatives to develop alternative livelihoods linked to the sustainable use of natural resources at the Dana and Azraq wildlife reserves.*

*In 2007, local representatives from Jordan, Syria and Yemen visited Lebanon to learn more about SPNL’s revival of the hima, a traditional, community-based approach to resource management and conservation (see case study, page 9).*
Through its grassroots work with communities, BirdLife is also helping them convey their concerns to powerful institutions and corporations.

The Lake Qarun Protected Area LCG, established by BirdLife Affiliate Nature Conservation Egypt, was able to end dumping of building waste at the Lake Qarun IBA. Group members took photographic evidence to the Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency (EEAA). The director ordered the dumping to stop, and bulldozers at work on a tourist development were quickly pulled back from the shoreline. The developer, one of Egypt’s largest and most powerful construction companies, also cancelled plans for a hunting lodge, and reserved an area of saltmarsh as a bird sanctuary. (http://www.birdlife.org/news/news/2009/09/lake_qarun)

BirdLife helps citizens and community-based organisations to engage effectively with local governments and municipalities, national politicians and businesses on planning and evaluation of proposed developments.

The Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds (BSPB, BirdLife Partner) worked with other NGOs and local people to oppose the routing of the Struma motorway through the Kresna Gorge, a hugely important biodiversity corridor along the Struma River. BSPB and its partner NGOs argued that the assessments of the impacts on biodiversity were inadequate, and hired a team of road engineers to redesign the Struma section, avoiding ecological hotspots.

The citizens of Kresna supported the NGOs. In the summer of 2007, following a series of meetings with the Government, an agreement was reached on the design of a new 16-km tunnel through the gorge, which avoided priority habitats and species. This was welcomed as a more open and democratic approach to decision-making that respected the views of civil society. (www.birdlife.org/eu/pdfs/growth_job_and_biodiversity_2008.pdf)

BirdLife works to integrate and promote the cultural and spiritual values of biodiversity as components of human welfare, and human responsibility. BirdLife’s biennial global celebration of birds and the natural world, the World Bird Festival, focuses on involving people who are beyond the usual reach of conservation organisations.

Paraguay’s celebration of the World Bird Festival began in the streets of Asuncion with dances, music and paintings by young Paraguayans. The old Central Train Station echoed to the sound of a Paraguayan harp playing the famous polka Guya´ Campana, and Paraguayan and international dances. Children enjoyed the moment, creating masks of owls, toucans and the Gua´a hovy (Hyacinth Macaw). (www.birdlife.org/action/awareness/world_bird_festival/wbf_2006/americas)
Writers, visual artists and musicians can help engage new audiences, and convey BirdLife’s conservation messages to them. Around the world, nationally and internationally known performers, painters, novelists and poets have lent us their work and their voices.

We also work with faith groups, finding common ground with their values and traditions.

Turkey’s Lake Burdur, an internationally important site for wintering and passage waterbirds, has been threatened in recent years by pollution, urban development and unsustainable agriculture. In response, Doğa Derneği (BirdLife in Turkey) worked with Burdur’s Provincial Mufti, and the Imam of the Ulu Mosque in the provincial centre, Bursa.

“Water is one of the countless blessings and a source of life for us, as well as for all of Earth’s creatures”, the Provincial Mufti said, in a sermon that reached more than 50,000 people in the mosques of towns and villages around the lake. “We should learn appropriate irrigation techniques, and farming practices in line with our soil characteristics, and implement them wisely.”

BirdLife Partners in the Middle East have been working to revive the Islamic tradition of the hima, a way of managing and conserving water, grazing lands and other natural resources. The hima system allows a mixture of strict protection and sustainable use, and one of its side effects has been the preservation of biodiversity. Historically himas were governed by tribal or religious leaders, but more recently governance has been transferred to municipalities and other democratically elected bodies at local level, ensuring equity and the fair use of resources.

When, in 2006, war struck the people of Lebanon, 120 displaced families fled to the Kfar Zabad IBA, which the local community with SPNL (BirdLife in Lebanon) support had established as a hima. Fears that the increased pressure on the fragile site would damage its biodiversity proved groundless. The families were accommodated in the surrounding villages, where their needs were met by a combination of local hospitality and international aid.

Lebanon’s Daily Star newspaper commented that Kfar Zabad had become an experiment “Illustrating how nature conservation strategies make for markedly more efficient responses to crisis management and humanitarian relief.” (www.biodiversityinfo.org/casestudy.php?r=response&id=206)

“Good conservation practice empowers local people and builds sustainable societies. Local people power good conservation practice”

Building Grassroots Support for Conservation: Lessons Learned from BirdLife’s Site Support Groups in Cambodia and Vietnam
OUR WORK WITH OTHER SECTORS

“We can no longer see the continued loss of and changes to biodiversity as an issue separate from the core concerns of society: to tackle poverty, to improve the health, prosperity and security of our populations, and to deal with climate change... Better decisions for biodiversity must be made at all levels and in all sectors, in particular the major economic sectors, and government has a key enabling role to play”

Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, Global Biodiversity Outlook 3.

The decisions and policies of businesses, governments, and the inter-governmental bodies that manage the global commons such as the high seas and the atmosphere, have huge implications for life on Earth.

Civil society (including NGOs) needs to work with other sectors, to seek ways of creating wealth and employment that protect and enhance the living resource-base on which all economic development depends.

International companies in particular are having an increasing impact on biodiversity as the world’s economy becomes more interconnected. Forward-looking businesses are becoming aware that their use of natural resources must be sustainable. But their over-riding emphasis on sustainable economic growth needs to be balanced with more attention to the other dimensions of sustainability, including socio-cultural and environmental values.

BirdLife is engaging with businesses, to work together towards achieving Net Positive Impact on biodiversity at their operations.

BirdLife is a member of a coalition of conservation organisations, businesses and international development banks, with support from the US Department of Energy, which developed the Integrated Biodiversity Assessment Tool (IBAT). This is a web-based tool that allows companies to integrate biodiversity considerations at the earliest stages of project planning, while alternative approaches or locations for business development are still economically viable. IBAT helps identify sites that may not be part of existing protected area networks, but are nevertheless of high importance for biodiversity, and also likely to possess significant social, economic or cultural value to local communities. (www.birdlife.org/news/news/2008/10/ibat_launch)

For most mining operations, a negative impact on biodiversity is unavoidable. BirdLife assists international mining group Rio Tinto in its attempts to mitigate these impacts through more effective design and planning, using reliable information on the biodiversity value of affected areas. Through the development of biodiversity performance measures for the group, BirdLife is helping Rio Tinto report on the net impact its operations are having. (www.birdlife.org/action/business/rio_tinto)
Changing the behaviour of consumers in favour of sustainability is just as important as greening business practices. Market-based mechanisms like eco-labelling can achieve both, by pointing consumers towards products which meet the highest environmental standards, and encouraging suppliers to provide them. **BirdLife supports market-based mechanisms, including eco-labelling, as policy instruments through which to help change market behaviour and encourage good environmental stewardship in the production of goods and services.**

The Mpingo Conservation Project, a Tanzanian NGO supported by the Conservation Leadership Programme (CLP), a partnership between BirdLife and other conservation NGOs, has helped two communities become Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified forest managers. The wood of the African Blackwood tree, known as Mpingo, is prized by local wood carvers, and manufacturers of woodwind instruments around the world. Although the tree is still relatively abundant in south-east Tanzania, illegal logging is widespread, and poor, forest-dependent communities receive little benefit. FSC certification will enable communities to earn upwards of $US 19.00 per log, compared to $US 0.08 they received before. ([www.birdlife.org/news/news/2009/06/clp_forest_certification](http://www.birdlife.org/news/news/2009/06/clp_forest_certification))

BirdLife also works with the Marine Stewardship Council, which certifies fish from fisheries that have taken steps to minimise damage to other biodiversity. Since 2004, BirdLife’s Global Seabird Programme has been involved with Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs), through which countries collaborate to manage fish stocks on the high seas. RFMOs have a duty to minimise ‘bycatch’ of non-target species, such as seabirds which become hooked when seizing the baits put out by longline fishing vessels.

Fishermen benefit in two ways from bycatch mitigation measures, firstly by preventing wastage of costly bait (up to 70% of baits were lost in one Norwegian study), and secondly from the better prices paid for biodiversity-friendly fish. In some fisheries, the cumulative economic gains over the year are considerable in relation to the modest cost of mitigation measures.

**BirdLife International’s Albatross Task Force (ATF) has been working closely with fishers and fisheries managers around the world to help develop, test and promote measures to prevent seabird bycatch. In 2008, thanks to the work of the ATF and the willingness of local fishermen, seabird deaths in South Africa’s longline tuna fishery were reduced by 85%. One hundred per cent of pelagic longline vessels in Chile have now adopted a suite of mitigation measures that are significantly reducing bycatch of albatrosses and petrels in the swordfish fleet. ([www.birdlife.org/news/news/2009/07/atf_callingcard](http://www.birdlife.org/news/news/2009/07/atf_callingcard))**

**Minimising seabird bycatch by longline fisheries has been a major success for the BirdLife Partnership**
Around the world, **BirdLife is a powerful voice advocating frameworks which support government and business in the transition to sustainability.** Recognising that climate change poses the most serious threat to people and global biodiversity, and that a move away from fossil fuels is needed urgently, BirdLife Partners have worked with national governments to ensure, for example, that windfarms are located where they will do least damage to birds and other wildlife. One Partner, the RSPB (BirdLife in the UK), has had a long-standing partnership with a major power company to provide RSPB Energy, which supplies 100% renewably-generated electricity to private households. ([www.rspbenergy.co.uk/](http://www.rspbenergy.co.uk/))

In the USA, BirdLife Partner, the National Audubon Society helped persuade the US Bureau of Land Management to change its leasing policies, ensuring that oil and gas drilling in the state of Wyoming no longer threatens areas of high biodiversity value. This 'core areas' approach provides greater predictability in land use planning, recognising the importance of wildlife and fragile landscapes, yet still encouraging energy independence and economic growth. ([www.birdlife.org/news/news/2010/01/sage_grouse](http://www.birdlife.org/news/news/2010/01/sage_grouse))

Among the first organisations to point out that the enthusiasm for first generation biofuels—effectively using crops to feed cars instead of people—was unfounded and dangerous, BirdLife took a strong stand against the European Commission's biofuel policy. BirdLife’s report, *Fuelling the ecological crisis – six examples of habitat destruction driven by biofuels*, showed how EU biofuels policies are contributing to the expansion of palm oil plantations in South-East Asia, one of the main factors in the destruction of forests in the region. The publication *Biofuels – handle with care* analyses the flaws of EU legislation on the issue. ([www.birdlife.org/eu/EU_policy/Biofuels/eu_biofuels.html](http://www.birdlife.org/eu/EU_policy/Biofuels/eu_biofuels.html))

**BirdLife and its Partners work to integrate biodiversity into the sectoral policies and practice of national governments.** Over the last decade, BirdLife Partners in Brazil, Paraguay, Indonesia, Palau, Kenya and Sierra Leone have taken an increasingly active role in developing national forest policy.

In Paraguay, BirdLife Partner Guyra Paraguay succeeded in replacing a Forest Bill drawn up largely in the interests of the Federation of Timber Producers with another which recognises the rights of all stakeholders—including the Federation of Timber Producers. The government has now asked Guyra Paraguay to monitor all land use change in the country, using satellite-based remote sensing in partnership with NASA. ([www.birdlife.org/news/features/2008/01/guyra_paraguay](http://www.birdlife.org/news/features/2008/01/guyra_paraguay))

Growing sugarcane for biofuel has lead to extensive deforestation in Brazil
In the European Union, BirdLife ensures that the site and species protection obligations of the Birds and Habitats Directives are respected. Believing that cooperation is the best approach, BirdLife works with developers and decision-makers to find solutions.

The Danube Delta Special Protection Area (SPA) in Romania is home to over 320 bird species. To date, conservation and wetland restoration projects have not addressed social and economic regeneration in this region. SOR (BirdLife Romania), in partnership with the Danube Delta Institute (DDI), Tulcea County Council and the RSPB (BirdLife in the UK), is aiming to restore up to 1,300 ha of degraded land at Stipoc Levee in the Delta, integrating conservation with tourism, local business development and employment opportunities. (www.birdlife.org/eu/pdfs/growth_job_and_biodiversity_2008.pdf)

BirdLife promotes concerns through international conservation conventions addressing the ‘global commons’, like the Conventions on Biological Diversity (CBD) and Migratory Species (CMS), Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), and Ramsar Convention on Wetlands.

BirdLife and its Partners have succeeded in persuading national governments to designate many wetland IBAs as Ramsar sites and supported community-based organisations in seeking designation for their own local wetlands.

Between 1979 and 1996, up to 90% of the mangroves at Kok Kham in the Inner Gulf of Thailand were converted to shrimp farms. But after some years of unsustainable production, the shrimp industry crashed, and shrimp farming businesses turned their attention elsewhere. Declining catches made many local fishermen understand the importance of mangroves as nurseries and spawning grounds for marine organisms. Without the protection of the mangroves, villages suffered regular flooding and erosion of farmland.

In response, local people began their own initiatives to protect and replant the mangroves, supported by the Bird Conservation Society of Thailand (BCST, BirdLife in Thailand). After years of consultations and meetings between BCST, the LCGs and stakeholders from many different backgrounds, local people sent a petition to Thailand’s Minister of Natural Resources and Environment, requesting that Khok Kham be designated a Ramsar Site, which they see as a defence against unsustainable development. Ramsar designation in Thailand requires communities to commit to safeguarding their local wetlands, so this action was a vital first step. (www.birdlife.org/news/news/2010/03/thai_ramsar)
LIVING WITHIN THE EARTH’S CAPACITY

“... it lies within the power of human societies to ease the strains we are putting on the nature services of the planet, while continuing to use them to bring better living standards to all. Achieving this, however, will require radical changes in the way nature is treated at every level of decision-making, and new ways of cooperation between government, business and civil society.”

The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, 2005

The Earth’s ecosystems have an astonishing capacity to supply us with renewable resources, and absorb and process the waste we create. But these resources have limits, and we are exceeding them. The UN’s Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MEA), published in 2005, documented how the growing human population and rising levels of consumption are depleting resources and damaging the ecological systems that provide the fundamentals of life, such as clean water, breathable air, productive soil and a stable climate.

BirdLife works with governments, with business and with international bodies to ensure that economic calculations take proper account of biodiversity and ecosystem services.

Globally, deforestation and forest degradation account for 15–20% of all human-induced carbon emissions, more than all the world’s transport. Through its Forests of Hope programme, BirdLife is working in tropical countries to pilot innovative management, financing and governance systems for forest conservation.

Forests of Hope aims to prevent deforestation and restore forest at up to 20 sites covering at least 5 million ha of tropical forest by 2015. The first site, Harapan in Sumatra, is to expand to more than 101,000 ha. Burung Indonesia (BirdLife Partner), BirdLife International and the RSPB (BirdLife in the UK) worked with the Indonesian government to develop an important change to forestry law. Previously, those holding management rights were obliged to extract the timber. Logging concessions are for 25 years, but the new category of ‘restoration concessions’ will last for 100 years. Burung Indonesia and the BirdLife coalition believe the new forestry law will enable many other restoration concessions to be approved.

(www.birdlife.org/forests)
Many developing countries have significant natural resources and ecosystems which deliver essential local and global services. Environmental mainstreaming (integrating environmental issues into development planning and programmes) is therefore vitally important.

**BirdLife is addressing some of the key drivers of biodiversity loss by advocating the mainstreaming of biodiversity into policy and practice.**

BirdLife Partner, the Nigerian Conservation Foundation (NCF), has been closely involved in ensuring that Nigeria’s second National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS-2) takes full account of biodiversity, natural resource management, climate change and related issues. As a major stakeholder, NCF will be consulted as the implementation of NEEDS-2 progresses. ([www.biodiversityinfo.org/casestudy.php?id=211](http://www.biodiversityinfo.org/casestudy.php?id=211))

For more than 20 years, BirdLife and its Partners have been working to ensure that biodiversity conservation and environmental services are integrated into strategies for sustainable livelihoods and poverty reduction.

In southern Bahia, Brazil, the cabruca system of cacao (cocoa) cultivation uses native Atlantic forest trees to provide shade. In the 1990s, crop disease and low international markets made this economically unviable, and the trees began to be cleared for pasture or ‘sun’ coffee. SAVE Brasil (BirdLife in Brazil) has been implementing a project to restore the cabruca system, and add value to cacao by using biodiversity-friendly methods. ([www.birdlife.org/news/news/2007/06/people_and_biodiversity.pdf](http://www.birdlife.org/news/news/2007/06/people_and_biodiversity.pdf))

To achieve the ‘eradication of poverty in the context of sustainable development’ (as stated in the 2005 European Union Consensus on Development), international aid must contribute to the management and protection of natural ecosystems. **BirdLife and its Partners work to ensure that international aid supports the management and protection of natural ecosystems, and recognises their economic and cultural value.**

The European Union is the world’s largest aid donor. In 2009, working with FERN and WWF, BirdLife analysed the effectiveness of the tools designed to integrate environmental concerns into development aid. We concluded that the EU had made progress in ‘greening’ development aid, but had a long way to go to achieve true sustainability. We then designed our advocacy programmes to ensure that the EU meets its sustainable development commitments. ([www.birdlife.org/news/news/2009/05/envi_tools](http://www.birdlife.org/news/news/2009/05/envi_tools))
Healthy, bio-diverse ecosystems play a vital role in adapting to climate change. **BirdLife is supporting the application of local knowledge and community engagement and action at Important Bird Areas, to build the resilience of natural and societal systems, delivering locally appropriate solutions to help communities, countries and economies adapt to the challenges of climate change.**

Three-quarters of Samoa’s indigenous population lives in low lying coastal areas, but monitoring suggests sea levels around Samoa are rising by 3.8 mm per year. *O le Si’osi’omaga Society Incorporated (BirdLife in Samoa)* is working with the Matafaa indigenous community to conserve and extend coastal mangroves. Experience has taught local people that mangroves can protect their land from cyclone- and tsunami-related flooding and erosion, which are predicted to increase in frequency and intensity with climate change. They believe this is a far better use of money from the UNFCCC Clean Development Mechanism than any expensive seawall. Unlike carbon-intensive concrete sea defences, the mangroves also serve as a nursery for fish and shellfish, and provide other food, fuel and timber, and medicinal herbs. ([www.birdlife.org/climate_change/pdfs/Ecosystemsandadaption.pdf](http://www.birdlife.org/climate_change/pdfs/Ecosystemsandadaption.pdf))

**BirdLife promotes a global economic system which fits within the Earth’s capacity for absorption of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases**, advocating climate change mitigation measures such as Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation in developing countries (REDD), which also conserve biodiversity, respect access and resource use rights, and deliver social and development benefits to local people.

The *RSPB (BirdLife in the UK)* orchestrated a campaign against government plans to wave through a new generation of coal-fired power stations without carbon capture and storage technology. The *RSPB* believes that cumulatively, its actions added to the pressure on E.ON, the developer of a proposed new coal-fired power plant at Kingsnorth in Kent. In October 2009, E.ON postponed its planned development of Kingsnorth indefinitely.
BirdLife promotes environmental management policies which support functioning, healthy freshwater, marine and forest ecosystems for the benefit of people and biodiversity.

Freshwater ecosystems are vital to life. But wetlands are being lost and degraded faster than any other ecosystem, and up to 20% of freshwater use globally is unsustainable. The BirdLife Partnership has worked on a range of water issues worldwide, from wetland conservation and livelihood promotion in developing countries, to demand management and implementation of the EU’s Water Framework Directive in Europe.

BirdLife’s wetland conservation work in Madagascar began in 2002. Wetlands have long been important to Malagasy people for fishing, hunting and agriculture. But in recent decades wetland use has become unsustainable.

Under Malagasy law, local people can form associations and acquire the rights to manage natural resources sustainably. Working with communities, local and national government, BirdLife and Asity Madagascar (Madagascar’s BirdLife Affiliate) helped establish these associations.

Management agreements that integrate scientifically-based and traditional resource management and protection systems are now in place at two important wetland sites, the Mahavavy-Kinkony and Mangoky-Ihotry complexes. Each site is managed by its own ‘umbrella’ body, including representatives from the local associations, Government, traditional leaders and businesses, with Asity Madagascar acting as facilitator and technical supporter. (www.birdlife.org/action/ground/madagascar)
The European Union too has its share of money-poor but biodiversity-rich countries, and Europe’s farmers and foresters, like communities in developing countries, are entitled to be compensated for the ecosystem services they provide, and the economic opportunities they forgo. BirdLife’s European Division works to ensure that these costs and their benefits are recognised, and integrated into the appropriate EU funding instruments, such as the Rural Development Fund.

Riet Vell, a company promoted and owned by SEO/BirdLife (BirdLife in Spain) to produce and trade organic food from wildlife-friendly farming in Spain’s Important Bird Areas, began as the beneficiary of a European Union LIFE project to grow sustainable rice in the vulnerable wetlands of the Ebro Delta in Catalonia. Because of the sensitive nature of the ecosystem and its biodiversity, normal cultivation methods involving pesticides could not be used.

Riet Vell was formed as a cooperative with 200 partners, and bought 54 ha of wetland, 42 of which have been dedicated to rice cultivation, and the other 12 to wetland restoration. The cooperative has produced good harvests of rice, while numbers of wetland birds have increased. In October 2009, the rice-growing project was recognised with an ‘Innovation in Action’ award by the Spanish Biodiversity Foundation. Following the success of its rice brand, Riet Vell began producing organic pasta from wheat grown in the fragile dry steppes of the Ebro Valley. (ec.europa.eu/environment/life/news/newsarchive2009/december)

We must also recognise that in addition to the quantifiable material benefits we derive from it, biodiversity is of intrinsic value and should be maintained for its own sake. This too has its human benefits. Awareness that the world’s great ecosystems are in good health contributes to the mental wellbeing of people who will never visit the Amazon rainforests or see a whale, while news of biodiversity loss, however remote, can add to our sense of alienation and powerlessness. BirdLife promotes the integration of biodiversity conservation and ecosystem health with wider concerns about human wellbeing, human health, and quality of life.

Perhaps the greatest potential for making the profound social and economic changes which will enable us to live secure and fulfilling lives within the Earth’s limits lies in the education of the next generation of politicians, businesspeople, farmers and conservationists. BirdLife supports education on the environment and sustainable development in schools, as a foundation for knowledgeable citizens able to make informed decisions.

Linking African children to the global conservation community involves BirdLife organisations in 17 African countries. The project will link almost 400,000 members of African Wildlife Clubs with each other, and with the rest of the world, via a regional electronic network which is giving many of them access to information and communications technology for the first time. By creating an awareness at an early age of links between environmental sustainability and improved quality of life, this project is contributing to MDG 7 (to ensure environmental sustainability) as well as MDG 2 (to achieve universal primary education by 2015). (www.birdlife.org/news/news/2009/09/ghana_wca_workshop)
A number of BirdLife’s income-generating projects have provided communities with the means to pay their children’s transport fares and school fees for the first time. BirdLife has also intervened more directly to make sure children have a school to go to.

Since 2007, BirdLife has been working with the Société Audubon Haïti (SAH) to develop sustainable livelihoods in the southern buffer zone of the Macaya National Park. Severe poverty in these remote communities has resulted in unsustainable use of natural resources.

The school at Formon, the main settlement, ran out of funding and was closed in 2000. This was the only school within six hours’ walk, and left the majority of the community’s children, particularly girls, without the benefit of a formal education.

SAH worked with local NGO Fondation Macaya and the community to renovate the school, furnish and staff it with eight teachers. The children of Formon went back to school in October 2009. BirdLife International and its Canadian co-Partner Nature Canada are now working with SAH and others to provide additional accommodation for children displaced by the earthquake of January 2010.

As part of a broader conservation and development initiative, the reopening of Formon school has had a huge, positive impact on parents as well as children. The tell-tale smoke from charcoal production and forest clearance is no longer seen around Formon, and a notable recovery in the natural vegetation is already visible. (www.birdlife.org/news/news/2010/02/haiti_school)

“Current trends are bringing us closer to a number of potential tipping points that would catastrophically reduce the capacity of ecosystems to provide these essential services. The poor, who tend to be most immediately dependent on them, would suffer first and most severely. At stake are the principal objectives outlined in the Millennium Development Goals: food security, poverty eradication and a healthier population”

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon
CONSERVATION IMPACT

The work featured here is an integral part of the BirdLife Partnership’s mission to conserve birds and other biodiversity. Our projects often focus on important Bird Areas (IBAs)—sites which we have identified as especially rich in biodiversity.

Natewa/Tunuloa Peninsula IBA, Vanua Levu, Fiji, contains most of the remaining old growth forest on the Peninsula. It is home to bird species and subspecies endemic to Vanua Levu, and to many other Fijian endemic species. The Local Conservation Group (LCG) is creating a community protected area of over 6,000 ha.

The Ngovayang Massif Forest IBA holds 156 of Cameroon’s 215 Guinea-Congo forest biome bird species including globally threatened Grey-necked Picathartes, *Picathartes oreas*. It is also home to globally threatened Chimpanzee *Pan troglodyte*, Giant Pangolin *Manis gigantea* and Goliath Frog *Conraua goliath*, the world’s largest frog species.

The Kikuyu Escarpment forest IBA has a rich avifauna, characteristic of the central Kenyan highlands. A survey by BirdLife Partner Nature Kenya found a notable regeneration of the forest, much of it thanks to the work of the KENVO LCG.

Egypt’s Lake Qarun Protected Area IBA holds large numbers of waterfowl in winter. At least ten species of waterbird are known to breed there. The LCG has been credited with changing local attitudes to birds: fisherman at the lake were previously suspected of poisoning 3,000 fledgling Slender-billed Gulls *Larus genei*.

The Kresna Gorge IBA, Bulgaria, is important for its assemblage of Mediterranean-restricted bird species. The whole IBA is covered by various levels of protection, with regulated grazing and forestry allowed in some parts.

Turkey’s Lake Burdur IBA is very important for waterbirds, and is the single most important wintering site for the Endangered White-headed Duck *Oxyura leucocephala*, with over two-thirds of the world’s population. Most of the IBA is a Permanent Wildlife Reserve, and a Ramsar site.

The Kfar Zabad IBA is a small marshland in Lebanon’s Bekaa Valley, on the main migration route for African–Eurasian waterbirds through the Near East. When SPNL started work, the wetland was under pressure from drainage, uncontrolled hunting, grazing and dumping, and overuse of agrochemicals. Following the establishing of the LCG and a local management committee, the key threats have been addressed.

The Mpingo Conservation Project is working along with the District Forestry Office in Kilwa, south-eastern Tanzania, close to the Kilwa District Coastal Forests IBA. Important bird species in this area include Southern Banded Snake-eagle *Circaetus fasciolatus* and Plain-backed Sunbird *Anthreptes reichenowi*. The project is helping to develop Participatory Forest Management (PFM), which includes setting aside forest as Village Land Forest Reserves.

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The new Bureau of Land Management rules, developed with the advice of the National Audubon Society (BirdLife Partner in the USA), limit energy development in the 20% of Wyoming land designated as core areas for the Near Threatened Greater Sage-grouse Centrocercus urophasianus.

The Danube Delta IBA is part of one of the world’s largest wetlands, and home to over 320 bird species. The Danube Delta Administration, supported by SOR (BirdLife in Romania), has repeatedly tried to harmonise the laws governing the Delta with European bird and habitat legislation.

Less than 1,600 ha of mangroves remain in the Inner Gulf of Thailand IBA, replaced by at least 10,600 ha of salt pans and up to 80,000 ha of shrimp ponds, many of them abandoned. This IBA is one of the most important sites for migratory waterbirds in mainland South-east Asia. Conservation actions aimed at controlling over-exploitation of natural resources and promoting compatible forms of land use are required across the whole site.

In addition to at least 235 bird species, six of them globally threatened, Harapan forest in Sumatra is home to up to 20 Sumatran Tigers, of which only 100–300 remain in the wild, and many other globally threatened mammal species.

In a relatively small area of forest, Serra das Lontras IBA, Bahia, Brazil, supports populations of 11 globally threatened bird species. Four species are new to science, and a fifth, described several years ago, represents a new genus and is dependent on the canopy trees within the caRBucuas.

Species that will benefit from the Matafaa Indigenous village community’s restoration of mangroves at their IBA include Pacific Black Duck Anas superciliosa, Pacific Reef-egret Egretta sacra, Flat-billed Kingfisher, Todiramphus recurvirostris, Cardinal Myzomela Myzomela cardinalis and Wattled Honeyeater Foulehario carunculatus.

The Mahavavy-Kinkony wetlands IBA covers around 250,000 ha of wetlands, forests, savannas and caves in north-west Madagascar. It holds all the wetland bird species found in Western Madagascar, many of them endemic, including the Critically Endangered Madagascar Fish-eagle Haliaeetus vociferoides and Endangered Sakalava Rail Amaurornis olivieri and Madagascar Teal Anas bernieri.

Pollution with agrochemicals from ‘conventional’ rice production is just one of many threats to Spain’s Ebro Delta IBA, one of the most important sites in the Mediterranean for breeding, passage and wintering waterbirds.

Haiti’s Macaya National Park—within the Massif de la Hotte Key Biodiversity Area—is home to one of the few known breeding colonies of the Endangered Black-capped Petrel Pterodroma hastata, and a range of other globally threatened and restricted-range birds, amphibians, reptiles and mammals.

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