



Media release

BirdLife International celebrates the World Wetlands Day: an answer to climate change

Brussels, 02 February 2010 - Today BirdLife International [1] celebrates the 13th World Wetlands Day. It's theme this year is "Caring for wetlands: an answer to climate change", highlighting the bonds between wetlands, biodiversity and climate change.

"Caring for wetlands is part of the solution to climate change", said Melanie Heath – Senior Advisor on Climate Change at BirdLife. "If we manage them well, wetland ecosystems and their biodiversity have a vital role to play in mitigating against, and adapting to, climate change".

Climate change is also a threat to wetland biodiversity adding to the unprecedented rates of extinction of species and habitats.

There is plenty of evidence that modern living is causing unparalleled losses of species at the global level, and that climate change is making the situation much worse.

"Fortunately, in the EU many wetlands are protected as part of the Natura 2000 network where tangible improvements can already be observed. Whether on site or in the wider catchment area, unsustainable human activities still threaten wetland's vulnerable ecosystems. Europe has yet to solve its problems with excessive water use, agriculture run off, urbanisation and ill conceived infrastructure projects", commented Boris Barov, European Conservation Manager at the BirdLife International European Division.

"BirdLife International, official Partner of the International Year of Biodiversity, urges the EU to take stock of the failure of the 2010 target of halting biodiversity decline and finally start taking decisive and effective action to reverse the collapse of the web of life on which we all depend. It also spotlights the need for the EU to show leadership by setting itself real and binding future targets ahead of next conference of the Convention of

Biological Diversity in Nagoya, Japan, this October”, added Ariel Brunner, Head of EU Policy at BirdLife International European Division. [3]

The importance of wetlands for people, biodiversity and climate change adaptation is crucial to BirdLife International and its Partnership.

Many BirdLife Partners on the African-Eurasian Flyway are participating to the Wings over Wetland Project, [4] which is the largest international wetland and waterbird conservation initiative ever to take place in the region.

“The WOW is a partnership among international conservation organizations and national governments, which aims to support healthy populations migratory waterbirds”, continued Mr Barov. “This will be achieved by conserving the critical wetlands that these birds require to complete their annual migrations across Africa and Eurasia, by improving international cooperation and by building local professional capacity”

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For more information, please contact:

Herlinde Herpoel, Head of European Communication & Marketing at BirdLife International -

+32 (0)494 542 844, herlinde.herpoel@birdlife.org

Notes for the editor

[1] BirdLife International is a global Partnership of nature conservation organisations working in more than 100 countries and territories. BirdLife is the leading authority on the status of birds, their habitats and the problems affecting them, and is working on a wide range of environmental issues.

For more information about the work of the BirdLife European Division:

<http://europe.birdlife.org>

[2] The World Wetlands Day marks the date of the signing of the Convention on Wetlands on 2 February 1971, in the Iranian city of Ramsar on the shores of the Caspian Sea. WWD was celebrated for the first time in 1997 and made an encouraging beginning. Each year, government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and groups of citizens at all levels of the community have taken advantage of the opportunity to undertake actions aimed at raising public awareness of wetland values and benefits in general and the Ramsar Convention in particular. From 1997 to 2009, the Convention’s Web site has posted reports from more than 98 countries of WWD activities of all sizes and

shapes, from lectures and seminars, nature walks, children's art contests, sampan races, and community clean-up days, to radio and television interviews and letters to newspapers, to the launch of new wetland policies, new Ramsar sites, and new programmes at the national level.

http://www.ramsar.org/cda/ramsar/display/main/main.jsp?zn=ramsar&cp=1-63-78%5E24106_4000_0__

[3] The 10th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP 10) and the 5th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties Serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol (COP-MOP 5) will be held in Nagoya, Aichi, from 11 to 29 October 2010. More information at <http://www.cop10.jp/aichi-nagoya/english/cop/cop.html>

[4] The Wings Over Wetlands' project is a joint effort led by Wetlands International in partnership with BirdLife International, UNEP-GEF, the United Nations Office for Project Services, and will operate in close coordination with the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat, the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and a wide range of local partners along the African-Eurasian Flyways. The project is supported by the UNEP Global Environment Facility, the German government, UNEP/AEWA Secretariat and several other donors.