

Migratory Birds, Flyways and Saline Lakes

The International Society for Salt Lake Research (ISSLR), is an organisation devoted to research, management and conservation of salt lakes worldwide, that holds triennial conferences with research on salt lakes as a central theme. In 2011 the conference took place at Miramar, on the shores of Laguna Mar Chiquita (Cordoba, Argentina), between the 9th and 14th of May. The meeting provided an opportunity for scientists, environmentalists and managers involved with research and management of saline ecosystems in the world, to share their experiences, interests and projects. Three years ago in 2008, this conference was held at Salt Lake City in Utah, at a time when BirdLife was developing a migratory birds and flyways initiative with Rio Tinto Kennecott Copper, a company with long-standing interests in shorebirds at the Great Salt Lake. Since that time a flyways initiative has now been established that addresses migratory bird conservation along the flyway, with Laguna Mar Chiquita a key IBA at the southern end. This year's conference was a good opportunity to profile the importance of saline lakes as key sites for migratory shorebirds, and to indicate how BirdLife Partners are responding to that challenge. The symposium was organized by PROMAR, a research and development program of the National University of Cordoba, Argentina. In this context, Aves Argentinas/ BirdLife International proposed to the organizers to develop a special flyways session with the following objectives:

- Sharing and learning knowledge regarding conservation efforts for migratory birds and resident species in saline lakes located along migratory flyways in the Americas.
- Describe potential and known connections between northern and southern American Important Bird Areas (IBAs) critical for migratory bird populations within the Americas.
- Establish cooperative relations and frameworks to achieve links within and between local communities associated with conservation efforts at saline lakes that are critical for such migratory species.

Coordinators of local and national flyway initiatives from the United States, Argentina, Chile and Paraguay contributed, in particular the Linking Communities programme and relevant BirdLife Partners. Also results of studies conducted by the University of Cordoba in Mar Chiquita, and the regional efforts undertaken by the High Andean Flamingo Conservation Group (GCFA), were presented. The special flyways session was led by Jonathan Stacey, manager of the Rio Tinto - BirdLife Global Programme, and Itala Yepez, Conservation Projects Officer of the Americas Secretariat of BirdLife International. It was supported by Aves Argentinas and the Rio Tinto ? BirdLife programme in conjunction with PROMAR, the conference organizers. There was a high level of participation and various issues of common interest to all, were discussed. Without a doubt, this event helped create awareness regarding the importance of cooperative work between people and organizations from different countries

and regions that are striving to achieve the coordinated conservation of migratory birds and their habitats in the Western hemisphere.