

Sustainable birdwatching tourism is promoted at Birdfair

Title

Birdwatching tourism is growing. Nowhere is this more obvious than amongst the crowds in the huge marquees of "biggest wildlife event of the year", the British Birdwatching Fair, or Birdfair, which was held this year at Rutland Water Friday 17th ? Sunday 19th August.

Impacts and potential of sustainable birdwatching tourism learnt at Birdfair

Ornithological tourism is increasingly being included in models of sustainable development in areas of high biodiversity importance, because it can provide direct economic contributions to, and raise awareness about, important bird areas. However, with growing numbers of people visiting environmentally sensitive areas, it also has the possibility of detrimentally affecting the very birds and ecosystems people travel to see. With over 22,000 people descending on Rutland Water for the world's biggest fair relating to bird and wildlife conservation, it is possible to imagine the detrimental impacts this industry could have on important bird reserves worldwide- that is, unless it is managed sustainably. This is why the International Project on Sustainable Tourism (IPOT) was created and is being used as a tool for conservation.

Over 1,400 professionals registered for the training tool in the first two years

Birdfair provided an ideal position for the Portuguese Society for the Study of Birds (SPEA) and the Hellenic Ornithological Society (HOS) to promote the project, with many of the main birdwatching tourism companies all under one roof- or tent. Piloted in Spain and Portugal with the *iberaves*, this IPOT project was expanded this year into the Mediterranean basin under the new name *Mediteraves* and has the potential to be replicated in protected areas all over Europe. The successful project produces well-documented training modules that are designed for professionals working in the bird tourism sector (hoteliers, transport professionals, tour companies, guides etc), and raises awareness of sustainable tourism. Birdwatching professionals in attendance were able to download free training modules, which are available in several languages.

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<http://www.birdlife.org/community/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/shaun-2012-10-25-at-16-48-45-300x300.jpg>



IPOP brochures focus on responsible and sustainable birdwatching tourism

Photo: Martin Fowle

IPOP consists of partners from SEO/BirdLife (Spain), SPEA (BirdLife in Portugal), BirdLife Cyprus, HOS (BirdLife in Greece) and the BirdLife International Secretariat, and there have been two successful meetings so far. A free app for iPhones has also been created as part of the project, which details Iberian Important Bird Areas. *The project is supported by the*

Leonardo da Vinci Agency, part of the European Lifelong Learning Programme.

