

Community Spirit

Alone we are all a single voice. But by working with others we achieve so much more. We get heard. And so it is with BirdLife - the world's biggest Partnership of conservation organisations. Our news in May highlighted how a community spirit enables us to be far greater than just the sum of our parts. We kicked the month off by launching 'The Americas IBA Directory'. The landmark publication brought together thousands of dedicated supporters representing a huge network of 20 national NGOs in the Americas and at least 150 other collaborating organisations. A great achievement and a formidable tool to help governments, the private sector, investment banks and donor organisations to direct conservation funding towards clearly defined priorities ([A cartography of hope for biodiversity in the Americas](#)). Sadly many of the IBAs in the directory 'as around the world' have no formal protection and face a number of threats. As if to illustrate the point, as the directory launch was happening, 25 IBAs in the Gulf of Mexico were being threatened by a huge oil spill. For birds, the timing could not be worse, and already over 300 seabirds have been found dead along the US Gulf Coast. We've been keeping a close eye on the spill, and reporting the latest from Audubon (BirdLife Partner in the US) experts on the ground ([read the latest here](#)). Last month we also announced the 2010 IUCN Red List update for birds. Like the America's IBA Directory, producing the annual update is the result of a massive effort by BirdLife, our Partners and a community of ornithologists around the world providing information on key species ([Wetland aliens cause bird extinction](#)). Sadly the news was not good; we declared a species of waterbird extinct. Restricted to a tiny area of east Madagascar, the Alaotra Grebe declined rapidly after carnivorous fish were introduced to the lakes in which it lived. Using our [new BirdLife Community website](#), we posed the question 'Do you care?' The response was enormous, thanks to everyone who responded ([see the comments](#)). Collecting data on Globally Threatened bird species is not an easy task. Sometime it can be dangerous as Omar Fadil's search for the Critically Endangered Sociable Lapwing in Iraq told us. In order to visit the area where GPS co-ordinates of the birds were located, Omar has to convince a group of 15 Iraqi army bodyguards to join his quest ([read Omar's blog here](#)). BirdLife's Middle East advisor Richard Porter is now in the field with Nature Iraq (BirdLife Partner) and has also published a blog about his work. Working in 38 degrees, clambering on rocky slopes, through wooded mountain slopes, atop high crags and along river valleys, his post really describes what it's like working in this magnificent country ([Walking with Nature Iraq by Richard Porter](#)). So from a huge network working together to identify 2,345 IBAs in the Americas, to just ten men and one woman shouldering binoculars, telescopes and cameras right now in Iraq, BirdLife is working together across the globe to conserve the natural world. After all, it's probably the biggest community we have?