

State of the World's Waterbirds: in trouble in Asia, recovering in the West?

The rate of decline of waterbird populations has slightly decreased over the last three decades. However, 47% of the waterbird populations are still declining and only 16% are increasing. The status of waterbirds is improving mainly in North America and Europe, while it is least favourable in Asia. Especially long distance migrants appear to be vulnerable. These are the key findings of the 'State of the World's Waterbirds 2010' report recently launched by Wetlands International. The new publication analyses the changes in the status of waterbird populations between 1976 and 2005 using the data collected for the four editions of Waterbird Population Estimates published since 1994. The report shows how the status of waterbird populations is improving in regions where strong conservation legislation is implemented, such as North America and Europe. However, the rate of decline of waterbird populations is increasing in all other regions without such instruments. The situation is especially alarming in Asia where 62% of waterbird populations are decreasing or even extinct. "The combination of rapid economic growth and weak conservation efforts appears to be lethal", said Ali Stattersfield, BirdLife's Head of Science. "Waterbird populations are exposed to a wide range of threats, such as agricultural intensification, leading to the loss and degradation of marshes and lakes, as well as unsustainable hunting and the impacts of climate change". The status of long-distance migrant waterbirds is generally worse than of those remaining in regions with strong conservation measures. This highlights the importance of coordinated conservation measures across entire flyways from the breeding to the non-breeding grounds. "It is not surprising that the rate of decline of the long distant migrant sandpipers, snipes and curlews has accelerated most rapidly", said Prof Nick Davidson - Deputy Secretary General of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands. "Now, 70% of their populations are decreasing. Halting destruction of their migratory staging areas is vital". On the other hand, the improving status of many crane species demonstrates that targeted conservation actions for the protection of key sites can produce positive results. "We feel we have to put more effort into the conservation of waterbirds in this region", added Mr Daizaburo Kuroda - Senior Councillor to the Japanese Minister of the Environment that supported the publication. "The decline of waterbird populations in developing countries is an indication of the environmental problems in these parts of the world. The world community of governments that is gathering at the UN Conference in Japan should take action to reverse this trend", stated Dr Taej Mundkur - Wetlands International's Flyway Programme Manager. The 'State of the World's Waterbirds 2010' report follows BirdLife's global model for the 'State of the World's Birds'. BirdLife's 'State of the World's Birds' report and website provides a comprehensive overview of current and emerging conservation issues. Presented in a clear and exciting way, it is a synthesis of

the work and knowledge of the BirdLife Partnership, as well as leading researchers and conservationists from around the globe. Through a searchable database of more than 230 case studies, it examines why birds and biodiversity are important, what we know about the changing state of the world's birds, why birds are declining and what can be done to improve their status.

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