BirdLife World Congress, the most energising and inspiring event in the conservation calendar, opens in Ottawa

Title
Conservationists, politicians and business people from more than 120 countries will meet in Ottawa, Canada on June 19th, for the World Congress of the largest and fastest growing global Partnership of national conservation organisations. BirdLife International is the world's largest nature conservation Partnership, **121 BirdLife Partners worldwide** – one per country – and growing with **over 13 million members and supporters, 7000 local conservation groups and 7400 staff**.

The 2013 BirdLife International World Congress marks two major anniversaries: the 90th anniversary of the organisation from which BirdLife evolved (making it the oldest truly international conservation organisation), and the 20th anniversary of the BirdLife Partnership. Celebrations will take place in the presence of BirdLife's Honorary President, HRH Princess Takamado of Japan, and Canadian authors Margaret Atwood and Graeme Gibson. Other guests, and participants in sessions and workshops, include senior figures from the worlds of business as well as conservation, among them former United States Secretary of the Treasury, Hank Paulson, Director General of IUCN, Julia Marton-Lefèvre, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity Braulio Ferreira de Souza Dias and representatives of major donors to BirdLife's work. Hosted this year by BirdLife's two Canadian co-Partners, Bird Studies Canada and Nature Canada, BirdLife's World Congress is a five-yearly event which brings together national and local conservation leaders, and their counterparts in other sectors, to share innovative approaches to the global challenges of biodiversity loss and environmental degradation.

The World Congress will see the launch of BirdLife's 2020 Strategy, which sets the Partnership's objectives for saving species, conserving sites and habitats, encouraging ecological sustainability and empowering people. The BirdLife Strategy is translated into action through nine global programmes. Among new programmes introduced at this World Congress will be Local Empowerment, which addresses the linked issues of poverty alleviation and sustainable development through nature conservation, and the Invasive Alien Species Programme, which is already improving the health of ecosystems and the livelihoods

of islanders in the Pacific by eradicating rodents and other destructive introduced species. The Partnership will report on progress made in older programmes. For example, Forests of Hope is tackling deforestation at 22 sites covering 5.5 million ha in the tropics. Under the Preventing Extinctions Programme, Species Guardians have been appointed to take action for 59 Critically Endangered and 11 Endangered species, and in total 537 threatened bird species are benefitting from the work of the BirdLife Partnership.

The third edition of *State of the World's Birds* will be published. Subtitled *Indicators for our changing world*, this fact-packed and hard-hitting booklet explains that the status of the world's birds -and the habitability of our planet -is in rapid decline. But there is good news: conservation demonstrably works, and *State of the World's Birds* puts a figure to the annual cost of protecting all nature (surprisingly low), and shows where and how that money should be spent. The programme includes 17 workshops open to external audiences, including "Business for biodiversity - working together", with contributions from BirdLife's strategic business partners, Rio Tinto, CEMEX and HeidelbergCement. "This gathering of our Partnership brings together the people who make conservation happen, not just for nature but for the human communities that depend on it. The atmosphere will be energising, challenging and inspiring", said outgoing BirdLife International Chairman Peter Schei. Follow all the news via twitter