CBD Day: Convention on Biological Diversity or Clean Bathing and Drinking?

Title
May 22 is the International Day of Biological Diversity, which celebrates the day the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) was adopted at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992. This year the CBD has chosen the theme Water and Biodiversity, to coincide with the United Nations designation of 2013 as the International Year of Water Cooperation.

Every living organism depends on water, but the wetlands and other water ecosystems that provide clean water and prevent flooding, erosion and pollution depend on biodiversity if they are to continue to function.

No fewer than 780 million people lack access to clean water. The United Nations? Millennium Goal 7 (Ensure environmental sustainability) includes the target of halving that number by 2015.

Healthy ecosystems are known to be the most efficient and least costly providers of water of sufficient quality and quantity. But until recently, the contribution made by protected areas and their biodiversity had not been quantified. BirdLife Partner Bird Conservation Nepal has undertaken a project to assess and monitor ecosystem services at all the country?s 27 Important Bird Areas (IBAs). All were found to contribute significantly to meeting water needs, locally, nationally and beyond Nepal?s borders, and for 90% of the IBAs, water provision was identified as the most important ecosystem service. The Shivapuri Nagarjun National Park IBA, for example, supplies nearly 60% of the annual freshwater requirements of 2.5 million people.

?Many of the world?s big cities have understood that protecting natural ecosystems to secure their water supplies makes economic sense?, says BCN?s Ishana Thapa. ?Rather than chopping down forests, keeping water catchments healthy saves billions of dollars by not having to pay for costly urban infrastructure to store water, clean it or bring it from elsewhere.?

BirdLife Partners are working on water-related issues around the world, from the lakes of the High Andes and the flood plains of the African Sahel to the polders of The Netherlands, empowering local communities to restore, manage and protect the ecosystems that provide water and other services.

BirdLife is active at the local, national, regional and international level, implementing projects on the ground, carrying out impact assessments, raising awareness, assisting in the development of national legislation, and contributing to international agreements like the CBD and the Ramsar Convention on wetlands. Data gathered by the BirdLife Partnership has helped identify wetlands of international importance, and contributed to national and international targets for biodiversity and ecosystem conservation.

?Today, BirdLife wants to celebrate the achievements in wetland conservation, and raise awareness of the needs and challenges to come?, says Carolina Hazin, BirdLife?s Global Biodiversity Policy Coordinator. ?We recognise the need to strengthen the work with the water resources sector for more efficient water resources planning and use at the national level. But we also know that water and biodiversity don?t have frontiers, so the work must go beyond borders, taking into consideration the interdependencies of the ecosystems.?

As the key implementation partner of the CBD Programme of Work on Inland Waters Biodiversity, the Ramsar Convention is guiding member countries to deliver the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, especially those with implications for water biodiversity. BirdLife is one of the five International Organisation Partners of the Ramsar Convention, and has helped shape its development and implementation.

With 67% of globally Important Bird Areas (some 6,700 sites) containing natural or artificial wetlands, and at least 12% of all Globally Threatened Birds (146 species) depending on them, BirdLife will continue its collaborative work with the CBD and with the Ramsar Conventions, to inform decision making and promote the conservation and wise use of water ecosystems and wetlands.