

Migrants under threat

Title

On their epic journeys, often spanning thousands of kilometres, migratory birds cross many borders, linking different countries as well as ecosystems. The annual migration of an estimated 50 billion birds representing around 19% of the world's 10,000 bird species is one of nature's great natural wonders. Yet each year, more and more of the natural habitats migratory birds need to complete their journeys either diminish or disappear completely. The theme for World Migratory Bird Day 2011, celebrated around the world on 14-15 May, is 'Land use changes from a bird's-eye view' and it highlights the **negative effects human activities are having on migratory birds, their habitats and the planet's natural environment**. The loss, fragmentation and degradation of natural bird habitats is occurring globally and is mainly caused by the pressures resulting from a growing human population, rapid urbanisation and unsustainable human use of natural areas. "Land-use change poses an immediate and increasing threat to the world's migratory birds. Habitats vital to these species on their incredible journeys are being destroyed or degraded at an alarming rate and the bird's-eye view is becoming bleaker. The BirdLife Partnership, with over 110 conservation organisations along the world's flyways, is working across borders to help stem this tide and achieve the effective joined-up conservation needed to make a difference for these inspiring birds", said Dr. Marco Lambertini, BirdLife International's Chief Executive. World Migratory Bird Day is being organised by the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) and the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA) - two intergovernmental wildlife treaties administered by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP). BirdLife International, Wetlands International and the Secretariat of the Partnership for the East Asian - Australasian Flyway (EAAFP) are also main partners of the global campaign. "Although migratory birds face many serious threats, the way humans use the land around them has by far the greatest negative effect. Unsustainable human land use, whether through deforestation, intensive agriculture, biofuel production, land reclamation, urbanization and mining directly removes or damages the habitats of migratory birds, affecting their populations on a global scale", said Bert Lenten, Deputy Executive Secretary of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) and initiator of the World Migratory Bird Day campaign. "As the two intergovernmental treaties dedicated to the conservation of migratory animals, including migratory birds at global and flyway scale, the Convention on Migratory Species and the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement have launched World Migratory Bird Day to make people aware of the threats migratory birds face along their migration routes. CMS and AEWA bring together governments and other stakeholders to coordinate and further develop global flyways policy, to ensure that all flyways in the world benefit from some kind of coordination mechanism that promotes cooperation at ground level among the countries involved. This includes working towards establishing a viable network of sites which can be used by migratory birds to breed, rest and refuel during their migration. Initiated in 2006, World Migratory Bird Day is an annual campaign backed by the United Nations and is devoted to celebrating migratory birds and promoting their

conservation worldwide.