Title

Vogelbescherming Nederland (VBN, BirdLife in The Netherlands) and WWF-Netherlands are funding a new chair in migratory bird ecology at the University of Groningen. The chair is held by Professor Theunis Piersma, a world authority on the ecology of migratory birds, whose work includes studies on the links between shorebirds breeding in the Wadden Sea and their wintering grounds on intertidal wetlands along the West African coast. VBN director Fred Wouters and WWF-NL director Johan van de Gronden signed a covenant on 14 May 2012 to enable this chair. The support from the two organisations includes at least 10 years of funding for PhD and postdoctoral researchers. Professor Piersma and his team at Groningen are part of the Global Flyway Network (GFN), an alliance of wader research groups from all over the world. VBN has supported the work of the GFN since 2007, including long-term studies of migratory shorebirds involving biologists from the Netherlands, Canada, Argentina, Australia, China and other countries along the world?s great flyways. Migratory shorebirds depend on a diminishing number of wetlands, which are often seriously degraded and under threat from reclamation projects. ?Now that there is a chair that concentrates very specifically on migratory bird ecology, I expect we will be able to expand the scope of this global research even further?, said Professor Piersma. ?This is urgently needed, because thanks to human co-use of their habitats, most of the migratory bird populations we have studied are declining rapidly.? VBN?s Fred Wouters said: ?Scientific knowledge is crucial for the protection of migratory birds. Vogelbescherming was able to successfully challenge the Dutch mussel farming policy in the Wadden Sea partly thanks to the results of research by Theunis Piersma and his group. The insights generated by the new chair in Global Flyway Ecology will help in devising conservation strategies for this vulnerable group of birds.? Find out more about BirdLife's Flyway Programme