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Migratory birds undertake some of the most daring journeys in the animal kingdom, often covering thousands of kilometers to migrate. And the growing fan base of these winged adventurers is now presenting economic opportunities through sustainable tourism. On 12-13 May 2012, the economic benefits of supporting the world's migratory bird species will be one of the key themes of celebrations to mark [World Migratory Bird Day 2012](#) (WMBD). Under the slogan Migratory birds and people - together through time, WMBD will also emphasize the important cultural and environmental role played by birds. There is also a growing trend among bird tour operators to practice sustainable and socially responsible ecotourism, while relying on local goods and services or supporting local conservation projects. Indeed, the UNEP Green Economy Report shows that global spending on all areas of ecotourism is increasing by about six times the industry-wide rate of growth. A survey by the United States Fish & Wildlife Service puts the annual economic value generated by bird watchers (or 'birders') and other wildlife watchers at around US\$ 32 billion per year in the United States alone. This amount corresponds to the GDP of Costa Rica, which, coincidentally, is a popular destination for US birders. In Scotland, the RSPB (BirdLife in the UK) found that between GBP 5 - 8 million (US\$ 8 - 12 million) is spent annually by tourists wishing to see White-tailed Eagles on the Isle of Mull alone. The equivalent of at least 110 full-time jobs - 4 per cent of jobs in Scotland associated with wildlife tourism - is supported by this expenditure every year. Economic benefits delivered by White-tailed Eagles on the Isle of Mull have more than tripled since 2005. "Birding plays a significant and growing part in the tourism industry, and creates direct and indirect economic benefits for many countries and communities, also amongst developing countries. Wildlife watching appeals to a wide range of people, and opportunities to participate in wildlife watching are and should increasingly be a factor in tourists' holiday choices today," said Elizabeth Maruma Mrema Acting Executive Secretary of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS). World Migratory Bird Day is organized by CMS and the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA) - two intergovernmental wildlife treaties administered by the United Nations 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. CMS and AEWA bring together governments and other stakeholders to address threats to migratory birds and the world's other migratory animals. A key aspect is raising awareness among local communities and involving them in safeguarding endangered species. They provide tour guides, accommodation, transportation and necessary infrastructure. In addition, local people might engage in long-term monitoring which is crucial for designing an efficient conservation strategy. "The scale of the problems and the actions required to reverse the fortunes of our migrant birds is daunting, but international collaboration offers the best chance of achieving effective conservation for these species," said BirdLife's CEO, Dr Marco Lambertini. "World Migratory Bird Day is an opportunity to raise our heads from the problems and issues that preoccupy everyone who works for the conservation of migratory birds, and to remind ourselves that bird migration is a miracle that should be celebrated - not on one day alone, but every day." Events to mark WMBD 2012 are due to take place in 70 countries, including bird festivals, education programmes, presentations, film screenings and bird watching trips, run by hundreds of volunteers and organizations. WMBD is an opportunity to both celebrate the phenomenon of bird migration and to take collective action to raise awareness on some of the threats migratory birds face. "Conserving migratory birds is highly challenging because their annual migration often spans several countries, each governed by its own jurisdiction and national conservation strategies. AEWA was created to bring governments together in order to facilitate the international coordination of conservation action for migratory waterbirds among the many countries found in the African-Eurasian Flyway", said Ms. Mrema. World Migratory Bird Day will be closely followed by an AEWA intergovernmental conference on migratory waterbirds, which will take place on 14-18 May in La Rochelle, France. The 5th Meeting of the Parties to AEWA will focus on wetlands, particularly their role as a vital habitat for migratory birds and people, as a provider of other important ecosystem services, and as a source of livelihoods for communities, particularly in Africa. The AEWA meeting is being hosted by the government of France and will be held under the theme Migratory waterbirds and people - sharing wetlands. "The World Migratory Bird Day 2012 theme highlights that migratory birds and people have been closely linked throughout history and that migratory birds continue to play a very

significant cultural, aesthetic and economic role in the lives of people around the world today. The upcoming AEWA intergovernmental meeting will focus on the habitats we share such as wetlands. It is absolutely critical that governments use the forthcoming meeting, to continue to do all they can to work together to try to safeguard, retain and where feasible restore high quality habitats - and to begin to link the conservation of migratory birds to human development and livelihoods on a flyway scale", said Dr. Marco Barbieri, Acting Executive Secretary of AEWA. **See Spotlight on Flyways in BirdLife data zone Notes to Editors** [World Migratory Bird Day](#) The World Migratory Bird Day 2012 campaign is made possible through part of the voluntary contribution given to the CMS and AEWA Secretariats by the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU). 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. For more information and an overview of all registered World Migratory Bird Day events, please see the Global Event Map: www.worldmigratorybirdday.org/events **Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals** The Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (UNEP/CMS) works for the conservation of a wide array of endangered migratory animals worldwide through the negotiation and implementation of agreements and action plans. CMS is a fast-growing convention with special importance due to its expertise in the field of migratory species. At present, 116 countries are Parties to the Convention. For more information, please visit: www.cms.int **African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA)** The Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds ([AEWA](#)) is an intergovernmental treaty developed under the auspices of CMS dedicated to the conservation of migratory waterbirds using the African-Eurasian Flyways. The Agreement covers 255 species of birds ecologically dependent on wetlands for at least part of their annual cycle. The treaty covers a large geographic area, including Europe, Africa, the Middle East and parts of Asia and Canada. So far 65 out of the 118 countries in this area have become Contracting Parties to the Agreement. **For more information please contact:** Francisco Rilla, Information Officer, UNEP/CMS Secretariat on Tel: +49 (0) 228 8152460, E-mail: frilla@cms.int Florian Keil, Information Officer, UNEP/AEWA Secretariat on Tel: +49 (0) 228 8152451, Mobile: +49 (0)151 14701633, E-mail: contact@worldmigratorybirdday.org Veronika Lenarz, Public Information, UNEP/CMS Secretariat on Tel: +49 (0) 228 8152409, E-mail: vlenarz@cms.int UNEP Newsdesk (Nairobi) on Tel. +254 207623088 or E-mail: unepnewsdesk@unep.org