



World Migratory Bird Day 2014 spotlights pioneering sustainable tourism initiative

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This weekend 10-11 May [World Migratory Bird Day 2014](#) is being celebrated in over 70 countries around the globe.

With the theme “Destination Flyways: Migratory Birds and Tourism”, World Migratory Bird Day (WMBD) 2014 will highlight the links between migratory bird conservation, local community development and wildlife watching tourism around the world.

Every year, more than one billion tourists cross international borders. A thriving wildlife is a key tourism asset, and the spectacular movements of the world’s migratory birds are no exception. Properly managed, popular bird-related tourism activities such as bird watching or bird photography can serve as the foundation for a mutually beneficial relationship between people and migratory birds.

“This year’s theme of ‘Destination Flyways’ reinforces some of the key ways in which the BirdLife Partnership works, - linking local communities to save sites, species and habitats in a coordinated way and enhancing local livelihoods”, said Dr Hazell Shokellu Thompson, BirdLife’s interim Chief Executive.

“Working with people locally is critical to effective, sustainable, equitable conservation. Conservation cannot succeed without the consent and participation of the people who live in or near, obtain their livelihoods from, or simply enjoy the sites that threatened bird species depend on.”

One of the eight project sites selected for the Destination Flyways project is [Lake Natron](#), in the remote north of the United Republic of Tanzania near the Kenyan border. Home to 75% of the world’s population of [Lesser Flamingo](#), Lake Natron is the only breeding ground for this species in East Africa.

For Lake Natron, tourism can be a solution for conservation, provided that local communities are involved in its development and implementation and derive tangible benefits from it. It is therefore critical to make sustainable tourism a true long-term alternative to other economic activities, such as the proposed mining of soda ash from the lake, about which serious concerns have been raised because of the potential danger to the flamingo population.

The site was threatened by a potential large-scale industrial plant to extract soda ash from Lake Natron and a new road and rail infrastructure to service the plant. BirdLife International and the Lake Natron Consultative Group (a coalition of 56 institutions) led the campaign to reject the industrial plant proposal, safeguarding the site for local people and wildlife.

With over one billion international tourists travelling the world every year, generating a global trade income of US\$ 1.4 trillion and 9% of global GDP, tourism clearly has an immense potential to contribute to sustainable development.

“Tourism is an undisputed generator of national wealth, corporate income and local employment. Managed sustainably, it can benefit people and the planet alike”, said United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

The annual World Migratory Bird Day campaign is organised by the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) and the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (AEWA) – two intergovernmental wildlife treaties administered by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). For this year’s campaign, CMS and AEWA are partnering with UNWTO and others to highlight the mutually beneficial relationship between tourism and conservation.